

# 2020

## AUSTRALIAN GENERAL PRACTITIONER EARNINGS REPORT

# A LETTER FROM ENSURE HEALTH DIRECTOR, HELENA MURPHY



Helena Murphy  
*Director & Specialist GP Recruiter*  
**Ensure Health Recruitment**

**P:** 0451 003 518

**E:** [h.murphy@ensurehealth.com.au](mailto:h.murphy@ensurehealth.com.au)

**W:** [www.ensurehealth.com.au](http://www.ensurehealth.com.au)

The year 2020 has been challenging for everyone. I personally wanted to open this foreword by sending my sincerest and best wishes to you, your family, and your colleagues during this difficult time and to thank you for the work you are doing.

Ensure Health has been in touch with many of our clinic owners and doctors as they attempt to navigate this rapidly changing and unprecedented situation.

We're hearing from GP clinics and individual GPs across the country that they have experienced an overall drop in income over the last few months as a result of COVID-19 fears. This has been against a background of challenging new protocols including triaging patients safely, transitioning to telehealth services and understanding and implementing new item numbers. All of this has been in addition to higher levels of worry and stress for all staff working in medical centres.

A survey by [The Medical Republic](#) of 175 GPs found that approximately half had lost more than 30% of their revenue. The [Australian GP Alliance](#) said those numbers were similar to what their members are reporting, with one member reporting a revenue loss of as much as 75%. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners have also confirmed reports of reductions in patient numbers, both of those attending practices and those using telehealth services.

While it is yet to be seen how income changes will play out for GPs over the life of this pandemic, the Federal Government has further [overhauled original telehealth arrangements](#) to help boost income for GPs. This includes expanding Medicare-subsidised telehealth, doubling the incentive for GPs to bulk-bill, and introducing a new incentive payment to help GP clinics stay open. The flu season, which is typically a very busy time for clinics, has helped with an increase of patient visits for vaccinations in recent weeks but will not provide a long-term increase in numbers.

RACGP examinations and assessments have been postponed, which has led to delays in some GPs completing their fellowship or entering into the Practice Experience Programme. Many of these GPs are unable to utilise the A1 rates and earn at a higher rate until examinations are undertaken and passed.

This earnings survey was undertaken in January 2020, before the widespread effects of COVID-19 began to impact the Australian economy. Although it's hard to predict how long this pandemic will affect GP incomes, once we return to a more "usual" way of working, clinics are likely to be busier than ever managing patients who have postponed important procedures and health checks. Therefore, these results within the report, will give extremely valuable insights for future earnings. In certain areas, we are already seeing a positive change and more patients returning to, or contacting their GPs.

The salaries listed have been compiled from a survey undertaken by Ensure Health in January 2020. All figures are listed in Australia Dollars and have been adapted to reflect a 40-hour working week over 48 weeks a year. While every care has been taken in compiling the information, it is intended as a guide only and does not constitute advice. Please note figures are pre-tax earnings.

If you have any questions or feedback, or you'd just like to chat during this time, please get in touch.

Kindest regards,

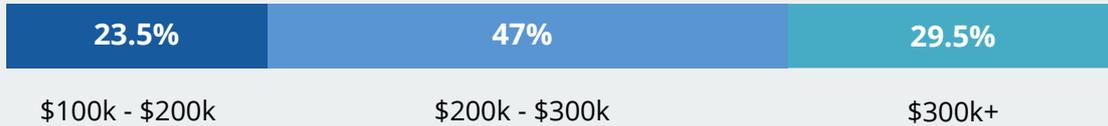
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# AVERAGE GP EARNINGS

## ALL GPs SURVEYED

Range: \$132k - \$550k

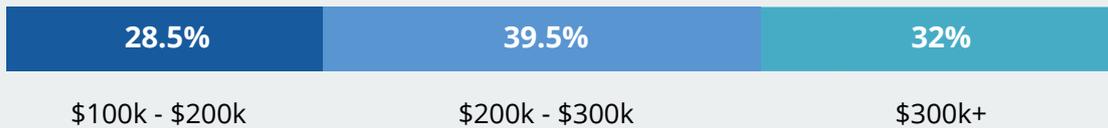
Average: \$279,441



## VOCATIONALLY REGISTERED GPs SURVEYED

Range: \$180k - \$550k

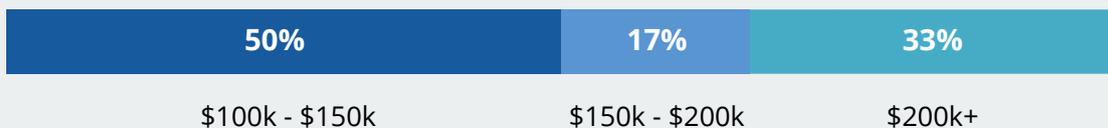
Average: \$298,535



## NON-VOCATIONALLY REGISTERED GPs SURVEYED

Range: \$132k - \$342k

Average: \$190,333



## FEMALE VOCATIONALLY REGISTERED GPs SURVEYED

Range: \$188k - \$269k

Average: \$240,429



### MALE VOCATIONALLY REGISTERED GPs SURVEYED

Range: \$180k - \$550k

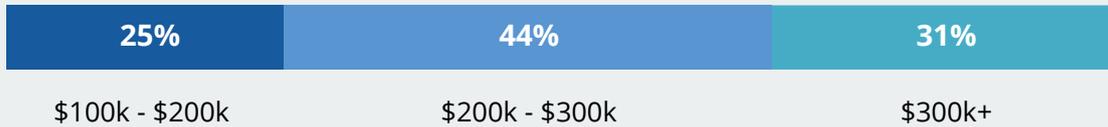
Average: \$317,905



### BULK BILLING GPs SURVEYED

Range: \$153k - \$480k

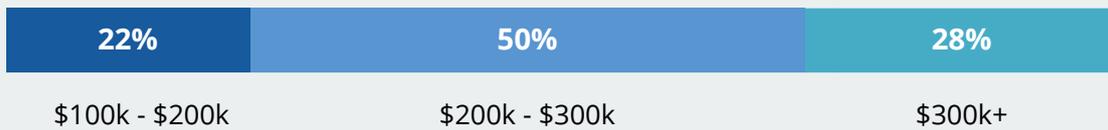
Average: \$281,625



### MIXED BILLING GPs SURVEYED

Range: \$132k - \$550k

Average: \$277,500



The above results demonstrate the wide variance in GP earnings within both the vocationally registered group of doctors, and also in the non-vocationally registered group. We also found some interesting insights in respect of male vs. female earnings.

## VOCATIONALLY REGISTERED DOCTORS

The average earnings of a vocationally registered doctor at just under \$300k per year is a good reflection of the information we get from our daily discussions with GPs. The lower and higher end of the scale show just how much of a difference there can be in earnings. It is interesting to note that almost a third of GPs in this group earn >\$300k and the top 20% earn >\$400k.

In the group of higher earning GPs (\$300k+) we found that there was an equal mix of bulk and mixed billing and that the billing percentage ranged from 60% - 75% (average 69%). For those in the bracket of earnings over \$400k we found the average percentage was slightly higher at 71% and that in the top 10% of earners, those in a bulk billing clinic were on 75% compared to 70% in a mixed billing clinic.

## NON VOCATIONALLY REGISTERED DOCTORS

Although the non-vocationally registered doctors have average earnings of \$190k per year, it's worth noting that once we adjusted the figures to remove those associated with the Practice Experience Programme or the Other Medical Practitioners Scheme, which both remunerate doctors at A1 rates, average earnings fell to \$143k per year.

## MALE VERSUS FEMALE INCOME

Our survey found that there was no difference in earnings between the male and female cohort in the non-vocational group (once adjusted for PEP/OMPs payments) however there was a 28% difference in the vocationally registered group.

Interestingly, [research by the University of Sydney](#) gives us some insight into possible reasons for this disparity: female GPs tend to manage more issues and complexity per consultation, are more likely to charge Medicare fewer items and are more likely to bulk bill. It may be that one or a combination of these factors has an effect on earnings. According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, female GPs can earn up to 25% less than their male counterparts.

## MIXED BILLING VERSUS BULK BILLING

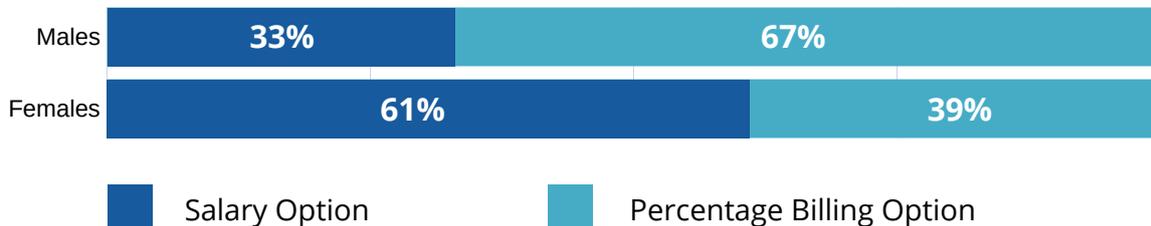
There was only a small difference in average earnings of GPs who are bulk billing and those who are mixed billing. On further analysis of GPs with above average earnings (>\$300k), we found a similar picture. However at the top end of the scale, 50% more GPs were mixed billing compared to bulk billing on earnings of \$400k+.

# AVERAGE GP EARNINGS VS. TENURE

The survey also highlighted that, unlike many other occupations, the tenure of a GP has no direct relationship with any increase in earnings.

0 - 5 years	\$284,750
5 - 10 years	\$286,375
10+ years	\$285,800

# WOULD GPs PREFER A SALARY OR A PERCENTAGE OF BILLING?

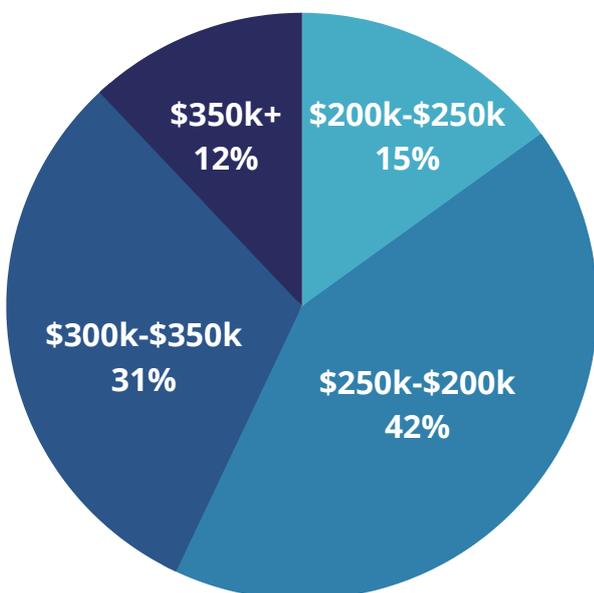


When asked whether GPs would prefer a salary or percentage billings, just over half (57%) of those surveyed indicated they would prefer to remain on a percentage billing model. This left 43% who said they would prefer to receive a salary.

Interestingly, male GPs were much more favourable to percentage billings with 67% preferring it over the salary option. Contrastingly, female GPs preferred the salary option, with 61% of females preferring a salary option over percentage billed.

In situations where Ensure Health has worked on behalf of a client to offer a GP a salaried position, we have found a very high level of interest. For some people the consistency of a known regular income and benefits such as paid leave and superannuation are highly valued.

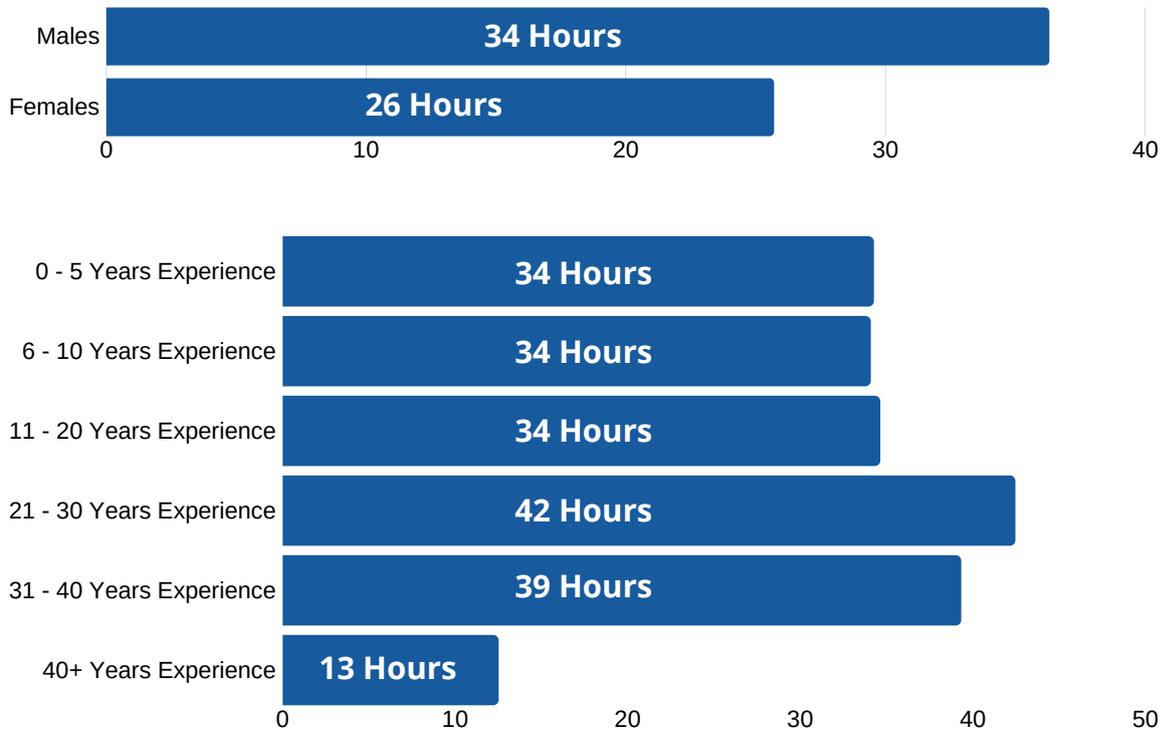
## GP SALARY EXPECTATIONS



Of those who prefer a salary, 42% would like an annual salary package of \$250k - \$300k per year, which correlates to the average income of a GP.

Undoubtedly, in the 43% of doctors interested in the higher salary brackets, there will be some GPs earning a higher rate but it may be that this percentage is reflective in part to the rising costs in delivering healthcare services and stagnant Medicare reimbursement rates since the rebate freeze in 2014. Although there have been recent changes, current indexation rates are considered too low according to prominent voices in the medical community.

# AVERAGE GP HOURS WORKED PER WEEK



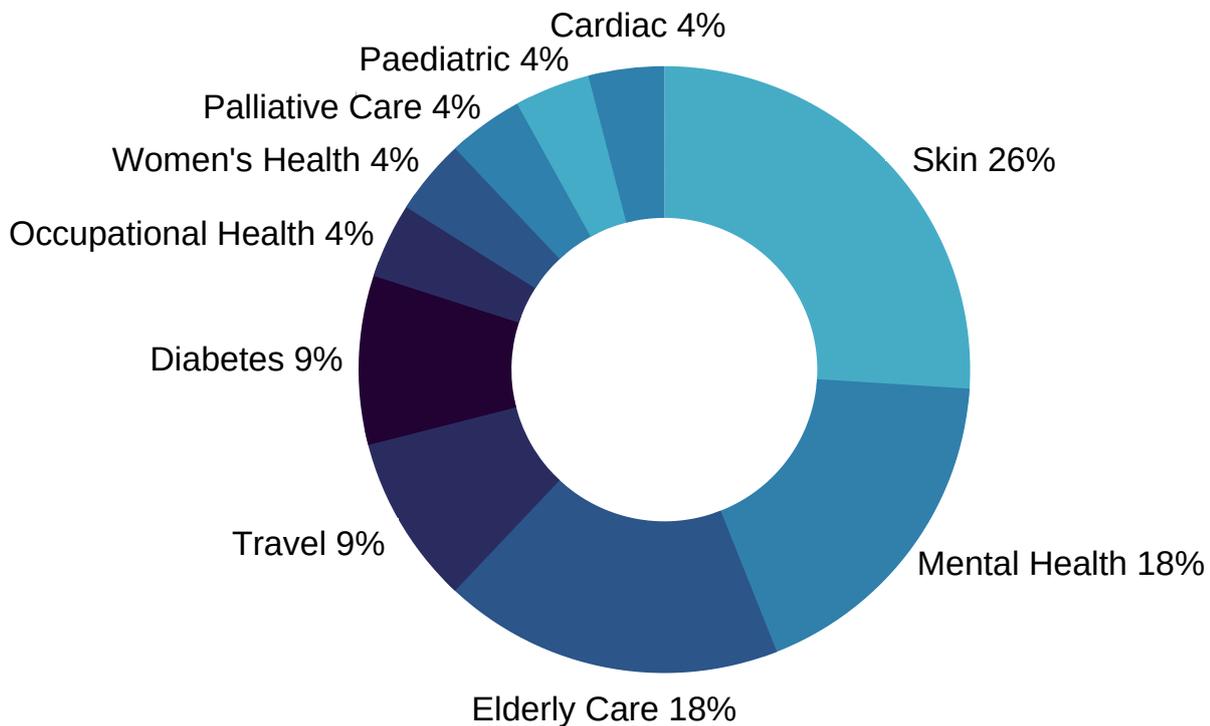
The survey found that the average hours worked per week by GPs in Australia is 32.84 hours.

Notably, women worked an average of 26 hours, compared to men who worked an average of 36 hours every week. The main reason for this is likely to be that women take time off to raise children and work shorter hours due to family commitments.

Data from the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) reveals that childcare is the biggest barrier to women entering the workforce or taking on more hours. Women remain much more likely to work part-time than men with only 41% of women working full-time during their prime years, compared with 73% of men.

The survey also found that GPs with over 20 years' experience work longer hours (an average of 41 hours). Younger GPs are working shorter hours and averaging 34 hour work weeks. It is perhaps unsurprising to see that there are GPs who remain in practice even after 40 years of service although this tends to be in part-time positions, with an average number of hours worked being 13.

# WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON GP SPECIALIST AREAS?



The survey identified that a high number of GPs (42%) are currently working in an area of special interest. Of the GPs who specialise, the three most popular areas of specialisation were Skin (26%), Mental Health (18%) and Elderly Care or Nursing Home Work (18%), accounting for more than 50% of chosen specialities. Diabetes and Travel were also popular choices with a further 18% specialising in these areas.

A large number of Skin Specialists is likely due to the high prevalence of skin cancer among Australians. Public skin health campaigns have raised awareness leading to patients requesting skin checks. The survey didn't find any correlation to a higher income for skin specialists. This is something we would have expected as when discussing incomes with GPs, procedural work usually leads to above average earnings.

Mental Health was the second most popular specialisation, as GPs are also often the first port of call for people seeking help with a mental illness. Anxiety and depression rates continue to creep upwards, according to the [ABS National Health Survey: First Results, 2017-18](#). The survey found increased rates of mental illness, including one in five Australians reporting a mental or behavioural condition, and one in 10 people with depression or feelings of depression. In the current environment with high rates of unemployment and unprecedented levels of social isolation, it is highly likely that this will be an increasing area of concern over the coming months.

# WHAT DO GPs LOOK FOR WHEN MOVING CLINICS?



Flexible Working  
**18%**



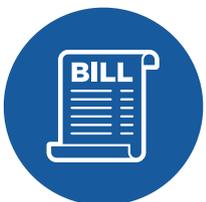
Income  
**13%**



Location  
**13%**



Development Opportunities  
**9%**



Type of Billing  
**8%**



Friendly Colleagues  
**8%**



Good Nursing Support  
**6%**



Specialisation Opportunities  
**6%**



Onsite Allied Health  
**5%**



Close to Good Schools  
**4%**



Patient Demographic  
**3%**



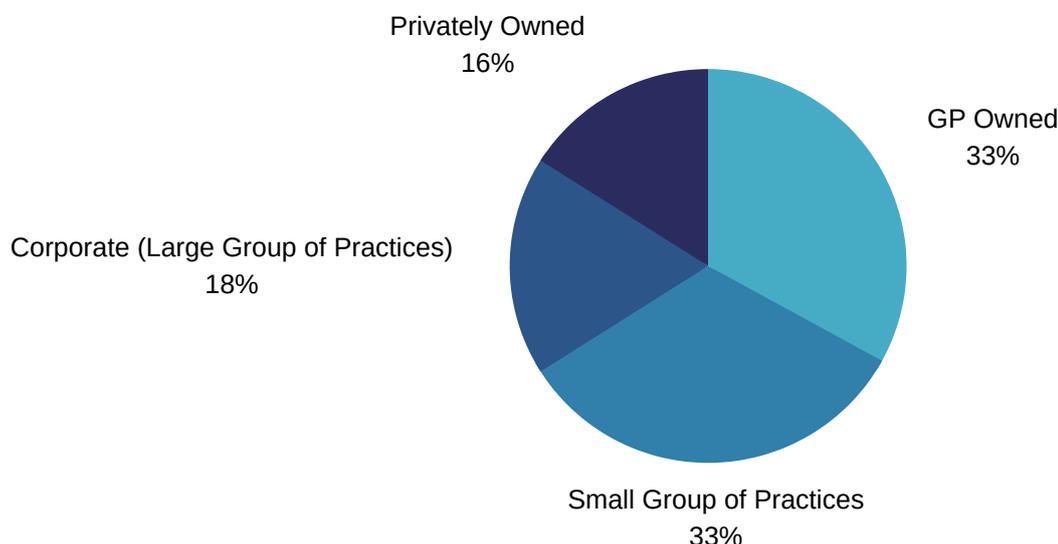
Size of Consulting Rooms  
**1%**

When asked what are the key reasons or benefits that would make you consider changing to a new practice, flexible working was by far the most popular response with 18% of GPs seeking more flexible work hours. Flexibility is being raised more and more in our discussions with GPs and this often relates to the numbers of days and hours worked to fit a better work/life balance or managing family commitments.

It is also more common to have GPs ask for options that offer telehealth or other working from home options. Under the current Medicare benefit arrangements for all GPs to have the option to offer telehealth (some from home), I have no doubt that for some this will become more of a priority. A more regular use of telehealth after 30th September is a hot topic of conversation. [Harry Nespolon](#), president of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, said the number of consultations that could be done properly over telehealth was about 40%.

Following flexibility, the next most popular reasons for a GP to move clinic were location, income and training/development opportunities. In my experience, there may often be two or three higher priority considerations but quite often there will be a number of other factors like nursing support, friendly colleagues and the general environment that are part of the overall decision-making process.

## WHAT TYPE OF CLINIC DO GPs WANT TO WORK IN?



For those GPs looking to move practice, GP owned and small groups were the most popular choice with 66% opting for these. However, over a third of GPs were interested in looking at either private or corporate options demonstrating that this is a very individual choice. The different types of clinic ownership offer a range to meet the needs of GPs. Each option can be perceived as offering different benefits.

# ABOUT ENSURE HEALTH

## WHY GPs COME TO US TO HELP IN THEIR SEARCH FOR A CLINIC

Ensure Health specialises in working with GPs and medical centres across Australia and are confident that we offer the very best positions and wide-ranging opportunities across Australia.

For us, it's not about finding the next position, it's about finding the 'right' position for every doctor we work with; it's about offering ongoing career advice taking into account personal goals and professional skills and getting to know individuals as people to understand what matters to them at work.

So whether you are looking for a great mentor, love to supervise others and help nurture their growth, are keen to utilise your specialist skills more, want more time to spend with your kids, would love to be earning more, prefer to work in a mixed billing environment or are looking for a shorter commute time, we are here to help!

***"Helena has demonstrated excellent knowledge of the marketplace and a very high level of expertise in being able to navigate the processes and systems within the Department of Health and Medicare to expedite my application for a provider number. Throughout the process from my initial interview with Ensure Health to starting with my new employer, I have been impressed with the level of engagement to help me find a very specific role and the high levels of ongoing communication to keep me fully informed at all times in relation to requirements and questions relating to the role. I have recommended Ensure Health to colleagues as an agency that stand out in their field; both in their ability to provide tailored options and an incredibly high level of service to healthcare professionals"***

**- Dr Aruna Dhara, Melbourne/Canada**

***"From the start the engagement Helena was friendly, thorough and very respectful of my wishes. She tried to understand exactly what I need from a practice and only pointed me to the ones that would suit my requirements. Helena was dedicated and available all the time no matter whether it was a public holiday or a weekend to answer my question and follow up on progress. I would recommend Ensure Health's services to any of my colleagues without any hesitation"***

**- Dr Khalaf Haddadin, Perth**

**[Get in touch](#)** to have a conversation about your next move.

## WHY CLINICS ACROSS AUSTRALIA CHOOSE ENSURE HEALTH AS A PARTNER

Finding the right GP for your vacancy can be both difficult and time consuming. Ensure Health has built extensive networks across Australia with GPs and has an industry leading, sophisticated database that allows us to communicate quickly and effectively with doctors to keep them updated with your opportunity. We have access to thousands of GPs who are not actively looking for positions (and therefore not responding to advertising) but who are open to hearing about options. We will spend the time to understand the skills, experience and culture fit you are looking for and take a detailed brief of your clinic / organisation so that we can match your requirements with those of the doctors we work with.

***"I have been continuously drawn to the company for their professional and knowledgeable approach when recruiting Doctors for our 3 practices. Helena has always been compassionate and listened to our needs, and for this I see us working together now, and in the future"***

**- Goran Mujkic, Family Doctor Service, Deloraine & Westbury Medical Centres, Tasmania**

***"Ensure Health has been a great support in our GP recruitment searches within the NFP sector. Not only have they been able to guide us through the process with their expert knowledge, through our engagement with Helena she takes the time to understand our needs to best match quality candidates that align with our business values. Helena's responsiveness, transparency and clear communication have been highly valued by the IPC Health team and as a result we have established a great relationship which complements our working style."***

**- Helen Nguyen, IPC Health, Melbourne**



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