**Forget the 12 hour day…**

**How GPs work in Australia**

[**What your working day will be like**](https://www.alecto.tekhost2.co.uk/working-gp-australia/#ac_6803_collapse1)

GPs working in Australia have a lot of choice as to how, when and where they work. A GP is not salaried but is contracted to a practice, and this element alone gives the GP a large degree of autonomy about his/her working life.

Obviously, different practices will have different needs and a practice may stipulate that they need a GP prepared to work, say, two Saturday mornings a month, for example. But equally a practice may simple say that they need a GP who is prepared to work 38 hours a week, or they only need a part time GP, or they need a GP to work Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. As a general rule, practices are very flexible and will seek to accommodate a GP’s wishes.

Once you’ve chosen the number of hours and the spread of hours across the week in consultation with the practice, the GP will be able to choose how many patients per hour they see. The average across the country is 4.5 patients per hour but some will only see 4 per hour and others up to 6. GPs are not under pressure to see more patients than they are comfortable with although as you are only paid for the time you are consulting, you will probably not choose to slope shoulders too much!

A significant difference to the way GPs work in the UK is that in Australia, any paper work resulting from a consultation will be done during the consult. You will not be required to put in additional hours at the end of the day to complete paper work. At the end of your last patient consult, you are free to go home.

As the GP is not under pressure to push the patients through, it opens up the opportunity to actually treat your patients in a more considered way. You can choose to take the time to assess their needs, to consider their ongoing health, and if appropriate to put in place care plans and ongoing appointments and treatments – to take a preventative approach to caring for their needs. Medicare rewards such an approach in that you will receive a higher fee for putting in place various treatments and care plans.

[**How you earn**](https://www.alecto.tekhost2.co.uk/working-gp-australia/#ac_6803_collapse2)

Because GPs are contracted to the practice and not salaried, you will be paid on a patient by patient consultation – you are only paid when you see patients. This has a bearing on your income and gives you much greater autonomy in the way you work – you can choose to take time to treat a patient or set up a care plan without undue time constraints. And it puts you very firmly in charge of how much you will earn. As a contractor to the practice, you will be paid a percentage of each patient consult fee, and the practice retains the remainder to cover the facilities and services they bring to the party. The GP will be offered anywhere between 60% and 70% of billings but most commonly, 65% of each patient billing.

In most instances, you will also be offered a minimum guarantee for 3 to 6 months while you build up your patient base – and remember – you are only paid for seeing patients so having a good steady stream of patients is very important. In considering your job options, our advice is unequivocal: chase the patient demand and not the higher percentage of billings. We explore this further in our [GP salary](https://www.alectoaustralia.com/gp-jobs/gp-jobs-australia/gp-salary-australia/) page.

[**Typical hours you will work**](https://www.alecto.tekhost2.co.uk/working-gp-australia/#ac_6803_collapse3)

GPs are contracted to a practice rather than salaried, this offers significant choice about the number of hours you will work. Typically, full time is approximately 35 to 40 hours per week, but you can choose to work less or more hours, subject to the needs of the practice. And you will not be required to work additional hours at the end of the day on paper work. If you agree to work 38 hours for a practice, you will work 38 hours to include paperwork, after hours and weekend work.

[**Where you can work**](https://www.alecto.tekhost2.co.uk/working-gp-australia/#ac_6803_collapse4)

There are some restrictions on where UK GPs can work in Australia. The country as a whole suffers a significant shortage of GPs, but some areas are deemed to be in greater need of GPs than others. Often this particular need occurs in outer metropolitan and rural areas. To more evenly distribute GPs across the country as a whole, the Department of Health has developed a system to identify areas where the need for GPs is of a higher priority, known as District Priority Areas (DPA), and actively encourages overseas trained GPs /international medical graduates to work in these areas.

Quite naturally, these areas will change from time to time, but once you have been placed in such an area, your position remains a DPA position as long as you remain at the practice and beyond.

We keep a close eye on the DPA changes and will keep you appraised of changes that open up further job opportunities. We are constantly updated on all the rules and regulations, so please feel free to contact us, tell us where you would like to relocate to, and we will discuss with you the DPA options in detail.

[**Australian medical system**](https://www.alecto.tekhost2.co.uk/working-gp-australia/#ac_6803_collapse5)

Primary care in Australia is funded by a unique blend of state and private funding. Medicare pays for everyone to see the GP at the point of need, but some choose to top up this Medicare payment and pay privately for a consultation with their GP. The government offers tax incentives for those who use their own money or take out medical insurance and this element of private funding eases the pressure on the state making the whole system work rather well and, crucially, offering patients choice.

Medicare pays a practice $39 for each standard consult. Patients whose visit to the GP is funded by Medicare are referred to as **bulk billing patients** – the patient is not charged the fee and no money changes hands. At the end of the fortnight the practice will bulk bill Medicare for all those seen in that period. There are still some practices set up to take bulk billing patients exclusively, but these are becoming less common.

More often a practice will take both privately paying patients and bulk billing patients. In the case of the **privately paying patient**, they will pay the practice for their consult – roughly $50 - $80 for a standard consult - then claim back from Medicare the $39 to which they are entitled.

These days, most practices are **mixed billing** – a mix of private and bulk billing patients. Some GPs feel strongly that they would prefer to work in one or other of these types of practices. When considering a potential job, if you have a preference as to which model you would like to work in, the practice should be able to give you stats about the percentage which are bulk billing and which privately paying.

We advise UK GPs to keep an open mind however as there are pros and cons for both and, significantly, there is very little difference in income at the end of the day.

[**Types of practices you can work in**](https://www.alecto.tekhost2.co.uk/working-gp-australia/#ac_6803_collapse6)

A single **independent practice** may be owned privately by a GP, businessman, or a number of people working in the practice. Usually such practices are smaller with anywhere from two to ten GPs, for example. We do have some such smaller practices with jobs for UK GPs, but you may find there are more opportunities with Groups and Corporate practices.

Sometimes, these single independently owned practices will open further practices in their area, exploiting economies of scale and their local knowledge. These **groups of practices** offer good opportunities to UK GPs on starting work in Australia.

Then there are the **corporate practices**. Most are listed on the stock exchange and benefit from significant financial investment which makes them highly profitable and well able to invest in their medical centres and their GPs. They offer generous packages, are well set-up to take on UK GPs and support them in getting to know the Australian medical system. Whilst this opens up even more choice for you, it would be prudent for UK GPs considering their job options to assess which offers not just the best package but the best training and support in integrating into the Australian system.

[**What GPs earn**](https://www.alecto.tekhost2.co.uk/working-gp-australia/#ac_6803_collapse7)

The average annual income of a GP is **$350,000** but this will vary based on the number of hours a week you work, what percentage of billings you are on at your practice, the number of patients you will see, whether they are bulk billing or private billing patients, and crucially, that you have a steady stream of patients.

The average billing per patient in a predominantly bulk billing practice is around the **$55**. In a practice where there is a reasonably even mix of bulk billing and private patients, the average billing per patient is around the **$65**. Private fees are around **$75** for a standard consultation.

Crucially, all practices will take a percentage of the fees charged to cover the costs associated with running the practice and the remainder of the percentage will be given to the GP. **The percentage given to the GP can range from 60% to 70%** but as we have already mentioned, chase the patient demand rather than the higher percentage.

Bearing that in mind, consider the following scenarios:

* A GP seeing 5 patients per hour, bulk billing at $55 per consult, working 40 hours a week, for 46 weeks a year at 65% of billings –

(((4.5 x 55) x 40) x 46) x 65% = $328,900 per annum

* A GP seeing 3 privately billed patients at $75 per consult, and 1 bulk billed patient at $55 per hour, working 40 hours a week, for 46 weeks a year at 65% of billings – ((((3 x 75) + 55) x 40) x 46) x 65% = $334,880 per annum
* A GP seeing 4.5 patients per hour with an even mix of bulk and private billing patients at $65 per consult, working 40 hours a week, for 46 weeks a year at $65 of billings – (((4.5 x 65) x 40) x 46) x 65% = $349,830 per annum

Inevitably a private paying patient will demand more of the GPs time so we have assumed a mostly bulk billing GP will see 5 plus patients per hour, a mixed billing GP will see 4.5 patients per hour, and a private billing GP will see 4 patients per hour. These are assumptions, but play around with the numbers and create your own scenarios.

[**What if something goes wrong with my job?**](https://www.alecto.tekhost2.co.uk/working-gp-australia/#ac_6803_collapse7)

We have a breadth of experience in placing UK GPs and will be happy to guide you through the job options, looking at the benefits of each job and how it will suit your circumstances and lifestyle. And should anything go wrong, we will fix it! We are in there with you not just for the lifetime of your job, but for the lifetime of your work in Australia, should you wish us to be.

[**Call Raelene – 07808 704050 - today to chat through job options and for further information on how the medical system in Australia works**](https://www.alecto.tekhost2.co.uk/working-gp-australia/#ac_6803_collapse7) **.**

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