



**Exercise & Sports Science Australia**

**Responses to Questions on Notice  
and  
Supplementary Information**

**Health outcomes and access to health and hospital  
services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales**

**Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health  
Legislative Council, Parliament of NSW**

12 January, 2022

Leanne Evans  
Senior Policy and Relations Advisor  
Exercise & Sports Science Australia

Anita Hobson-Powell  
Chief Executive Officer  
Exercise & Sports Science Australia

# Responses to Question on Notice

## 1. Details on Exercise is Medicine® (EIM®) training - which and how many NSW health professionals have completed the training

According to The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), GPs consider it their roles to give physical activity (PA) and nutritional advice to their patients, however time constraints prevent PA counselling beyond broad advice. GPs and registrars would like to develop skills in providing effective brief advice and motivation to patients where time is limited. Despite RACGP members feeling confident in providing physical activity and nutrition counselling in their practices, the reality is far different.

A 2016 Australian study found less than one in five inactive Australian adults, especially those who have existing medical conditions or are overweight received a physical activity recommendation from their general practitioners in the past 12 month<sup>i</sup>. Furthermore, a recent 2019 study indicated that GPs are only referring 1.4 patients in every 1,000 to an Accredited Exercise Physiologist<sup>1</sup>.

The EIM® training offers health professional free Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points:

- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP): This education is a CPD Activity under the RACGP CPD Program and is eligible for 4 Points
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA): This activity has been endorsed by APNA according to approved quality standards criteria and is eligible for 2 CPD hours.
- Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM): This activity is accredited by ACRRM and is eligible for 2 Core Points.

Upskilling health professionals via the ESSA supported evidenced based professional development program, Exercise is Medicine® would especially benefit GPs, primary health care nurses, specialist nurses in cancer care and mental health, psychologists, aboriginal health workers, Rural Adversity Mental Health Coordinators and many others to more confidently and widely prescribe exercise.

The COVID-19 pandemic has played havoc with face-to-face training in 2020 and 2021.

### **NSW Hospital Workshops:**

In 2020, 6 x 60 minute abridged face-to-face workshops were conducted for approximately 30 medical interns per hospital in the following hospitals:

Mona Vale Hospital, Westmead Hospital, Tweed Heads, Royal North Shore Hospital, Macquarie University Hospital, Canterbury Hospital, Blue Mountains Hospital.

Total: 180 interns

In 2021, 8 x 60 minute abridged face-to-face workshops were conducted for approximately 30 medical interns per hospital in the following hospitals:<sup>ii</sup>

Canterbury Hospital, Royal North Shore Hospital, Mona Vale Hospital, Albury Wodonga Health, Tweed Heads, St Vincent Health Network NSW, Griffith Base Hospital, Campbelltown Hospital.

Total: 240 interns

## NSW Primary Care Workshops

In 2020, 5 x 2 hour standard face-to-face workshops were conducted for general practices across NSW for 110 participants, comprising general practitioners and primary care nurses.

## Online Training

2020: 7 NSW health professionals completed the 2x hour standard course (Occupational Therapist, GPs, AEPs, Registered Nurses)

2021: 19 NSW health professionals and one teacher completed the 2 x hour standard course (Physiotherapist, Osteopath, Registered Nurses, GPs, AEPs, Teacher, Accredited Exercise Scientist, Podiatrist)

ESSA has plans to widely promote the availability of the EIM course in 2022, by advertising directly with various peak professional bodies including the RACGP, ACRRM and APNA. This should help up drive enrolment numbers, along with greater support and promotion by NSW Health and its Hospital and Health Services.

**Additional Recommendation:** That the NSW Government via its Hospital and Health Services supports educating health professionals on the importance of exercise for chronic disease and the value of having Accredited Exercise Physiologists employed within NSW Health and promote the availability of EIM® training to priority public medical, nursing and allied health practitioners.

## Supplementary Information

### a. An Update on ESSA's Advocacy Efforts to remove the goods and services tax (GST) from exercise physiology services

Since it lodged its initial submission to the Inquiry, ESSA continued its advocacy efforts to remove GST from exercise physiology services during 2021.

Whilst exercise physiology meets the requirements of an 'eligible health service' under GST law, all State and Federal Treasurers who comprise the Council on Federal Financial Relations (CFFR) need to agree to remove GST from exercise physiology services.

There are existing policy inconsistencies between Federal taxation and private health insurance laws. From 1 April 2019, 2 x natural therapies (naturopathy and western herbal medicine) were excluded from the definition of private health insurance 'general treatment' and no longer receive the private health insurance rebate as part of a 'general treatment' policy under [the Private Health Insurance \(Complying Product\) Rules](#). Both natural therapies continue to be GST exempt.

In October 2021, ESSA received various letters from the state and territory Treasurers all indicating that the Council on Federal Financial Relations (CFFR) is planning to consider the findings from a CFFR sub-committee, the GST Policy and Administrative Committee (GPAS) review and ESSA's proposal to remove GST from EP services at a CFFR meeting in early 2022 (end of Feb/early March).

### b. What support is needed from the NSW Government to remove GST from exercise physiology services

The upcoming CFFR meeting is a significant opportunity for the NSW Treasurer to address the policy inconsistencies between Federal tax and private health insurance laws and ensure that exercise physiology services are recognised alongside other health services in Section 38-10 of the [A New Tax System \(Goods and Services Tax\) Act 1999 \[GST Act\]](#) which prescribes GST free supplies in the health sector.

Removing GST on EP services will support many New South Wales (NSW) Government objectives for the community including:

- minimising public health outpatient and elective surgery waitlists and hospital admissions/re-admissions
- keeping people healthy though tackling overweight and obesity rates, and helping people manage their own health as per the [NSW State Health Plan: Towards 2021](#); and promoting prevention and early intervention health as per the [NSW Rural Health Plan: Towards 2021](#)
- supporting the [Living Well blueprint](#) for mental health and wellbeing reform by supporting more affordable access to wellbeing, prevention and early intervention exercise programs
- helping people maintain an active and healthy lifestyle to help reduce the risk of COVID-19
- creating new frontline allied health (exercise physiology) jobs by utilising the GST savings
- reducing red tape burdening small businesses and ensuring private exercise physiology services are not unfairly treated compared to public health services.

The removal of GST will also help those who most need care, including those living with chronic or complex medical conditions, and people who cannot afford private health insurance.

ESSA looks forward to the Support of the NSW Government to leave a legacy which will support the health of many NSW residents in the years to come.

---

<sup>i</sup> Short, C.E., et al., Physical activity recommendations from general practitioners in Australia. Results from a national survey. *Aust N Z J Public Health*, 2016. 40(1): p. 83-90

<sup>ii</sup> Craike, M., et al., General practitioner referrals to exercise physiologists during routine practice: A prospective study. *J Sci Med Sport*, 2019. 22(4): p. 478-483.