

A Life Less Ordinary: Experience Working in the Top End

Anaesthesia Provisional Fellow, Royal Darwin Hospital



Do you want an ordinary, uneventful job doing an easy, repetitive list every week? Do you enjoy freezing cold winters and endless days of drizzly rain? Do you look forward to your long commute to work in congested traffic?

If so, then Darwin is NOT the place for you!

The Royal Darwin and Palmerston Hospital (RDPH) Department of Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine is seeking enthusiastic PFYs in Anaesthesia, commencing in February 2025 for 6-12 months. We encourage Anaesthetists to apply who thrive on challenging medicine, cultural diversity and feeling like they've really made a difference in patients' lives. Our dynamic, friendly department is comprised of a group of easy-going but highly motivated Anaesthetists. We are proud of our collegial, supportive culture and strive to provide a healthy work-life balance. The workload is often very busy, frequently unpredictable and sometimes a little chaotic; but always rewarding.

Royal Darwin Hospital is one of the most geographically isolated tertiary hospitals in Australia. It is a 370 bed hospital servicing a population of over 200,000 people, covering a catchment area of over one million square kilometres (larger than New South Wales, Texas or France – take your pick). Around 14,000 operations are performed per annum with a case-mix of most adult and paediatric surgical specialties, including neurosurgery, upper gastrointestinal surgery, head and neck surgery and vascular surgery. Approximately 15% of the caseload is paediatric and there are ~ 2200 obstetric deliveries per year with a significant proportion of high risk cases.

There is a high trauma burden and emergency surgery workload. RDPH is the home of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre (NCCTRC) and has been heavily involved in several mass casualty disasters including the Bali bombings, Ashmore Reef and East Timor crises, as well as international deployment after natural disasters in Philippines, Vanuatu, Fiji and Solomon Islands.

Patients in the NT face extraordinary challenges including a high burden of chronic disease, high levels of social disadvantage and extreme geographic isolation. Half of the NT population live in remote or very remote locations, mostly in small communities or outstations. The NT is one of the most linguistically diverse areas in the world with over 100 First Nation languages and dialects spoken. Around 27% of the NT population are First Nation individuals but make up > 50% of hospital inpatients.

The Royal Darwin and Palmerston Hospital Anaesthetic Department runs an Acute Pain Service and an evolving Perioperative Medicine service including early assessment and optimisation of high-risk patients. There are Anaesthesia Outreach visits to regional hospitals in Gove and Katherine available. Out-of-theatre anaesthesia services are provided for radiology, diagnostic and interventional procedures, cardiac electrophysiological ablation procedures and electroconvulsive therapy. Clinical support services include an 18 bed ICU, Level 6A NICU, radiotherapy centre on-campus, MRI, CT and PET scanning.

Provisional Fellows will find working at RDPH a rewarding experience, with a chance to develop the skills and knowledge to transition to specialist practice smoothly. PFYs will run many lists independently, as well as being involved in the 1st On-call roster (with consultant support). Fellows are frequently involved in teaching and supervising more junior trainees, and clinical support time is provided to allow for involvement in quality assurance projects or research. While all fellows will be exposed to a breadth of clinical experience there are a number of specific fellow roles available. These include pre-determined PFY roles approved by ANZCA in the areas of Simulation/Education, Perioperative Medicine, High Risk Obstetrics and Perioperative Echocardiography, as well as other Generalist positions with portfolios available such as Sustainability and Safety and Quality.

Darwin has a very attractive lifestyle – most staff enjoy a 10-minute bike commute to work along the foreshore; but for those who still prefer cars, traffic congestion is almost non-existent. The relaxed tropical life is great for young families, couples and singles alike. There is a childcare centre on-campus of the hospital as well as several in surrounding areas. The city has excellent public and private schools at both primary and secondary levels. Darwin is the tourism gateway to some of Australia's largest and most spectacular National Parks and is on the doorstep to Asia with short flights to Bali, Dili, and Singapore.

Relocation assistance is provided and short-term subsidised hospital accommodation is available on-campus. Leave provisions are generous with 6 weeks recreation leave and 10 days Study Leave per annum, as well as the many additional Public Holidays during the beautiful Dry Season in the NT.

Enquiries can be made to: Dr Matt Mathieson, PFY Supervisor of Training.

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[ANZCA Darwin Video – “Beyond City Limits”](#)

[ANZCA | Beyond City Limits: Darwin](#) (article)

Applications are open for positions commencing February 2025 via the website:

<https://jobs.nt.gov.au/>