



Sydney North Health Network is funding a program to provide fully subsidised access to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) online emergency response planning tool (ERPT) for general practices in 2023/24.

Sydney North Health Network recognises the important role of general practices in providing essential health services to local communities and understands that maintaining an up-to-date emergency response plan is crucial in ensuring continuity of service during emergency events.

Each participating general practice will receive fully subsidised access to the ERPT in 2023/24 and support from Healthpoint ANZ to start planning and complete an emergency response plan. This includes online webinars, personalised training and access to a help desk.

Australia overall experiences a range of emergency events like 'natural disasters' including bushfires, floods, severe storms, earthquakes and landslides. These events cause great financial hardship for individuals and communities and can result in loss of life. There are also more localised events such as power outages, loss of systems, loss of premises or even intruders to think about.

“The RACGP is committed to supporting general practitioners. (GPs) and practice teams in delivering quality care to Australian patients. Recognising the vital role that GPs and general practice teams play in responding to emergencies, the RACGP has demonstrated its commitment to supporting its members by developing a range of resources relating to disaster, emergency and incident planning and management” (1). The ERPT is such a resource developed specifically to support general practice in Australia.

The importance of emergency planning in general Practice: Why general practices are critical to emergency responses

General practice is the linchpin of Australia’s health service infrastructure. GPs and practice teams are at the forefront of medical care, providing Australians with access to quality healthcare on a daily basis. In an emergency, it is generally expected that the demand for healthcare services will rise. During previous emergency responses, GPs and practice teams have consistently worked to provide individuals with the best care possible. They have demonstrated their commitment to the communities they serve during emergencies by ensuring that individuals requiring urgent medical attention were seen.

It is crucial that general practices can continue providing essential services during emergencies. To do this, it is imperative that they have an up-to-date emergency response plan so that they are prepared, well stocked and ready to respond to any crisis.

Keeping your practice disaster-ready What is the ERPT?



The Emergency Response Planning Tool (ERPT) is an on-line tool which assists general practices in better **preparing** for, **responding** to and **recovering** from the impacts of emergencies and pandemics.

Maintaining an up-to-date emergency plan helps ensure the safety of your staff, the smooth recovery of your practice and reduces the risk of financial loss.

To ensure business continuity, the ERPT provides suggested contingency measures for staff so that, in the event of an emergency, they will know how to respond to:

- a pandemic
- loss of power supply to the practice
- disruption to water and gas supplies
- disruption to telecommunications systems
- loss of IT systems or data
- loss of business records
- complete or partial loss of practice premises
- loss of medical supplies, equipment and furniture
- loss or non-availability of key staff
- Cyber incident response.

These modules are supported with new additions including;

- mental health support services for staff
- telehealth
- Strategies for dealing with patient aggression and violence.

The ERPT guides through a series of modules which are relevant to your practice. The tool has considerable pre-populated information to make the process as easy as possible.

You can complete this in stages and save as you go or complete it in one sitting. Keep in mind it will take someone in your practice approx. 4 hours to complete the whole process. But it is worth-it!

When you have finished, you will have your own personalised practice emergency response plan. You can access it anywhere, anytime but we recommend that you print a version and keep it on-site for your staff to access in case an emergency event happens. The plan will guide your staff on what to do in such an event. It also complies with the 5th edition of the GP standards toward accreditation.

You can print this as a word document or in flip-chart format.

PHN funding will begin 1st July 2023 with limited spaces available.

How do I access the ERPT?

1. Go to the URL: <https://erpt.racgp.org.au/standardlogin>
2. Click on `Register your practice for the ERPT`, in red. Complete the few details.