

Port Augusta GP on “cloud nine”

Dr Amanda Bethell claims the Royal Australian College of GPs' top honour at the GP17 annual conference ...

DR Amanda Bethell was struck by a vaguely surreal feeling as she processed to the stage at the Royal Australian College of GPs' annual conference late last month.

“We were in our robes and as we processed up the aisle the string quartet played *Can't help falling in love*,” she tells the *MJA*.

“It was like a wedding. I don't know whether the RACGP planned it that way, or if it was just what the string quartet happened to be up to at the time. It was a bit surreal.”

Dr Bethell was heading to the stage to be presented with the College's 2017 General Practitioner of the Year award, and she is still “wandering around on cloud nine”.

“[As GPs] we do a lot of unseen work,” she says. “It's nice to have some people notice.”

Dr Bethell is based in Port Augusta, South Australia. She and her husband set up a house church and each month they host a multicultural meal which is aimed at migrants but at which all are welcome.

Since she last spoke to the *MJA*, she has had a win in her fight to establish safer working hours for doctors in Port Augusta when they are rostered on to hospital shifts.

“About 4 weeks ago we moved to 12-hour shifts at the hospital,” Dr Bethell says. “It's not perfect, but it's a better Band-Aid solution than the last Band-Aid solution that we had.”

“Locums are doing the daytime shifts, covering inpatients and whatever emergency department presentations come around. And the rest of us cover the night shifts – usually about four a month for each of us.”

“The nurses love it and the doctors like it. Hopefully that makes it easier for young doctors to come here.”

The GP of the Year award recognises a GP who has

“demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the general practice profession, excellence in primary healthcare provision, and significant involvement in training and continuing professional development”, according to the RACGP.

College president Dr Bastian Seidel said that Dr Bethell “believes in empowering her patients to make informed choices and works closely alongside marginalised and disadvantaged groups to ensure that their voices are heard and that they have access to equitable services”.

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“She is always open to listening to others and forms her opinions based on best available information, a wealth of professional experience and the considered opinions of those she works alongside. Dr Bethell demonstrates exemplary levels of integrity and professionalism and fulfils her role admirably as the trusted custodian of her patients' clinical information.”

Dr Bethell says her immediate goals are pretty simple.

“I aim to work out, pick up the kids at least one day a week, and continue to take care of my work/life balance.”

Hobart GP Dr David Knowles was the recipient of the RACGP's most prestigious honour, the Rose-Hunt Award, presented to a College Fellow or member who has rendered exemplary service in the promotion of the objectives of the RACGP.

“Dr Knowles has a positive and long-lasting influence on all those who are fortunate enough to work alongside him,” Dr Seidel said. “This influence extends from his

role as a GP in South Hobart, to his time as Chair of the RACGP Council in 2012–13. Two vastly different positions that he has held with compassion, competence and integrity.

“Dr Knowles goes out of his way to welcome new doctors to the profession and ensure they get the most out of their careers,” Dr Seidel said. “His commitment to fairness and inclusiveness has meant many members, a significant number of whom are younger members and female members, have become more engaged with the RACGP. “Dr Knowles is courageous, pragmatic and open. He is the very best of what the RACGP offers.”

Dr Knowles also won the 2017 GP Supervisor of the Year award.

Atticus Health in Carrum, Victoria was named the 2017 General Practice of the Year, recognising the practice's approach to patient health and wellbeing, exemplary service and quality of care provided to patients, health promotion initiatives and the practice's involvement in general practice teaching.

Bundaberg GP Dr Denise Powell was the winner of the 2017 Brian Williams Award, the RACGP's top rural accolade.

Dr Adelaide Boylan, a GP from Adelaide, SA, was awarded the GP Registrar of the Year, “for outstanding commitment to the general practice profession, to advancing their education and to the provision of high-quality patient care”.

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Dr Amanda Bethell