



NSW RURAL DOCTORS NETWORK

HEALTH WORKFORCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

APPLICANT
GUIDELINES



Australian Government
Department of Health



NSW RURAL DOCTORS NETWORK
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

1. INTRODUCTION

The Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP) provides scholarships and bursaries to help health professionals in rural and remote Australia retain and enhance their skills, capacity and scope of practice.

The Program is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health, administered in New South Wales by NSW Rural Doctors Network (RDN).

The HWSP is available to medical, nursing, midwifery, allied health, dental and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals providing primary health care in the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) sector, non-government organisations and private practice.

The priority areas identified for scholarship and bursary funding include locations, professions and gaps in service access that may be addressed through enhancing the skills of the current health workforce.

Therefore, payments under the HWSP will be:

- determined in response to identified local needs for health professionals who provide primary health services to rural and remote areas
- justifiable against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

Under the HWSP, health professionals working in rural and remote locations (MMM 3-7) are eligible to apply for scholarships and bursaries to pursue further education or attend training courses.

Funding is available for either a scholarship or bursary for health professionals who hold a primary professional qualification or who are working in an existing role e.g. as an Aboriginal Health Worker.

THE HEALTH WORKFORCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM WILL PROVIDE EITHER:



SCHOLARSHIP PAYMENT

A payment up to \$10,000 per year for up to two years to support participants to undertake full or part-time studies (maximum of \$20,000 in total over two years) to attain the qualification of either a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma, Master or PhD.



BURSARY PAYMENT

A payment up to \$10,000 (maximum of \$10,000 in total in one financial year) for participants to put toward the cost of upskilling, training or course fees and training-related expenses such as accommodation and travel, where appropriate.

2. ELIGIBILITY

2.1 WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Use the checklist below to determine whether you meet the eligibility requirements for the HWSP.

YOU ARE:

- a health professional who has obtained their primary professional qualification and/or is working in the role as:
- an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker/Practitioner; or
 - an allied health professional
 - Arts Therapist
 - Audiologist
 - Chiropractor
 - Dietitian
 - Exercise Physiologist
 - Occupational Therapist
 - Optometrist
 - Orthotist
 - Orthoptist
 - Osteopath
 - Music Therapist
 - Pharmacist
 - Physiotherapist
 - Podiatrist
 - Prosthetist
 - Psychologist
 - Radiographer
 - Social Worker
 - Sonographer
 - Speech Pathologist
 - a dentist; or
 - a Medical Practitioner; or
 - a nurse or midwife.
- providing services full or part-time in the **private or non-state government** primary health sector e.g. general practice, private allied health practitioner or a non-government organisation
- providing (or can through a service or employment agreement demonstrate that you are about to provide) primary health services in rural NSW (Modified Monash Model 3-7 locations)
- proposing to undertake study or upskilling activities that will fill the established, high priority gaps in primary health service provision within your community
- proposing to continue working in a rural NSW MMM 3-7 location after completing your course (as you may be required to complete a return of service agreement of 12 months after your course is completed).
- Courses and activities do not need to be accredited but will be assessed by RDN for relevance, value for money and the likelihood of meeting the identified learning and community need based on RDN's Health Workforce Needs Assessment.

Locums providing services in MMM 3-7 may be eligible for up to \$5,000 in bursary funding. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

2.2 WHO AND WHAT IS NOT ELIGIBLE?

Any health professional employed solely by the NSW Government (i.e. employed in a public hospital, TAFE, university) is not eligible to apply.

Scholarships or bursaries cannot be used for:

- retrospective costs
- undergraduate (Bachelor) degree programs. **Note:** Certificate III and Certificate IV are not considered undergraduate degree programs and HWSP bursary funding can be used for these qualifications
- overseas expenses
- study fully funded by other sources
- IT or IT related equipment
- meal expenses
- taxi and Uber fares, transfers, parking fees or similar
- activities for which other Commonwealth, State or Local Government bodies have primary responsibility. This includes training for health professionals working solely or primarily in a public hospital.

Applicants who work primarily for NSW Health but provide vital primary health services to rural and remote areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis in line with RDN's Primary Healthcare Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNNA).

3. WHAT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

The HWSP offers two types of funding.

- **Scholarship:** a lump sum payment toward the cost of completing a postgraduate course leading to a postgraduate qualification; or
- **Bursary:** a payment for completing a short course or to attend a conference. This funding may include reimbursement for the cost of both the course and travel related expenses.

If you are unsure which funding you are eligible for, please select the option you believe is correct when completing your online application and the RDN HWSP case managers will review your choice.

You can make more than one application, to the total value of \$10,000 per financial year.

3.1 SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING AMOUNT

Scholarship allocations will be determined against the perceived workforce benefit of the training. Scholarships must be directly related to training and upskilling primary health professionals who will provide services to rural and remote areas.

Scholarships are a single payment depending on the course you are studying and payments are awarded as a contribution toward the annual cost of the course.

POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATION	AMOUNT
Graduate Certificate	\$5,000
Graduate Diploma	\$8,000
Masters and PhD	\$10,000

If a course extends beyond one year, you must make a new application for a second year of funding.

3.2 BURSARY FUNDING AMOUNT

HWSP bursaries are payments up to \$10,000 that cover the cost of training or course fees and/or cover or partially cover training-related expenses, where appropriate.

Applicants can make more than one bursary application up to the total value of \$10,000 per financial year.

Bursaries must be directly related to training and upskilling health professionals who are providing or who are planning (with evidence) to provide primary health services to rural and remote areas.

Bursary values will be determined against the perceived workforce benefit of the training.

Bursaries can be used for courses such as:

- short courses, workshops, conferences and seminars
- Vocational Education and Training courses e.g. Australian Skills Quality Authorisation (ASQA) recognised training packages
- training that meets the professional development requirements of the applicant's professional registration and/or association
- recognised industry skills training and upskilling for individual health professionals.

Travel reimbursements for accommodation, airfares and kilometres will be payable according to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) rates considered reasonable for claims for domestic travel allowance expenses.

Applicants will need to provide a tax invoice and receipt in order to be reimbursed for approved expenses.



4. WHAT CAN I STUDY?

Each year, RDN works with stakeholders to identify regional and local health workforce skills/capacity needs through a Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA). The HWNA forms the basis for determining the allocation of scholarships and bursaries, and identified these upskilling and training areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care
- Chronic disease management
- Severe and complex conditions
- Mental health management
- Children and young people
- Aged care and associated conditions
- End of life/palliative care
- Culturally safe practices and practitioners
- Team/coordinated patient care
- Improved patient health literacy and self-management

5. HOW DO I APPLY?

You can apply anytime through the RDN website. Applications will be assessed based on:

- the location of your employment (MMM 3-7)
- applicant criteria
- activity
 - planned increase in skill, capacity and/or scope of clinical practice, and
 - meeting one or more identified primary health workforce needs, and
 - demonstration of primary health service provision to a rural or remote community.

Submitting your application does not mean you will be offered a scholarship or bursary.

6. WHAT DO I NEED TO PROVIDE?



1. PROOF OF EMPLOYMENT IN A LETTER THAT:

- a. is on your employer's letterhead and from your immediate manager. If you are self-employed please provide your ABN and detail services provided, location/s, hours of service delivery
- b. is dated and signed within the last three months
- c. states your name as the applicant, including evidence of a name change if the receipt is not in your professional registration name
- d. states your position title
- e. states your employment status (full-time/part-time hours)
- f. states the location of primary health services provided
- g. states the length of your employment in your present position
- h. if working for more than one employer includes letters from all employers on the employer's letterhead.



2. FOR SCHOLARSHIPS ONLY: OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF ENROLMENT OR RECEIPT FOR UNIVERSITY FEES ON OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY DOCUMENTATION FOR THE AUSTRALIAN POSTGRADUATE COURSE SPECIFIED IN YOUR APPLICATION.

- a. This document must include your name, the name of the course, the year of study and a list of the subjects in which you are enrolled.
- b. Generic information about course subjects cannot be accepted for payment.

Note: If enrolment confirmation is unavailable at the time of application, or you are waiting to receive notification of scholarship outcome prior to enrolling, you can upload details of the course you intend to enrol in and provide us with your university enrolment confirmation when you receive it.

- c. A letter of offer is not acceptable.



3. FOR BUSARIES ONLY: PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF PAYMENT OF COURSE FEES AND DETAILS OF TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION IF REQUIRED. REIMBURSEMENT WILL BE AS PER THE ATO REASONABLE TRAVEL ALLOWANCES FOR ACCOMMODATION AND TRAVEL ONLY.

Invoice and receipt must include:

- details of course/conference including dates and location
- name of attendee
- GST
- ABN of course/conference provider.

Cart receipts are not acceptable.

Receipts are not required for accommodation.



7. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I APPLY?

If your application is successful, we will email you a letter of offer for either a scholarship or bursary. The offer will outline:

- the amount offered (not necessarily full amount of course costs)
- documentation required for evidence before we can pay you the scholarship or bursary
- detail of whether your funding requires a return of service obligation.

Please do not forward any documentation with your application. If it is approved, we will request the relevant documentation from you.

We require all supporting documentation to enable payment.

Please note applications may take up to six weeks to be assessed, approved and processed.

7.1 CONTRACT

You will receive a contract via email documenting the amount to be paid towards your studies.

You will need to accept the terms and conditions of the contract electronically, which will serve as your signature and acceptance of the offer.

If RDN does not receive your accepted contract by the nominated date, we will withdraw the offer of funding.

8. RETURN OF SERVICE OBLIGATIONS

A Return of Service Obligation (RoSO) requires an applicant to continue providing services in a MMM 3-7 location for 12 months on completion of their course, and is required from any applicant receiving a scholarship/bursary equal to the value of \$5,000 or more.

RoSO will also apply where one or more bursary application has been approved in one financial year and the combined grants total is greater or equal to \$5,000.

The RoSO will be clearly stated in your contract with RDN.

Applicants with RoSO will be case managed and supported during their period of service to ensure they are able to successfully complete their commitments.

Where a health professional accepts a scholarship or a bursary and does not complete the required service obligations as stated in their contract, RDN will recover the funding.

Applicants who are unable to meet their RoSO due to exceptional circumstances are able to negotiate alternatives with their RDN case manager. Exceptional circumstances means any circumstances beyond the control of the applicant, which were not reasonably foreseeable by that applicant at the time they entered into the contract and which prevent that applicant from meeting their RoSO.

The RDN case manager will, however, seek to find alternatives to allow the applicant to meet their RoSO before a waiver will be considered. RDN reserves the final right to hold the scholar to their RoSO and can recover the debt where a mutually agreeable outcome cannot be found.

9. CASE MANAGEMENT

Successful applicants will be case managed by RDN throughout their scholarship/bursary activity.

The case management framework may include:

- the case manager retaining regular contact to track progress and determine how new skills are being utilised
- support and access to RDN resources that may be relevant to the grantees' needs
- monitoring progress of postgraduate studies and/or training programs at key milestones
- provision of program information updates to the grantee
- the case manager signing-off on completion, collecting evaluation information and instigating debt collection if all other avenues for completing RoSO requirements have failed.

10. COMPLAINTS, WAIVERS AND APPEALS

Unsuccessful applicants who wish to appeal the outcome of their application should initially explain their situation to the RDN HWSP Program Manager to determine if there are other avenues to access funding and/or support to meet their upskilling or professional development needs. Please email hwsp@nswrdn.com.au

If the matter is not resolved applicants can appeal to the RDN Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to consider their case. The RDN CEO is the final arbiter for any appeal on the HWSP.

11. DEFINITIONS

HWSP scholarship: a payment up to \$10,000 per year for up to two years to support participants to undertake full or part-time studies (maximum of \$20,000 in total over two years) to attain the qualification of either a postgraduate Certificate, postgraduate Diploma, Master or PhD.

Postgraduate: a level of qualification offered by education providers. Postgraduate qualifications are open to people who already hold undergraduate (Bachelor) degrees and/or, in many cases, people who can demonstrate equivalent experience in the workplace. **You do not always need qualifications to be eligible to study for a postgraduate Certificate, Diploma or Master.** Many universities and training organisations will recognise your career to date as prior learning and admit you to postgraduate study on that basis.

HWSP bursary: a payment up to \$10,000 for participants for development and upskilling to contribute toward the cost of training or course fees and training related expenses such as accommodation and transport, where appropriate.

Primary Healthcare Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA): aggregates evidence themed around primary healthcare workforce access, quality and sustainability, and identifies issues and trends for these priority areas.

Case management: the process of mutual engagement between the RDN and the applicant to ensure the right level of support and mutual responsibility is in place for a successful outcome.

Return of Service Obligation (RoSO): the commitment a participant makes to the Australian Government when accepting public money by continuing to provide services in a MMM 3-7 location.

Exceptional circumstances: any circumstance/s beyond the control of the participant, which were not reasonably foreseeable by that participant at the time they entered into the contract and which prevent that participant from meeting their RoSO.