

Key dates

Scholarship rounds opens	January 2016
Closing date for application	24 February 2016
Notification of successful applicants	1 March 2016
Acceptances confirmed by	15 March 2016
Payment of Student	Within four weeks of payment to health organisations

Program overview

Nursing and Midwifery Workforce, Department of Health and Human Services (the department), offers postgraduate scholarships for registered nurses and midwives working in the Victorian public health sector, in areas of clinical practice where additional postgraduate studies are considered an important workforce requirement.

Within the Australian and Victorian health workforce there exists a significant underrepresentation of Aboriginal people. It is recognised that a strengthened Aboriginal health workforce will be better placed to ensure culturally appropriate care in the services that are delivered to Aboriginal people, and this will potentially contribute to improved utilisation of health services and improved health outcomes.

Throughout this document, the term Aboriginal is used to refer to all Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is inclusive of people in Victoria who identify as Indigenous Australians, Koori and Koorie.

Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012-2022 outlines the Victorian Government's strategic directions for Aboriginal health over the next ten years. Through this initiative, the department now funds postgraduate scholarships for Aboriginal Victorian registered nurses to undertake and complete a graduate certificate or graduate diploma.

The Aboriginal Postgraduate Nursing and Midwifery Scholarships are targeting areas of:

- palliative care (Cherie Waight scholarship)
- aged care/renal dialysis /chronic disease/diabetes/oncology
- other postgraduate nursing and midwifery courses.

The Cherie Waight palliative care nursing scholarships exemplify the government's commitment in ensuring the Victorian health system is reflective of and meeting the palliative care needs of our Aboriginal community. The Victorian Aboriginal Palliative Care program aims to improve planning at the regional level. This program aims to improve staff knowledge of issues of cultural importance to Aboriginal people and to provide access to training in palliative care for Aboriginal health workers.

Cherie Waight was a leader in working to strengthen the ties between Aboriginal people, to improve access to palliative care and to unite health services and Aboriginal services. Cherie worked tirelessly to close the gap on palliative care for the indigenous community and provided education to palliative care services across Victoria on culturally appropriate care. The Cherie Waight Nursing Scholarships honors the commitment and dedication that Cherie embodied to improving palliative care for Aboriginal people.

Amount and purpose

In 2015-16, Aboriginal Postgraduate Nursing & Midwifery scholarships are up to the value of **\$20,000 per scholarship**.

Scholarships benefit individuals and employing organisations. For the individual, scholarships contribute to achieving career progression by reducing some of the financial burden of undertaking postgraduate studies.

At the organisational/regional level scholarships contribute to workforce and service delivery by supporting staff to have the necessary skills and formal knowledge beyond that delivered at undergraduate level.

This program assumes a shared cost model; the individual, the department and the employers all contribute to the cost of undertaking the studies.

- The individual is required to contribute to the cost of their further learning.
- The department provides scholarships to offset the costs, which can include tuition fees and student contributions (Higher Education Loan Program), study loans, books and equipment, travel required to attend lectures and clinical placements, child care and other related study costs.
- Employers have a responsibility to ensure they facilitate staff in successfully completing their postgraduate qualification by; the provision of study leave requirements in accordance with industrial provisions, fair and equitable rostering, access to learning opportunities in the clinical environment as well as through access to library and e-learning opportunities. Health services may contribute further monetary funds to the department scholarships.

Eligibility

Scholarship recipients eligibility

Eligible applicants must fulfill all of the following requirements:

- must be employed at a Victorian public hospital, metropolitan health service and multipurpose service identified in schedules 1,2,3,4 and 5 of the Health Services Act 1998, or community health services (both registered and integrated).
- be a currently registered nurse or midwife with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
- be of Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- identify as an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person
- be enrolled in semester one, 2016 in an eligible postgraduate program that leads to a tertiary qualification in one of the practice areas identified by the health service/department region
- not already hold an award qualification in the practice area for which the scholarship is sought
- have not previously or currently received a Department of Health and Human Services scholarship to study in the practice area for which the scholarship is sought
- be prepared to complete the course and then work in the area of study for the equivalent of one year full-time.

Course eligibility

Eligible postgraduate courses must:

- be delivered by a university or accredited higher education provider
- lead to an award qualification (or exit point) at postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma or masters
- include clinical nursing practice related to area of study.

Key Selection Criteria and application process

Key Selection Criteria

Applicants are requested to respond to the following points:

- Name of course and university
- Describe how this funding will assist your career in nursing or midwifery?
- Applicant must be supported and signed by the Director of Nursing in your health service.

How to apply

Expressions of Interest are now invited and should be submitted by using the attached template by **24 February 2016** to nmw@dhhs.vic.gov.au - **Subject:** Aboriginal Postgraduate Nursing and Midwifery Scholarships 2016.

Individuals will be notified by email of the outcome of their application by no later than **1 March 2016**.

Selection Process

Selection of applicants involves assessment of applications by the department's officers:

- against the eligibility and selection criteria; and
- against other applications in the round

Applications are scored against the criteria and higher weights are given to applications where the evidence is clear demonstrates how the applicant meets the specifics of the criteria and is presented in the required format.

Scholarships are granted at the discretion of the department and the decision of the department is final.

Successful applicants

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the outcome by **1 March 2016**, via email.

Successful applicants will be provided with a "letter of offer" and are required to complete, sign and return the letter of offer acknowledging they accept the scholarship and scholarship conditions, along with scanned copies of:

- a signed letter accepting the scholarship and scholarship conditions
- a copy of current nursing or midwifery registration front and back - noting any restrictions on registration
- confirmation of course enrolment for 2016 and enrolment status – part time/full time course load
- evidence of payment or deferment of fees (full fee paying students only) in the form of:
 - an official university letter confirming enrolment
 - an official Student Tax Invoice or Statement of Account for semester one 2016 Students with Commonwealth Supported Places need only provide evidence of enrolment
- evidence of course details – enrolled units, subjects or courses for semester one 2016 (and semester two 2016 where applicable)
- type of place –Commonwealth Supported Places -- HELP or full-fee paying .

Disbursement and conditions

Scholarship recipient acceptance rules

The following conditions of funding apply to all Aboriginal Postgraduate Nursing and Midwifery Scholarships:

- Continued employment

The scholarship recipient must be employed within the target area of practice in the Victorian public health sector for a period of one year full-time, or pro-rata equivalent, following completion of the postgraduate course for which the scholarship has been awarded.

- Participation in data collection

To assist in workforce planning, it is a condition that scholarship recipients provide their contact details to notify Nursing and Midwifery Workforce for a period of five years post-completion of studies.

- Deferment from course

If a student is required to defer their studies they must notify Nursing and Midwifery Workforce within one week of the change in study arrangements. If the recipient plans to recommence study in the

next 12 months, they will not need to return the funds. If the recipient does not return to study within this time the scholarship funds will be recalled. The amount to be repaid will be based on the 'Withdrawal from course' rules (see below). Students may re-apply in subsequent scholarship rounds.

- **Withdrawal from course**

Scholarship recipients withdrawing from the course are required to notify Nursing and Midwifery Workforce within one week of withdrawal. Total funds are required to be returned if completion of semester one is unsuccessful. If the candidate withdraws post successful completion of semester one, they will be required to return half of the scholarship funds.

Disbursement of scholarship funds

Scholarship funding for successful applicants will be paid to the recipients employing health service to be disseminated directly to the recipients for the purpose outlined in these guidelines. Administrative fees **must not** be levied against the funds by health services. The Department have an expectation that payment of the student will occur within four weeks of the health service receiving this funding.

Scholarship funds will not be released until Nursing & Midwifery Workforce receives all required documentation. Scholarships will be reallocated to other students if the required documentation is not received by the due date.

Successful applicants are responsible for enrolling and paying course fees (or deferring fees) or HECS by the due date, and are responsible for debts incurred in the course of study including FEE-HELP and HECS-HELP loans. Students with a Commonwealth Supported Place may be eligible for a discount if the student's HECS contribution is paid ahead of the census date for each semester.

Payments will not be made to universities or directly to the Australian Tax Office on the student's behalf (unless alternative arrangements are agreed between the health service and the recipient). All scholarships must be paid in full to the successful candidates within four weeks of the health services receiving the funding from the department.

Taxable Income

The Department is not required to withhold tax (PAYG) from scholarships paid. Recipients should be made aware that they:

- may be liable to pay tax on their scholarship. For more information refer recipients to the calculator on the Australian Taxation Office website: <https://www.ato.gov.au/calculators-and-tools/is-your-scholarship-taxable/>.
- may be entitled to claim a tax deduction for self-education expenses – for more information please refer recipients to the Australian Taxation Office site at the following link: <https://www.ato.gov.au/individuals/income-and-deductions/deductions-you-can-claim/self-education-expenses>.

The Department strongly recommends that recipients seek independent tax advice in respect to their scholarship payments.

Attachments

Attachment 1: [Scholarship application form template](#)

Further information

Alana Smythe

Nurse and Midwifery Workforce

Phone: 9096 7528; Email: nmw@dhhs.vic.gov.au