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| Making it free to study Nursing and Midwifery Information brief – Scholarships and support for nurses and midwives to re-enter the workforce – Re-entry Pathway September 2022  **OFFICIAL** |

## Background

Victoria’s healthcare workforce faces long-standing pressures that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Amid increased demand for care, ongoing action is needed to address issues regarding the supply and distribution of the healthcare workforce. The Victorian Government is implementing a range of initiatives to support Victoria’s healthcare workforce, including free university and specialist training for thousands of nurses and midwives.

This initiative aims to boost the health system, with more than 17,000 nurses and midwives recruited and trained as part of a massive hiring and upskilling initiative – building an army of home-grown health workers to care for Victorians.

## Funding purpose

This funding will provide scholarships and support for up to 25 nurses and midwives per annum to return to practice in public health services via the re-entry pathway.

There-entry pathway is designed to support nurses and midwives who have previously held registration as a nurse or midwife in Australia and are seeking to return to clinical practice, but do not meet the requirements of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). These nurses and midwives are required to complete an NMBA approved re-entry to practice program.

These programs comprise of two components:

1. an online training program, and
2. clinical experience to consolidate the learning. This clinical experience is gained through clinical placements coordinated by the program provider.

As participants may have limited capacity to earn an income during their placement, the funding support will enable candidates to cover out-of-pocket course costs and provide additional support during program participation, such as living expenses while completing clinical placements.

## Funding principles

Funding will be allocated to eligible individuals who complete an NMBA approved re-entry to practice program. Funding for 25 scholarships will be available each financial year from 2022-23 to 2025-26.

Each scholarship provides $15,000 per candidate which supports course fees and other expenses incurred while completing the required learning activities.

## Eligibility criteria

To receive a scholarship in 2022-23, eligible candidates must enrol and commence studying the re-entry to practice program during the 2022-23 financial year.

In addition, scholarship applicants must:

* Meet the prerequisite/entry requirements specified by the university
* Have previously been registered in Australia and have had at least two years of relevant Australian clinical nursing or midwifery experience
* Be considered a ‘domestic’ student for university application purposes, that is:
  + an Australian citizen;
  + a New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand);
  + an Australian permanent resident; or
  + an Australian permanent humanitarian visa holder.
* Reside in Victoria or a border community e.g. Albury/Wodonga.
* For the Re-entry to Nursing pathway, attend a university or accredited higher education provider with a campus located in Victoria or a border community e.g. Albury/Wodonga.
* Have not previously received a department scholarship to study in the practice area for which the scholarship is sought
* Be committed to successful completion of the clinical placement component of the course and express and intention to work in the area of study within a public health service.

## How do I apply?

The department will provide further details on eligibility and the application and selection process following consultation with education providers and public health services.

## Information for recipients of re-entry pathway scholarships

Recipients are responsible for enrolling and completing the qualification by the due date and for any study costs incurred beyond the value of the scholarship.

If the recipient plans to recommence study in the same year, they do not need to return the funds.

If the scholarship recipient does not return to study in the same year, the scholarship funds will be recalled.

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

* they may be liable to pay tax on their scholarship. For more information recipients should consider the calculator on the Australian Taxation Office website <<https://www.ato.gov.au/Calculators-and-tools/Is-my-scholarship-taxable/>>.
* they may be entitled to claim a tax deduction for self-education expenses – for more information please recipients should refer to the 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 payment.