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| Making it free to study Nursing and Midwifery Information brief – Support for new Nurse Practitioners 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 program provides comprehensive growth and support for nurse practitioner candidates and nurse practitioners in Victoria. This funding will enable public health services to support nurse practitioner candidates, grow the number of nurse practitioners and meet future needs across the system.

This includes 100 nurse practitioner candidate support packages, 100 scholarships for nurse practitioner candidates and salary support for nurse practitioners in their first year of practice as a nurse practitioner.

## Funding principles

This program will provide the following package of supports for nurse practitioner candidates and health services:

1. **Health service support for nurse practitioner candidates** – $30,000 per candidate to contribute to costs relating to:
   * Recruitment and appointment of candidates
   * Clinical supervision and professional support
   * Specific training and development consistent with the model of care and the candidate’s scope of practice
2. **Scholarship support for nurse practitioner candidates** – up to $12,000 per candidate
3. **Salary support** – for new nurse practitioner roles, health services will receive up to 25 per cent of the nurse practitioner salary for one year (approximately $34,000) to support implementation of the nurse practitioner role and assist in embedding the nurse practitioner model of care.

## Eligibility criteria

**Service eligibility**

All Victorian public health services will be eligible to apply for funding for nurse practitioner candidates.

**Nurse practitioner candidate eligibility**

Eligible applicants must fulfill the following requirements:

* be a registered nurse with a current registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
* be 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.
* be employed in an eligible Victorian public health service
* be enrolled in Semester 1 of an approved program of study that leads to a tertiary qualification enabling endorsement as a nurse practitioner
* not already hold a nurse practitioner endorsement.

In addition, eligible applicants must:

1. agree to complete the course and then work in as a nurse practitioner in the Victorian public health sector for a period of two years at a minimum of 0.8 EFT, or pro-rata equivalent, following completion of the postgraduate course.
2. only use the scholarship funds for the purpose of postgraduate study leading to Nurse Practitioner endorsement.

**Course requirements**

Eligible nurse practitioner candidates must be enrolled in a course that:

* is delivered by a university or an accredited higher education provider
* leads to a qualification (Master’s program or other appropriate units/modules at Master level) that enables endorsement as a Nurse Practitioner in Australia on successful completion
* includes clinical nursing practice related to area of study.

## How do I apply?

* Funding for the nurse practitioner program will be provided to health services directly, who will support the nurse practitioner candidate (including providing the scholarship).
* Funding will be made available to health services via an expression of interest process. The department will provide more information about this process directly to health services in September 2022.

## Information for recipients of the nurse practitioner candidate scholarships 2022-23

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 needs to defer or withdraw from their studies, they must notify the employer within one week of the change in study arrangements.

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 grants paid. Recipients should be 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-my-scholarship-taxable/>>.
* they 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 payment.