



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program FACT SHEET FOR NURSES AND MIDWIVES

Background

If you are a registered nurse/midwife (Division 1 in Victoria) or enrolled nurse (Division 2 in Victoria), or a level consistent to these, who has been employed previously in the Australian nursing workforce, but you have not worked as a nurse/midwife in Australia for the previous 12 months, you may be eligible for cash bonuses to encourage you to come back to work in a public or private health facility, a residential aged care home, or community health service.

The Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce (BNBW) program was announced on 15 January 2008 by the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP and the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP. The program commits \$39.4 million over five years to provide places for 7,750 extra nurses and midwives in public and private hospitals and 1,000 nurses in residential aged care homes. This program is part of a larger measure through which the Government will provide \$138.9 million over five years across the Health and Ageing and Education portfolios in support of the recruitment and training of up to a total of 8,750 nurses across public and private hospitals and aged care facilities as well as funding up to an additional 1,170 ongoing university nursing places per year.

On 5 December 2008, the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, announced that following feedback from stakeholders, and in response to ongoing shortages in the community nursing sector, the BNBW program would be expanded to include community health settings, community-based aged care and day surgery hospitals.

Aims and Approach

The aims of the BNBW program are to:

- reduce the nursing shortages in many parts of the Australian health system, both in the public and private sectors, community health settings residential aged care homes and community package aged care services; and
- attract 8,750 of the estimated 30,000 qualified nurses who are outside the Australian nursing workforce back into nursing.

The program will provide a cash bonus of up to \$6,000 to eligible nurses and midwives who return to work in an eligible facility that is participating in the program.

Nurse/midwife eligibility

You may be eligible for the BNBW program if you:

- have previously been employed as a registered nurse/midwife (Division 1 in Victoria) or enrolled nurse (Division 2 in Victoria) in the Australian nursing workforce;

- have not been employed as a registered nurse/midwife (Division 1 in Victoria) or enrolled nurse (Division 2 in Victoria) in Australia within the past 12 months;
- are registered or enrolled with the relevant state or territory regulatory authority or have qualifications that make you eligible for such registration or enrolment;
- return to work as a registered nurse/midwife (Division 1 in Victoria) or enrolled nurse (Division 2 in Victoria) as an employee of a eligible facility that has allocated places under this program;
- returned to work on or after 15 January 2008 or on or after 5 December 2008 for community health settings, community package aged care services and day surgery hospitals;
- returned to full time or part time work in the public, private, community or aged care sector, or casual work in the public or private sector (subject to employment arrangements in the relevant state or territory);
- confirm that the facility that is employing you has an allocated place available under this program;
- are an Australian citizen or have permanent residency status; and
- meet any additional requirements of the relevant state or territory.

You are not eligible for this program if any of these apply to you:

- you returned to work as a registered nurse/midwife or enrolled nurse in Australia before 15 January 2008 or before 5 December for community health settings, community package aged care services and day surgery hospitals;
- you are unable to gain registration or enrolment with the relevant state or territory regulatory authority;
- you have been employed as a registered nurse/midwife or enrolled nurse in Australia within the past 12 months at the time you intend to return to work;
- you are a registered nurse/midwife or enrolled nurse, or have qualifications that make you eligible for registration or enrolment, but have never been employed as a registered nurse/midwife or enrolled nurse in Australia;
- you are under investigation or sanctioned under the relevant state or territory regulatory body;
- you are employed as a registered nurse/midwife or enrolled nurse to provide services to a hospital or residential aged care home by an external body, e.g. nursing agency; and/or
- you are or have been in receipt of a BNBW bonus payments through previous employment. This applies for the duration of the funding.

How will the program work for nurses/midwives in an eligible facility?

- To ensure eligibility for the bonus payment, you should check that the facility where you are returning to work is participating in the program and has an allocated place available under this program.
- You will need to fill in an application form, including a statutory declaration, to apply for a place at the facility where you intend to work.
- You will need to submit this form to your employer for consideration for a place under the program. Failure to submit this completed form and signed statutory declaration to your employer will make you ineligible for the program.
- You can only apply to return to work in one facility under this program, and the hours worked in this place of employment are the only hours that will be attributed to the bonus payments.
- If you choose to change sectors before receiving the bonus payments, you will forego all entitlements under the BNBW program. If you choose to change sectors after payment of the first bonus, you will forego entitlement to the second bonus.
- If you choose to move from one participating employer to another participating employer in the same sector within the 6 month or 18 month period you may be able to transfer your bonus payment entitlement.

- The first bonus payment of \$3,000 (or pro rata equivalent) will be due for payment by the fund holder or eligible facility six months after you commence employment and can only be paid if employment is continuous during this period.
- After 18 months continuous employment you will be entitled to a final bonus payment of \$3,000 (or pro rata equivalent).
- Both of the bonus payments are considered assessable income for personal taxation purposes under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*, and will be taxed accordingly.
- There are a limited number of places available under this program, so if you believe you are eligible you should check now with your employer.

How will the program work for nurses in a residential aged care home and community package aged care services?

- To ensure eligibility for the bonus payment, a nurse should check that the residential aged care home or community package aged care service where he or she is returning to work is an Australian Government funded home or service and is eligible under this program.
- A nurse will need to submit an application through his or her employing organisation.
- A nurse can only apply to return to work in one facility under this program.
- If a nurse chooses to change employers before receiving the bonus payments but remains in an eligible residential aged care home or community package aged care service, he or she will retain the entitlements under the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program.
- The first bonus payment of \$3,000 (or pro rata equivalent) will be due six months after a nurse commences employment and can only be paid if employment is continuous during this period.
- After 18 months continuous employment in residential aged care or community package aged care a nurse will be entitled to a final bonus payment of \$3,000 (or pro rata equivalent).
- Both of the bonus payments are considered assessable income for personal taxation purposes under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*, and will be taxed accordingly.
- There are a limited number of places available under this program, so if you believe you are eligible you should check now with your employer.

How will the program work for nurses in the community?

- To ensure eligibility for the bonus payment, a nurse should check that the community health setting where he or she is returning to work is funded by a BNBW fundholder, is eligible under this program, and has an allocated place available.
- You will need to fill in an application form, including a Statutory Declaration, to apply for a place at the facility where you intend to work.
- You will need to submit this form to your employer for consideration for a place under the program. Failure to submit this completed form and signed Statutory Declaration to your employer will make you ineligible for the program.
- You can only apply to return to work in one facility under this program, and the hours worked in this place of employment are the only hours that will be attributed to the bonus payments.
- If you choose to change sectors before receiving the bonus payments, you will forego all entitlements under the BNBW program. If you choose to change sectors after payment of the first bonus, you will forego entitlement to the second bonus.
- If you choose to move from one participating employer to another participating employer in the same sector within the 6 month or 18 month period you may be able to transfer your bonus payment entitlement.

- The first bonus payment of \$3,000 (or pro rata equivalent) will be due for payment by the fund holder six months after you commence employment and can only be paid if employment is continuous during this period.
- After 18 months continuous employment you will be entitled to a final bonus payment of \$3,000 (or pro rata equivalent).
- Both of the bonus payments are considered assessable income for personal taxation purposes under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*, and will be taxed accordingly.
- There are a limited number of places available under this program, so if you believe you are eligible you should check now with your employer.

How will bonus payments be treated for taxation and income purposes?

The \$6,000 (or pro rata equivalent) is considered assessable income for personal taxation purposes under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*, and will be taxed accordingly.

Further information

Further information on the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program may be accessed from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing web site, www.health.gov.au/backtonursing or by calling toll free on 1300 733 314.

For information specific to aged care homes and non-affiliated private hospitals, please see the Royal College of Nursing, Australia (RCNA) web site, www.rcna.org.au or calling toll free on 1800 553 252.

Application Forms

Application forms are available from your employer.

For nurses working in public and private health facilities including the community sector, forms are available at the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce web site, www.health.gov.au/backtonursing

For aged care home nurses, community package aged care services nurses and other private facilities nurses, forms are available at the Royal College of Nursing, Australia's (RCNA) web site, www.rcna.org.au.