Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie  
Deputy Leader of The Nationals  
Minister for Rural Health  
Minister for Sport  
Minister for Regional Communications  
Senator for Victoria  

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 30 April 2018

Scholarships to improve regional health services

Health professionals in rural and regional Australia wanting to increase their skills are being encouraged to apply for financial support under the Australian Government’s Health Workforce Scholarship Program.

Officially launching the program today, Minister for Rural Health, Bridget McKenzie, said the Government was investing $11 million in the scholarships over three years from 2017-18 to help make health services more accessible for people living in country areas.

“The Health Workforce Scholarship Program provides support based on the needs of communities — whether for GPs, nurses, dentists or allied health professionals,” Minister McKenzie said.

“The program is delivering better outcomes for patients in rural and regional communities across Australia by supporting health practitioners to build up their professional skills.

“Support may be provided to health professionals already working in areas experiencing a shortage of services, or to those willing to move to areas where there is a lack of services.

“Importantly, most of the scholarships in the forthcoming round will include a ‘return of service’ obligation to ensure the recipients practise in rural and regional Australia for at least 12 months on completion of their studies.”

Geraldton resident and Indigenous Community Business Development Officer, Lenny Papertalk, is one health professional who has made the decision to apply for a scholarship.

“I will be applying for a scholarship to pursue a Masters of Social Work at University of Western Australia after having identified a high number of youth suffering from depression and mental illness within the Indigenous communities in Geraldton,” she said.

“I’m very committed to making a difference in rural health, so am hopeful of gaining this scholarship in order to improve health outcomes in my community.”
Tim Shackleton, CEO of Rural Health West in Western Australia, said the scholarship program would ultimately help to expand the range of health services available for people living in rural and remote communities in WA.

“The Health Workforce Scholarship Program will provide grants to postgraduate rural health professionals undertaking further study in the field of medicine, nursing or allied health,” he said.

“One-off bursary and support payments are available to help cover the cost of attending training and these payments can be put towards course fees, conference registrations, and accommodation and transports costs.”

The Health Workforce Scholarship Program is administered by a consortium of Rural Workforce Agencies (RWAs) led by Health Workforce Queensland. RWAs are located in all states and the Northern Territory, and all RWAs are included in the consortium.

The RWAs work closely with Primary Health Networks, local and state governments and other workforce planning groups to determine what skills are needed and where.

Further information about the Health Workforce Scholarship Program, including how to apply for a scholarship can be found on each of the Rural Workforce Agencies websites.

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<th>State</th>
<th>Rural Workforce Agency</th>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>Northern Territory Primary Health Network</td>
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