



Media Statement

17/11/2017 – **EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY 20 NOVEMBER**

Boost for health professionals, rural communities

A new scholarships program launched today will make it easier for rural medical and health professionals to access to education and training.

The Health Workforce Scholarships Program will provide up to \$3,000,000 over three years in scholarships and bursaries to health professionals working across rural Western Australia. The program is a national initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health which will be administered in WA by Rural Health West.

Rural Health West Chief Executive Officer Tim Shackleton said the program will make study and skills development more accessible for rural health professionals which will boost health services for country communities.

"Scholarships and bursaries will be given to support study and training that helps to fill a service gap or which addresses the health needs of specific communities," Tim said.

"For example, we may provide scholarships that will lead to more chronic disease management services in communities with a high prevalence of these illnesses. Alternatively, some communities may have limited access to mental health services, so we may support the upskilling of health professionals to expand their scope of practice to meet this need."

Two broad types of support will be available under the program; scholarships of up to \$10,000 per year for two years will be available to support study towards a post-graduate qualification, and one-off bursaries will be available to fund training courses, conference attendance, travel and accommodation.

"This scholarship program is one of a number of strategies in place to bridge the disparity in health services between country and city areas and we applaud the Australian Government for their commitment to improvements in this vital area," said Tim.

"We are working closely with our partners in rural health including the WA Country Health Service, the WA Primary Health Alliance, Aboriginal Health Council WA and WA General Practice Education and Training and local organisations to identify the key health needs of country WA.

"These health needs will guide our process when assessing requests from health professionals. We expect that the study and training we fund for health professionals in the Kimberley is likely to be very different to what is supported in the South West as the community needs are quite different."

Applications will be accepted during two annual funding rounds. The closing date for the first round of applications is 20 December.

Medical and health professionals interested in applying for a scholarship or bursary can find more information at www.ruralhealthwest.com.au/hwsp

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