

MEDIA RELEASE



An Australian Government Initiative

Investing in nurses to improve rural health services

25 January 2018

Murray PHN is investing more than \$170,000 to support 22 rural nurses in six health services to undertake further study to improve rural and remote health services.

The RIPERN (rural and isolated practice endorsed registered nurses) Scholarships Grants will support acute nursing staff in rural communities to expand their scope of practice and will allow rural health services to build on or establish a RIPERN model of care.

A RIPERN model of care allows health services to complement or supplement their capacity to provide urgent and primary care to those who need it. RIPERN accredited nurses have more advanced skills in assessing patients, and can begin treating them without waiting for a doctor. They can also provide approved medicines from Schedules 2, 3 and 4 such as pain relief and antibiotics.

Murray PHN RIPERN Scholarships Grants have been awarded to:

- **Castlemaine Health** – funding for six students
- **Heathcote Health** – funding for two students
- **Boort District Health** – funding for one student
- **Cobram District Health** – funding for two students
- **Numurkah District Health Service** – funding for seven students
- **Rochester and Elmore District Health Service** – funding for four students

Murray PHN CEO, Matt Jones, said in many rural communities it was not always easy to access a doctor or pharmacy, and sometimes patients needed to travel long distances for treatment and medicines.

“We know many of our rural health services rely heavily on general practitioners to provide services for urgent care. However doctors aren’t always available when a patient arrives,” Mr Jones said.

“In many rural communities, pharmacies are not open on weekends or outside of business hours - or there may not be a pharmacy at all,” he said.

“Nurses who undertake additional training can provide a wider range of primary care and emergency services to ensure people get the right care, in the right place, at the right time,” Mr Jones said.

Students receiving the training must be existing Registered Nurses Division 1. They will enroll in or have enrolled in either the Rural and Isolated Practice (Scheduled Medicines) Registered Nurse course offered by the University of Queensland or the Graduate Certificate of Health (Scheduled Medicines) offered by Queensland Health.

Both courses are online courses of study with clinical practice time. It is anticipated the students will begin their studies during intakes throughout 2018. The funding is made possible through the Australian Government’s After Hours Primary Health Care Program.

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