

South West Healthcare

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scholarship Program

Handbook for applicants and community partners





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Welcome

South West Healthcare (SWH) is proud to offer scholarships dedicated to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who aspire to pursue careers in health. These scholarships reflect our commitment to nurturing future leaders, strengthening culturally safe healthcare services, and ensuring our workforce genuinely represents the communities we serve across Gunditjmarra Country with our Eastern Maar and Gunditj Mirring communities.

This handbook provides an overview of the scholarship options available, what support is offered, and how to apply. Whether you are a secondary student exploring your future pathway or a tertiary student working toward a health profession, we are here to support you to learn, grow and thrive.

1. About the program

The South West Healthcare Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Scholarships Program provides financial, cultural, academic, and professional support for students in secondary school and higher education who intend to build a career in the health sector.

The program forms part of South West Healthcare's broader commitment to:

- Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation across the organisation
- Build culturally safe and supported pathways into health careers
- Strengthen the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce
- Partner with community to support self-determination and long-term economic participation
- Improve culturally responsive models of care

1.1 Purpose

To establish sustainable and culturally appropriate scholarship pathways that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enter, pursue, and successfully complete health-related education, leading to meaningful employment at South West Healthcare.

1.2 Program principles

- Cultural safety and respect
- Equity of access to health education opportunities
- Community partnership and connection
- Long-term workforce development
- Holistic support (academic, cultural, wellbeing, professional)

1.3 Benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

For Students:

- Reduced financial barriers to education
- Increased access to culturally safe professional mentors
- Stronger academic support and confidence
- Clear pathways into rewarding health careers
- Enhanced belonging, connection and wellbeing



The program has three (3) parts:

For Year 10 Students:

Opportunity for Year 10 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students to undertake work experience within our health service, providing hands-on exposure to a wide range of health professions and supporting a clear pathway into future health careers and tertiary study.

For Year 11/12 Students:

One annual scholarship valued at \$2,000 (for Years 11 and 12) to assist with:

- School fees
- Laptop or learning materials
- Textbooks or equipment
- Reducing part-time work pressure
- Assistance in applying for external scholarships
- Support navigating tertiary health study options

For Tertiary Students:

- Financial support of \$5,000 per year of study (paid as a lump sum)
- A clinical mentor in the student's chosen profession
- A cultural mentor employed at SWH
- Tailored academic, cultural and career guidance
- Assistance navigating placements, university expectations, and professional development
- Paid assistant roles aligned with study discipline
- Access to clinical placements at SWH with qualified supervisors
- Guaranteed two-year graduate role at SWH upon completion (Subject to meeting key selection criteria and standard recruitment requirements of SWH)

2. Scholarships for School Students (Years 11–12)

2.1 Program Purpose

To encourage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary school students to explore health careers, build academic confidence, and transition successfully into higher education.

2.2 What Support Includes

Years 11–12

- Assistance in applying for external scholarships
- Support navigating tertiary health study options
- One annual scholarship valued at \$2,000 (for Years 11 and 12) to assist with:
 - School fees
 - Laptop or learning materials
 - Textbooks or equipment
 - Reducing part-time work pressure

2.3 Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

- Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Reside and attend school in South West Region (Gunditj Mirring or Eastern Maar Country)
- Demonstrate a genuine interest in a future health career
- Provide evidence of satisfactory academic progress
- Submit a school support letter confirming commitment and engagement



3. Scholarships For Tertiary Students

3.1 Program Purpose

To support the entry into a clinical profession for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking health-related tertiary study and to strengthen future Aboriginal representation within South West Healthcare's clinical workforce.

3.2 What Support Includes

- Includes, but is not limited to:
- Nursing & Midwifery
- Dentistry & Oral Health Therapy
- Allied Health, including:
 - Physiotherapy
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Podiatry
 - Dietetics
 - Speech Pathology
 - Social Work
 - Psychology
 - Pharmacy
 - Exercise Physiology
 - Health Information Management
 - Biomedical Engineer
 - Health Promotion & more

3.3 What Scholarship Recipients Receive

Financial Support

- Scholarship total of \$20,000, amount provided each year depends on the length of your course (e.g. for a two year degree \$5,000 per year, for a five year degree \$4000 per year)
- Continued funding each year based on academic progress

Professional & Cultural Support

- A clinical mentor in the student's chosen profession
- A cultural mentor employed at SWH
- Tailored academic, cultural and career guidance
- Assistance navigating placements, university expectations, and professional development

Employment Opportunities

- Paid assistant roles aligned with study discipline
- Access to clinical placements at SWH with qualified supervisors
- Opportunity for two-year graduate role at SWH upon completion
 - Subject to meeting key selection criteria and standard recruitment requirements of SWH
 - Graduate roles are designed to provide structured support, supervision, and development to assist recipients in transitioning into clinical practice. Appointment to a graduate position is contingent on satisfactory performance during studies and completion of all required placement, compliance, and onboarding processes.

3.4 Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

- Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Have a primary/permanent residence in South West Victoria Region
- Be enrolled (or applying to enrol) in a relevant undergraduate or postgraduate health qualification
- Demonstrate commitment to working in health within the region, ideally with South West Healthcare



4. Expectations of Scholarship Recipients

South West Healthcare. scholarship recipients are expected to uphold the values, professionalism, and commitment associated with the organisation. Recipients are required to meet the following expectations throughout the duration of their scholarship. Failure to meet these expectations may affect eligibility for continued funding.

School Students

Scholarship recipients enrolled in secondary school are expected to:

- Maintain satisfactory academic progress, including meeting school attendance requirements and achieving results that demonstrate consistent effort and improvement.
- Engage positively in work experience opportunities, health-career exposure activities, or community programs arranged or endorsed by South West Healthcare.
- Demonstrate ongoing interest in a health profession, including participation in relevant school subjects, career events, or learning opportunities that support development in the health sector.
- Participate in mentoring sessions and regular check-ins, responding to communication and actively engaging with support provided by South West Healthcare.
- Uphold respectful behaviour and professionalism, representing both themselves and the organisation positively in school and community settings.
- Notify South West Healthcare of any significant changes, including academic challenges, personal circumstances, or barriers that may impact scholarship requirements.

Tertiary Students

Scholarship recipients enrolled in vocational, or university programs are expected to:

- Maintain satisfactory academic performance, remaining in good standing with their institution and successfully completing enrolled units each study period.
- Actively participate in mentoring, check-ins, supervision meetings, or other support activities as required by the scholarship program.
- Complete required placements or clinical hours within agreed timelines and communicate proactively if difficulties arise.
- Make consistent and measurable progress towards course completion within the standard programme timeframe, unless otherwise approved due to extenuating circumstances.
- Represent South West Healthcare with professionalism, including demonstrating cultural respect, ethical behaviour, and responsibility during all scholarship-related activities and placements.
- Consider future employment opportunities with South West Healthcare, and where appropriate, engage in discussions about graduate pathways and/ or workforce planning.
- Communicate any changes to enrolment, study load, or personal circumstances that may affect scholarship obligations.

5. Application Process

5.1 What you need to submit

School Students (Years 11–12)

- Completed scholarship application form
- A letter of support from your School
- Your academic records

Tertiary Students

- Completed scholarship application form
- Evidence of enrolment (or application) in approved tertiary qualification
- Academic transcript (if applicable)
- One referee who is not a family member
- A letter of reference

5.2 What Support Includes

Scholarship applicants will be assessed against criteria that reflect the values, aims, and workforce priorities of South West Healthcare. The following criteria guide decision-making and ensure a fair, transparent, and merit-based selection process.

School Students

Applicants currently enrolled in secondary school will be assessed on their demonstrated:

- Commitment to a future health career, including expressed interest, subject choices, voluntary activities, or participation in health-related programs.
- Academic engagement and effort, considering overall performance, attendance, willingness to progress and evidence of consistent effort rather than solely academic achievement.
- Level of school support, including endorsements from teachers, career advisors, or school leadership acknowledging the applicant's suitability, readiness, and capacity to benefit from the scholarship.
- Personal motivation and resilience, demonstrated through the application, interviews, or references (optional addition).
- Commitment to positive behaviour and contribution to school or community, where applicable.

Tertiary Students

Applicants enrolled in vocational, undergraduate, or postgraduate health programs will be assessed on their:

- Motivation to contribute to the South West Region health workforce, including long-term career goals, connection to the region, and willingness to return or remain after graduation.
- Commitment to on-time course completion, demonstrated through academic history, study plan, and ability to balance academic workload with personal responsibilities.
- Willingness to undertake placements with SWH, including flexibility to complete required clinical hours in SWH-supported settings and willingness to engage with supervisors and mentors.
- Merit, leadership, community contribution, and future potential, evaluated through academic performance, volunteer work, leadership roles, lived experience, or other relevant achievements.



- Capacity to benefit from the scholarship, including financial need, support requirements, and how the scholarship will support educational success.

5.3 Assessment and Notification

- Applications are reviewed by the SWH Scholarships Panel and Aboriginal Programs.
- Shortlisted applicants may be contacted for an interview with the panel and an Aboriginal Programs team member
- All applicants will be notified of the outcome

6. How to Apply

To apply for either scholarship, please email your expression of interest including the following to aboriginalprograms@swh.net.au;

A cover letter outlining why you are motivated to complete your studies and complete a grad year and further employment at South West healthcare

Are you of

- Aboriginal descent
- Torres Strait Islander descent
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- None of the above

Contact information(name, address, email, mobile)

Course evidence

- Name of Course
- University/Institution
- Course type and duration
- Evidence of application or acceptance into an eligible course
- Academic transcript (if currently studying)

Supporting Information

- Referee Name
- Referee Relationship/Role
- Referee Telephone Number
- Referee Email

If you need support completing your application, SWH can assist with:

- Application completion
- Document preparation
- Career pathway guidance

7. Contact and Support

If you have any questions or need help with your application:

South West Healthcare Centre for Research, Education and Teaching

Email create@swh.net.au

Phone 03 5563 4072

Website <https://southwesthealthcare.com.au/careers-volunteers>

Aboriginal programs team

Email aboriginalprograms@swh.net.au

Phone 03 5563 1549



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