

# Media Release

**The Hon James Merlino MP**

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education

Minister for Mental Health



Thursday, 7 October 2021

## MORE MENTAL HEALTH NURSES TO HELP VICTORIANS IN NEED

The Victorian Government is making sure all Victorians experiencing mental health concerns can get the specialised support they need with a boost to upskill and expand the state's mental health nursing workforce.

Minister for Mental Health James Merlino has announced a \$23.6 million mental health nursing workforce package – supporting Victoria's dedicated mental health nurses by investing in more graduate positions and upskilling nurses with a new postgraduate mental health scholarship program.

The landmark Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recommended that at least 120 more funded graduate nurses each year be placed in public health services in areas of need to deliver their vital care to more Victorians.

The Government is going above and beyond this recommendation – investing \$18.6 million for an extra 150 full-time equivalent graduate mental health nurse positions and 49 nurse educator positions across 18 public health services in 2022, on top of the 115 positions funded last year.

One third of all positions will be in regional Victoria – where increases in staff levels can have a huge impact on the level of care provided. Services include Albury Wodonga Health, Mildura Base Hospital, Ballarat Health Service, Bendigo Health, Latrobe Regional Hospital, Goulburn Valley Health, South West Healthcare and Barwon Health.

Extra nurse educator positions have also been funded for rural and regional services across the Grampians region in Ballarat, Ararat, Horsham and South West Healthcare.

Across the state, the Government is also investing \$5.05 million in the new Victorian Postgraduate Mental Health Nurse Scholarship program – helping develop the highly specialised skills needed in the profession to care for people with more acute mental illness or psychological distress.

This year's scholarships have been awarded to 124 nurses working in mental health settings across metropolitan and regional Victoria. The scholarship pays the full course cost of a Graduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing or contributes to a Master of Mental Health Nursing.

Applications are now open for 140 new scholarships for 2022, administered by the Australian College of Nursing. For more information, visit [acn.edu.au/scholarships](https://acn.edu.au/scholarships).

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* invested \$206 million in the mental health workforce to help deliver effective care, treatment and support in the rebuild of Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system.

### Quotes attributable to the Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

*"The mental health workforce is the beating heart of our system – so we're supporting nurses to continue delivering world-class treatment, care and support to every Victorian who needs it."*

*"These new scholarships will inspire more nurses to further their career in mental health, giving them more financial support in the workforce and helping them be better equipped to care for Victorians."*

**Media contact:** Lana Matafonov 0447 822 692 | [lane.matafonov@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:lane.matafonov@minstaff.vic.gov.au)