

Media Release

The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
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FUNDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS

The Andrews Labor Government is continuing to build a strong and skilled mental health workforce by supporting nearly 400 scholarships and grants for students studying mental health and alcohol and other drug (AOD) courses.

Minister for Mental Health Gabrielle Williams today met some of Victoria's *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Scholarship* recipients – which is part of the Labor Government's \$6 million investment to boost the workforce.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Scholarship program is helping AOD practitioners and allied health professionals, including occupational therapists, social workers and psychologists, develop their mental health skillset to support an integrated and wrap-around mental health system for all Victorians who need help.

Scholarships have been awarded to those studying mental health nursing, (AOD) practitioners, allied health clinicians and lived and living experience workers.

Several grants have been awarded to psychiatric enrolled nurses who are undertaking a clinical placement and 160 postgraduate mental health nurse scholarships – which covers the full cost of the course.

The Government is also boosting the mental health and wellbeing workforce through the Lived and Living Experience Workforce Development program, the Regional and Rural Mental Health Workforce incentive scheme, scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing workers and the Certificate IV in Mental Health Free TAFE program.

The *Victorian Budget 2022/23* included a record \$372 million in workforce initiatives to hire more than 1,500 mental health workers, including 400 mental health nurses and 100 psychiatrists to deliver Victoria's mental health reform agenda.

The Labor Government is investing record funding to ensure the mental health workforce meets the needs of the reformed system, with more than \$600 million invested since the Royal Commission. The *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024* sets out this vision for a skilled, supported and thriving workforce.

Over \$6 billion has been invested in mental health and wellbeing over the past three years – the largest investment in mental health in Victoria's history – with work underway on 90 per cent of the Royal Commission's recommendations.

Applications for the next round of scholarships will open for semester two 2023. For more information, visit: acn.edu.au/scholarships.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Gabrielle Williams

"Building up our workforce is crucial to delivering a reformed system of care – these scholarships are training up the next generation of highly skilled, motivated and supported mental health workers."

"The Royal Commission recommended a skilled and supported workforce for the reformed system – our landmark Workforce Strategy is getting more Victorians into work, while providing the best possible mental health care."

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