Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program
FACT SHEET FOR PUBLIC HOSPITALS

Background

Funding is available for eligible public hospitals to support the employment of registered nurses/midwives (Division 1 in Victoria) and enrolled nurses (Division 2 in Victoria) to return to the public hospital workforce. The funding available will assist public hospitals with the re-training and re-skilling of nurses and midwives who return to work.

This program was announced on 15 January 2008 by the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP and the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP. The program commits $39.4 million over 5 years to provide places for 7,750 extra nurses and midwives in public and private hospitals and 1,000 nurses in residential aged care homes. This program is part of a larger measure through which the Government will provide $138.9 million over five years across the Health and Ageing and Education portfolios in support of the recruitment and training of up to a total of 8,750 nurses across public and private hospitals and aged care as well as funding up to an additional 1,170 ongoing university nursing places per year.

Aims and Approach

The aims of the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program are to:

- reduce the nursing shortages in the public hospital system;
- attract 6,200 of the estimated 30,000 qualified nurses who are outside the Australian nursing workforce back into public hospitals; and

The program will provide cash bonuses of up to $6,000 to eligible nurses/midwives who return to work in a public hospital that is participating in the program. The program will also provide cash bonuses of up to $1,000 to participating public hospitals that employ an eligible nurse/midwife.

Eligibility

A public hospital will be eligible for the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce bonuses if it is a declared public hospital, where it provides hospital treatment that includes part of an overnight stay.

An organisation is not an eligible public hospital under this program if it is:

- an agency that employs nurses to provide nursing services to a hospital or aged care home
- a public hospital which provides only hospital treatment that does not include part of an overnight stay (i.e. day hospital facilities)
- any other organisation that is not a licensed public or private hospital.

How does an eligible public hospital gain a place?

- Each state and territory has a notional allocation of full-time equivalent places.
- A hospital will need to negotiate with its relevant state or territory health department to receive an allocated place under the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program.

How does an eligible hospital employ a registered nurse/midwife or enrolled nurse for a Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce place?

- The hospital is responsible for determining the recruitment and selection of nursing/midwifery staff for the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program.
- The hospital is responsible for gaining information from the registered nurse/midwife or enrolled nurse returning to work to determine if the individual is eligible to be considered for a place under the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program.
- A nurse/midwife must fill in the relevant forms and a statutory declaration for a hospital to register and claim a bonus payment.
- Applications should be based on a nurse/midwife being employed full-time or the pro rata equivalent. A hospital may give priority to a nurse returning to work in a full-time capacity.

What is a hospital entitled to under this program?

- A one-off payment of $1,000 per eligible full-time equivalent nurse/midwife returning to work (or pro rata for part-time nurses/midwives) is to be paid to the employing hospital by the relevant state or territory health departments.

How will this program work for a public hospital?

- The public hospital will undertake recruitment and selection processes.
- The public hospital will inform a nurse/midwife who is eligible under this program if there are places available at the hospital under the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program; the hospital should identify its preference for full-time allocation at this time.
- On employment of an eligible nurse/midwife under Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce, the hospital will provide the nurse/midwife with a form that will include the relevant Statutory Declaration for signature.
- The public hospital will promptly provide the state or territory health department with the details of the recruitment of a nurse/midwife to an allocated place, in accordance with the protocols established by the relevant health department.
- This notification will trigger payment by the state or territory health department of funds to be allocated to the hospital to assist the hospital support a full-time equivalent, or pro rata for part-time individuals, back into the hospital.
- The public hospital will not receive a payment for an eligible nurse/midwife who has moved to the hospital from another public hospital, as this nurse will have received this initial support at the hospital for which he or she commenced work. The public hospital will be required to notify the state or territory health department that this nurse/midwife has transferred entitlements to its hospital.
- The public hospital will provide a report to the state or territory health department with a minimum set of data to monitor the placement of an individual nurse/midwife and the number of full-time equivalent positions that have been employed.
- The public hospital will provide the state or territory health department with details of hours worked after six months and 18 months continuous employment of the individual nurse who has a place allocated under the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program.
What must the hospital provide for the bonus payment?

- A hospital will provide support through targeted programs for a nurse/midwife returning to the workforce. This is in addition to existing state or territory re-training and re-entry programs required for registration and funds received by the relevant state or territory health department or Australian Government for these general purposes.

How does a nurse/ midwife receive a bonus payment under this program?

- Each eligible nurse/midwife who returns to work in a hospital will receive $6,000 (or pro rata equivalent amount) in two instalments; one payment of $3,000 (or pro rata equivalent) after six months continuous employment and another $3,000 (or pro rata equivalent) after 18 months continuous employment.
- A hospital should ensure that there are systems in place through regular payroll processes to identify nurses/midwives that are eligible for such payments.
- A hospital should ensure that there are systems in place to provide to the funding body a minimum data set on a quarterly basis and on payment of bonuses to individual employees.
- The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing will provide this standard information through the funding body for the hospital to use and this should not be varied.

Further information


Public hospitals are encouraged to contact the relevant state or territory health department to discuss their eligibility for nursing places under the Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce program.