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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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**BUILDING AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH WORKFORCE – SCHOLARSHIPS FOR
NURSE PRACTITIONERS**

The Australian Government is investing \$2.1 million to help build the nation's nurse practitioner workforce.

Nurse practitioner scholarships of up to \$15,000 per annum for two years, targeted specifically at nurses in rural and remote areas, will be provided for up to 20 nurses to upgrade their skills to practice as nurse practitioners.

The Rudd Government recognises that Australia's nurse practitioners, many of whom hold Masters degrees, are highly-skilled and qualified health professionals.

They are the great unrecognised successes of Australia's health care system.

The development of this workforce in Australia has been slow - however, there are now approximately 300 registered nurse practitioners working in Australia. The Rudd Government is determined to see those numbers increase.

Nurse practitioners have responsibility for complex decisions about patient care, and work in a diverse range of areas, including emergency departments, community health centres, mental health services and paediatrics.

The scholarships announced today will have a particular emphasis on increasing the availability of nurse practitioners in rural and remote settings and in areas of need such as aged care, mental health, women's and men's health, and drug and alcohol health care.

By increasing the capacity of the nurse practitioner workforce, we increase the benefits that this group of health professionals can bring to the community, and the access of families to the health care they need.

The Rudd Government is working to build a health system that fully recognises and utilises the skills of all of our health professionals. It is important to ensure that nurse practitioners get the support needed to expand their numbers and play more of a role in our health system.

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