

Advocacy Policy Kit

Commonwealth Prac Payments

Updated 6 August 2026

Key Message

No student should be forced to drop out because they can't afford to complete mandatory placements. While we welcome support for teachers, nurses, social workers and allied health students, expanding the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) scheme to include **medicine, dentistry and veterinary students** is an essential step to support students and strengthen regional Australia's critical health and veterinary workforce.

Regional students face significantly higher placement costs, including travel and accommodation.

Background

Practical placements are an essential requirement for professional accreditation and a key part of many university degrees, particularly in teaching, health, medicine and veterinary science. These placements are often full-time, unpaid, and can run for extended periods. At Charles Sturt University many students must travel long distances, relocate temporarily, and cover accommodation and living costs while on placement, often without income.

The Commonwealth Prac Payment scheme was introduced in 2025 to help reduce the financial burden of placements for some students. It provides approx. \$338.60 per week (2026). We are pleased to have CPP support offered to our nursing, midwifery, teaching and social work students and more than 1,700 of our students in these fields have already benefited from these payments.

But more assistance is urgently required, and we'll continue to work with the Government to make the CPP more widely available, more cost effective and better aligned to student needs.

Why it matters

The cost of placements is creating "placement poverty", where students struggle to afford to complete mandatory training. This is especially acute for regional students, who often face higher travel and accommodation costs, fewer local placement options and limited access to part-time work during placements.

As a result:

- Students are delaying or withdrawing from their studies
- Workforce shortages in medicine, dentistry and veterinary are worsening
- Regional communities are missing out on trained professionals

What we need

Charles Sturt University strongly supports expanding the Commonwealth Prac Payment scheme to ensure fair and equitable access for all students undertaking mandatory placements.

We call on the Government to:

- Expand the CPP scheme to include medicine, dentistry
- and veterinary science students
- Provide additional targeted support for regional students who have to travel away for placements

Quick Facts

- 45% of CSU undergraduate students report financial pressures could force them to withdraw before completing their degree (2025 figure)
- Placements are mandatory and unpaid in many health and veterinary courses
- Regional students face significantly higher placement costs, including travel and accommodation
- CSU is a leading provider of graduates in nursing, medicine, allied health and veterinary science, supplying critical regional workforces
- Supporting students through placements directly improves completion rates and workforce supply
- The rural GP shortage is expected to worsen without intervention. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners estimates that if demand continues to grow, the shortfall could exceed 4,000 rural GPs by 2040.
- Rural dentistry faces a similar challenge. The 2023 Senate inquiry into dental services found there are around 4.5 times fewer dentists in small rural towns than in metropolitan areas, creating significant access gaps for millions of Australians.
- The veterinary workforce shortage is arguably more acute than the GP and dental shortages in regional Australia because there is no equivalent public health system that can redistribute staff. Rural veterinary practices are largely private businesses, and many report they simply cannot recruit enough veterinarians to meet demand. Regional vets are critical to Australia's food security and biosecurity.