

Victorian Government Postgraduate Cancer Research Scholarships: Supportive Care in Cancer

Guidelines for Applicants

Purpose of the scholarship

The Victorian Government is offering a number of postgraduate cancer research scholarships in 2007, aimed at supporting applicants interested in pursuing full-time PhD or Masters projects in supportive care in cancer.

These scholarships form part of the Government's commitment to cancer research and will be under the direction of the Victorian Cancer Agency once it is established in early 2007. The Victorian Cancer Agency will be an independent organisation with responsibility for building cancer research capacity and capability across Victoria, with particular focus on comprehensive translational research programs in priority tumour streams. One of the main functions of the Victorian Cancer Agency will be to align and support clinical, academic and research organisations involved in cancer research.

Definition of supportive care in cancer

Supportive care is an umbrella term for all services, both generalist and specialist, that may be required to support people with cancer and their carers. It includes:

- self-help and support
- user involvement
- information giving
- psychological support
- pain and symptom control
- social support
- rehabilitation
- complementary therapies
- spiritual support
- palliative care and
- end of life and bereavement care¹.

Student eligibility

Submissions will be considered from both local and overseas applicants interested in pursuing a full-time PhD or Masters at a university, health service or research institute located in Victoria.

1. *National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE). Guidance on Cancer Services: Improving Supportive and Palliative Care for Adults with Cancer. NICE: London, 2004. <http://www.nice.org.uk/pdf/csgspmanual.pdf>*

Scholarship entitlements

A limited number of scholarships will be offered for PhD or Masters projects carried out in 2007.

The scholarships will be in line with NHMRC allowance rates (see Appendix 1). Payments will be made in advance to the host institution, which will make payments to the candidate according to its internal arrangements. An additional \$5,000 will be provided for the purchase of consumables and research costs related to the project and for conference travel costs.

Each award will be for the duration of the project (For PhD projects up to a maximum of 3 years and 2 years for Masters projects). Applications will also be considered from candidates who have already commenced their PhD or Masters.

The scholarship will be payable subject to individual assessment of study load and remaining course duration.

Renewal in each year will depend on satisfactory progress as evidenced by an annual progress report approved by the candidate's supervisor and head of relevant university department.

Scholarship payments will not be released until the scholarship holder is accepted into the PhD or Masters project as detailed in their application and confirmation from the university can be provided.

Selection criteria

Scholarships will be awarded to eligible applicants based on the following criteria:

1. *Quality of the applicant's academic record and any previous research training*
2. *Referee reports including:*
 - referee report on the candidate from their supervisor
 - endorsement of the project by the head of the university department through which the candidate is enrolled
 - independent reference and review of the research proposal (including clear ratings from 1 to 10 on the selection criteria).
3. *Research objectives and relevance of the proposed project to supportive care in cancer (limit to 2 pages maximum)*
 - Clear research objectives
 - Demonstration that the project addresses significant gaps in supportive care in cancer research
 - The capacity of the proposed research to generate new knowledge that will make a significant contribution to a specific issue in supportive care in cancer
 - The potential for implementation of the research findings into practice. If this is not possible, indicate how this project may be used to inform future research that may lead to changes in practice.
4. *Quality and feasibility of the proposed research methodology*
 - High quality research
 - Appropriateness of the chosen methodology to the research question posed
 - Feasibility of the proposed research methodology
 - Appropriateness of timelines and outcome measures.

Application review process

The Victorian Government Research Secretariat will review applications for adherence to these guidelines and for application completeness.

A selection panel will assess applications for funding based on:

- scoring and ranking the submitted application based on the selection criteria
- consideration of the independent assessors report
- demonstration that the research institution where the work is to be undertaken has sufficient resources (both infrastructure and sufficient mentoring) to support the applicant.

Applications that the selection panel considers ineligible will not proceed further. The lodging of an application does not confer any entitlement for the applicant. The making of a recommendation is totally within the discretion of the selection panel.

The Victorian Government may seek additional external reviewers to provide advice on the application if required.

Based on the information provided in the application form, eligible applicants may be invited to discuss their application with the selection panel.

The Victorian Government requires its selection panel members to act in an ethical manner, declare any conflicts of interest and to withdraw from considering applications where such conflict exists.

Scholarship Recipient Obligations

Postgraduate Cancer Research Scholarship holders will be required to:

- Perform to a satisfactory academic standard and provide proof of satisfactory progress by way of an annual progress report to the Victorian Government. The annual progress report should be approved by the recipient's main supervisor and by the head of department where the research is being carried out.
- Provide proof of enrolment at the commencement of each year.
- Provide the Victorian Government Research Secretariat with details of any change to workload or contact details (address or phone numbers), in writing, within seven days.
- Sign a formal agreement confirming acceptance of the terms and conditions for the duration of the scholarship.

Recognition of support

The recipient should acknowledge the support of the Victorian Government in all publications and any media announcements pertaining to the research. The scholarship will be known under the name of "The Victorian Government Postgraduate Cancer Research Scholarship".

Approvals Required

If offered a scholarship, you will need to submit copies of relevant committee approvals for example Human Research Ethics Committee, Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee or Biosafety Committee. The scholarship funding will not commence until all approvals have been provided or if not available, the details of the expected time when these approvals will be obtained should be supplied.

Paid Employment

The nature of the Postgraduate Cancer Research Scholarship is full-time. Scholarship holders are permitted to undertake a strictly limited amount of paid employment throughout the year (in line with the paid work restrictions for PhD/Masters scholarship holders by the university at which they are enrolled). Paid employment must not impede the scholarship holder's study program.

Additional Scholarship Assistance

The scholarship holder can receive funding from other sources by way of top-ups (subject to guidelines of the administering institution). However, scholarship holders are not permitted to receive a full scholarship in addition to the Victorian Government Postgraduate Cancer Research Scholarship.

Taxation

At present, provided various conditions are met, these scholarships are exempt from income tax. At the commencement of this program, the Australian Taxation Office advised that the scholarships that the Victorian Government awards to eligible full-time students are income tax exempt pursuant to section 51-10, item 2.1A, of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997. It is the responsibility of scholarship holders to advise the Australian Taxation Office of their full income details including the Victorian Government Postgraduate Scholarship. Further information regarding tax exemption of the scholarship can be obtained from the Australian Taxation Office (Phone: 132 866).

Application Form

The application form and supporting documentation must be received by the Victorian Government no later than Monday the 26 February 2007.

For further information about the Postgraduate Cancer Research Scholarships please contact:

The Victorian Government Cancer Research Secretariat
Cancer and Palliative Care
Programs Branch, Level 19
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne, 3001.

Phone: (03) 9096 0024

Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted

Appendix 1

Victorian Government Postgraduate Cancer Research Scholarship and Allowance Rates for 2007

Stipends	Basic Rate	Including Allowances
Standard rate for biomedical and public health scholarships (non MBBS)	\$19,231	\$24,231
Medical and public health scholarships (with MBBS)	\$28,600	\$33,600

The scholarship will increase by 2% annually to reflect increases in the cost of living.

Allowances

All scholars will receive up to \$5000 per annum to be used for the purchase of consumables and research costs related to the project, and for conference travel costs.

In addition, the candidate will also receive reimbursement of their university amenities and services fees.

An allowance for costs associated with printing of theses is also payable to a maximum of \$860 for PhD theses and \$430 for Masters theses.