

Unions welcome cost-of-living relief for nursing, teaching and social work students

The ACTU welcomes today's announcement by the Albanese government to introduce a Commonwealth Prac Payment to provide financial support for nursing, teaching, midwifery, and social work students undertaking mandatory workplace placements necessary for university and vocational education and training qualifications.

Australians studying to be teachers, nurses, midwives, and social workers face significant financial challenges during their clinical and professional placement periods, contributing to long-term workforce shortages in these critical fields. The Commonwealth Prac Payment, offering \$319.50 per week, will ease cost-of-living pressures for around 68,000 eligible higher education students and over 5,000 VET students each year.

This payment, benchmarked to the single Austudy per week rate, will be means-tested and available from 1 July 2025 and will be in addition to any income support students also receive.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien:

"Unions welcome the government reducing cost-of-living pressures for nursing, teaching, and social work students. For too long, students pursuing careers in critical fields have struggled to make ends meet during their placement periods. The Commonwealth Prac Payment will ensure that Australians aren't held back from completing their studies because of financial insecurity.

"The high costs associated with mandatory placements have been a barrier to many students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. With the majority of students and workers in these vital sectors being women, this payment aligns with the Albanese government's gender equality strategy and creates a pipeline of future workers to address skills in critical areas.

"The Commonwealth Prac Payment is a vital step towards ensuring that students have equal access to educational opportunities, regardless of their financial backgrounds."

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