**Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program Frequently Asked Questions.**

**Scholarship eligibility and application process:**

1. **Noting this is a 6 year scholarship – do students have to take up the scholarship for the full 6 years? Are students eligible if they are partway through high school?**

* Scholarships are for up to 6 years and there is no requirement to take up the scholarship for the full 6 years.
* Students who are already partway through secondary school can apply for a scholarship for the remainder of their secondary schooling.
* Students who are already boarding at a school or a facility can apply for a scholarship – there is no requirement to be new to boarding.

1. **Will multiple children from the same family be eligible to receive a scholarship? Is there a limit?**

* There is no limit on the number of children eligible per family.

1. **Are families eligible for this scholarship if they receive other Australian Government payments?**

* The Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program does not exclude recipients of other scholarships or payments.
* The program intends to provide a contribution to boarding fees and, in many cases, will supplement existing support received by scholarship recipients (such as through other Australian Government or state and territory programs.)

1. **What supporting documents should I provide to support my scholarship application?**

You will need to provide the following supporting documents to support your scholarship application.

You can upload these documents as part of your application form via BUSY At Work’s web portal. Please contact us if you have any questions or need assistance.

* Evidence that the student will be commencing or undertaking secondary school education in Australia at the time of the scholarship commencement
* Proof of offer or enrolment in an eligible boarding school or facility
* Proof of permanent home address in a regional, rural or remote area
* Evidence that the student is an Australian citizen, permanent resident, holder of a permanent visa or a New Zealand citizen living in Australia
* Evidence of financial need (see question 6 below)
* (Optional – if relevant): Evidence of eligibility for one or more of the following equity considerations:
  + Families with two or more dependent children
  + Families affected by Australian disaster events or adverse environmental events such as recent drought, flood or bushfire
  + Students from remote and very remote areas
* Evidence that the scholarship will support the student’s aspirations, such as:
  + a statement prepared by the Scholarship Applicant (student) outlining how the scholarship will help them with their aspirations, and/or
  + a reference from a community organisation demonstrating how the scholarship would support the student’s education goals and aspirations, extracurricular activities and/or special interests.
* Evidence to demonstrate the Scholarship Applicant (student)’s potential, effort, motivation and/or improvement in their schooling, such as:
  + A statement prepared by the Scholarship Applicant (student) demonstrating a positive attitude to learning and a personal commitment to complete secondary schooling
  + School report cards and/or attendance records
  + Current school or teacher reference
  + Statement or reference from a distance education provider.
* A statement to demonstrate the Scholarship Applicant (parent/guardian)’s ability to support the student’s wellbeing while they are boarding
* Privacy and consent notice (please download this from the application form)

1. **What supporting documents do I need to provide to demonstrate financial need for a Tier 1 scholarship?**

**Tier 1 scholarship to support for low-income families - $20,000 per year for up to 6 years.**

Applicants applying for a Tier 1 Scholarship must provide evidence to show that they are either:

* receive an eligible Centrelink benefit or concession card at the time of application; or
* expect to receive an eligible Centrelink benefit or concession card after the scholarship application period has closed.

**Tier 1 - Financial need category evidence required:**

Scholarship Applicants can provide a copy of a Centrelink letter or current Income Statement showing the Scholarship Applicant (student or parent/guardian) receives any one of the following benefits or concession cards:

* Assistance for Isolated Children – Additional Boarding Allowance received for the Scholarship Applicant (student) or another child in the same family
* ABSTUDY Living Allowance received for the Scholarship Applicant (student) or another child in the same family
* Age Pension
* Austudy
* Carer Payment
* Department of Veterans’ Affairs income support payments
* Disability Support Pension
* Low Income Healthcare Card
* Jobseeker Payment
* Parenting Payment (Single or Partnered)
* Special Benefit
* Youth Allowance
* Farm Household Allowance
* Family Tax Benefit Part A **(Please provide reconciliation outcome notice for the 2022-23 financial year)**
* Pensioner Education Supplement.

**Note:** Parents/guardians using Low Income Healthcare Card as evidence must provide a copy of their card (both sides) showing their full details and card expiry date.

If the parent/guardian is providing a Centrelink letter, it must have been issued no more than three months prior to the date of document submission for the scholarship application.

**If the Scholarship Applicant (student or parent/guardian) expects to receive one of these benefits but hasn’t yet received confirmation, they can provide the following information instead:**

* Scholarship Applicants (student or parent/guardian) can indicate on their scholarship application form the Centrelink benefit or concession card they will apply for (the benefit or concession card must be on the above list).
* These Scholarship Applicants can provide proof that they receive a Centrelink benefit or concession card on the above list after the scholarship application period has closed.
* If these Scholarship Applicants are awarded a scholarship, BUSY At Work will issue a conditional scholarship offer. To confirm their scholarship place, Scholarship Applicants with a conditional offer must provide appropriate evidence that the student or parent/guardian receives an eligible benefit.

1. **What supporting documents do I need to provide to demonstrate financial need for a Tier 2 scholarship?**

**Tier 2 scholarship to support for low-to-middle income families experiencing financial hardship - $10,000 per year for up to 6 years.**

Tier 2 scholarship applicants must provide evidence to show that they meet the below eligibility:

* Have a combined household income at or under the combined parental income limit of $250,000 by providing:
  + A notice of assessment from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for the 2022-23 tax year, demonstrating income of parents/guardians that the Scholarship Applicant (student) lives with, including stepparents.
    - If parents are separated, the income of the parent that the Scholarship Applicant (student) spends the most time living with will be assessed.
    - If the Scholarship Applicant (student) spends equal time living with each parent, the income of the parent that submits the parental scholarship application form will be assessed.

**Applicants applying for a Tier 2 scholarship must also provide evidence to show that they satisfy one or more of the below financial hardship categories:**

* Two or more dependent children;
* Families affected by Australian disaster events, such as recent drought, flood, and bushfire;
* Financial hardship statement (outlining impact of financial hardship, including why this impacts the family’s ability to meet the costs of boarding).

1. **How will I be notified regarding the outcome of my application?**

Upon completion and submission of an application, applicants will receive an email confirmation with a unique identification number, details of how their application will be assessed, an estimated timeline for the decision, and the contact information of the relevant BUSY At Work staff member. Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback on their application from BUSY At Work.

**Scholarship recipients:**

1. **What conditions must be met to keep the scholarship?**

BUSY At Work will monitor progress of each student and liaise regularly with Boarding schools to ensure any changes are communicated in a timely manner.

**Scholarship Recipients to meet certain requirements to continue to receive the scholarship, such as:**

* Making adequate progress at school.
* remaining enrolled in school and continuing to board.
* satisfactory completion of required coursework.
* satisfactory attendance record and behaviour at school

**Note:** BUSY At Work may take the Scholarship Recipient’s individual circumstances into account when considering action in response to instances of underperformance. If a Scholarship Recipient is not making adequate progress at school, BUSY At Work will in the first instance work with the student, school, and family to connect the Scholarship Recipient to appropriate supports.

1. **How will scholarship funds be paid?**

Scholarship funding is paid directly to Boarding schools each semester (i.e., 4 equal instalments per year).

If the scholarship funding is less than the total fees each semester, the parent/guardian will be required to pay the balance directly to the school.

If there is remaining scholarship funding after settling boarding school fees, tuition fees and other relevant school-related fees (such as camps, excursions, technology levies etc) BUSY At Work will work with families to ensure that any remaining funding can be spent on education-related costs (such as home travel or a laptop).

1. **Will receiving the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship affect other payments?**

* Services Australia would be best placed to advise whether the scholarship will impact on families’ eligibility for Australian Government income support payments.

1. **Can a student change schools partway through the scholarship?**

* Yes, students can change schools partway through the scholarship as long as they remain enrolled in an eligible boarding school or facility. (For example, students may move from a metropolitan boarding school to an agricultural boarding school)

1. **What happens if student requires a leave of absence from school (for example, due to health or mental health reasons)?**

Families of scholarship recipients should keep BUSY At Work up to date with details such as leaves of absence. Depending on the circumstances, scholarship recipients can continue to receive a scholarship if they remain enrolled in an eligible boarding school or facility and plan to return.

An important note is that scholarship payments cannot be deferred/‘carried over’ to future school years and must be spent in the relevant year.

1. **If a student is withdrawn from the program, what is the process?**

If a scholar is withdrawn from the program partway through the year, BUSY At Work may recover funds where practical (for example, boarding and tuition fees covering a period where a student is no longer enrolled at school).

1. **What if there are changes to family estimated income? i.e., changed from low-income to low-middle income?**

A key part of the program is to ensure schooling continuity for scholarship recipients and to provide certainty for families to plan education costs and other expenses.

**Financial need assessment will only take place at two intervals:**

* the first assessment is as part of the initial scholarship application process.
* the second assessment takes place after a scholarship recipient has received a scholarship for three years. This reassessment will focus on major changes to family financial circumstances. We will let families know more about this process closer to the time.

1. **Can families apply for a change to scholarship funding if financial circumstances change?**

* Currently this is not possible due to the fixed number of scholarship available (30 x Tier 1 and 40 x Tier 2). If this changes, we will let families know.

1. **If a student relocates from a previously determined eligible remoteness category to a “major city” will the student be withdrawn from the program?**

To continue to be eligible for a scholarship, students should maintain a permanent home address in a regional, rural or remote location.

Students attending boarding schools or facilities in metropolitan areas are eligible for this program, provided that their permanent family home is in a regional, rural or remote location.