

Practice Nurse Incentive Program Funding

Healthy Practices

APNA has produced a suite of resources to help general practices employ nurses and optimise their role in the general practice setting. Fulfilling these aims will help build Healthy Practices that deliver positive outcomes for their communities through nursing skills and expertise.

Applying for and maintaining PNIP funding

The Australian Government Department of Human Services provides general practices with financial incentives, through the Practice Nurse Incentive Program (PNIP), to help offset the costs of employing nurses, allied health professionals and Aboriginal health workers. The funding can support enhanced roles for nurses in general practice.

This resource provides basic information about the PNIP and funding for nursing roles in general practice¹.

Up to \$125,000 is available each year, paid in quarterly instalments to practices. If eligible, the amount of funding each practice will receive depends on the size and location of the practice and the number of hours nurses or allied health professionals have worked within the practice.

Eligibility for the PNIP

To be eligible for PNIP payments to help fund nurses, a general practice must:

- Be accredited against the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' Standards for general practices; or, must be registered for accreditation and achieve accreditation within 12 months of joining the PNIP (see **Resource 16 Achieving and Maintaining RACGP Accreditation**).
- Maintain current public liability insurance.
- Make sure nurses are covered by appropriate professional indemnity insurance as required by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA)².
- Make sure all practice GPs have and maintain professional indemnity insurance.
- Employ or otherwise retain the services of one or more nurses (registered nurse and/or enrolled nurse), and employ or otherwise retain the services of a GP.

- Make sure nurses are registered with the NMBA as part of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme and meet minimum specified qualifications and training appropriate to their work. (Professional nursing standards require an enrolled nurse to be supervised by a registered nurse. Supervision may be direct or indirect, but appropriate supervisory arrangements must be in place.)
- Apply for the PNIP, either online or using the hard copy application form (see How to Apply for the PNIP section on this resource).

Amount of PNIP funding for your practice

If you are eligible for PNIP funding and apply, the Department of Human Services calculates how much money your practice can receive to help employ nurses or allied health professionals. The easiest way to estimate potential PNIP funding is to use the PNIP Ready Reckoner, available at: www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider/incentives/pnip/calculator.jsp

To make the calculation through the Ready Reckoner, you will need to know:

- Your practice Standardised Whole Patient Equivalent (SWPE), which is the Government's calculation of your practice's size and workload.
 - If your practice is new, your SWPE value will be 1,000.
 - If your practice is not new, your SWPE may be higher or lower than 1,000. If you have a Practice Incentives Program (PIP) statement, it will show your SWPE. If you don't have a PIP statement, your SWPE will be approximately 1,000 x the number of full-time general practitioners that worked in your practice over the last 18 months³. Note, though, that your SWPE could be lower than this estimation.

Practice Nurse Incentive Program Funding

- Whether your practice is an Aboriginal Medical Service or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service.
- Whether your practice is in an urban area of workforce shortage. You can find out if your practice is in an urban area of workforce shortage online at www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/locator – select the ‘Metropolitan Areas layer’, then enter your practice’s address on the right hand side. If your practice is in a green area, you are in an urban area of workforce shortage.
- Your practice remoteness. You can find out your practice remoteness online at www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/locator – select the ‘ASGC Remoteness Areas layer’, then enter your practice’s address.
- The total number of nursing hours worked for your practice each week.

Once you have entered this information into the PNIP Ready Reckoner, select ‘Calculate’ and it will show potential PNIP payment entitlements for your practice.

PNIP Direct financial benefit*

Practice SWPE	Nurse hours required	RN	EN
1000	12 hr 40 min	\$25,000	\$12,500
2000	25 hr 20 min	\$50,000	\$25,000
3000	38 hr	\$75,000	\$37,500
4000	50 hr 40 min	\$100,000	\$50,000
5000	63 hr 20 min	\$125,000	\$62,500

* Current February 2015.

How to apply for the PNIP

You can apply for the PNIP through PNIP Online or by using a PNIP application form:

- To apply for PNIP online, practice owners and/or authorised contact persons must have a Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) individual certificate to access the system. You can apply for a PKI individual certificate at www.humanservices.gov.au/health-professionals/services/public-key-infrastructure/#a5. If practice owners, or authorised contact persons, already have a PKI certificate and require assistance with installation, access, or other technical difficulties they can contact the eBusiness Service Centre on 1800 700 199.
- To apply through a PNIP application form, go online to www.humanservices.gov.au/healthprofessionals then select Forms.

When filling out the PNIP application form, you will need to supply the following information:

- A certificate of accreditation or registration for accreditation, or other documentation, from an accreditation body.
- Proof your practice employs or otherwise retains the services of a practice nurse, Aboriginal Health Worker or allied health professional, such as a statement on practice letterhead signed by an authorised practice representative.
- Proof your practice employs or otherwise retains the services of a GP, confirmed in the Individual General Practitioner details and declaration section of the PNIP application form.
- If your practice employs an enrolled nurse, proof you employ or otherwise retain the services of a registered nurse to supervise the enrolled nurse, such as a statement on practice letterhead signed by an authorised practice representative. The hours worked by the supervising registered nurse should also be noted on the PNIP application form.

Maintaining your quarterly PNIP payments

If you are successful in attracting PNIP payments to your practice, you will receive a quarterly payment. Before you receive a payment the Department of Human Services will send you a quarterly confirmation statement (QCS) to confirm your practice’s details and your ongoing eligibility for the PNIP. You will need to reply to the QCS before the point-in-time date listed below. It is important to remember the Government can audit your practice at any time to ensure your practice is still eligible to receive PNIP payments.

PNIP payments are calculated and paid quarterly on a retrospective basis, as follows:

Quarterly payment month	Point-in-time assessment of eligibility	Reference period
February each year	31 January	1 November to 31 January
May each year	30 April	1 February to 30 April
August each year	31 July	1 May to 31 July
November each year	31 October	1 August to 31 October

Practice Nurse Incentive Program Funding

It is important you notify the Department of Human Services of any relevant changes in practice arrangements that may affect your eligibility for the PNIP. Practices have 14 calendar days to advise of changes, and need to make sure this information is provided by the point-in-time date.

Relevant changes include:

- Changes in accreditation such as the practice becoming fully accredited or accreditation lapsing
- Renewals or lapses in public liability cover or professional indemnity cover for both GPs and nurses
- Changes to the bank account for PNIP payments
- Changes to the authorised contact person(s)
- Changes to the practice location, ownership, or structure
- Changes in the hours worked by nurses
- Changes in provider numbers for any GPs at the practice
- GPs leaving or joining the practice.

Quarterly payments to practices may be withheld by the Department of Human Services for a number of reasons, including:

- The practice no longer employs a GP
- The practice no longer employs a nurse
- An enrolled nurse is not supervised by a registered nurse
- There has been a change of practice ownership
- Non-compliance with PNIP Guidelines
- Expiry of accreditation
- The practice or general practitioners do not have the required insurances.

If practices do not confirm details in the QCS, PNIP payments will be withheld. The Department of Human Services will let practices know why payments have been withheld and what information needs to be provided in order for payments to be released. Once the information is provided and the practice is assessed as eligible for payments, the Department will release the payment(s).

Where a practice is not meeting the PNIP eligibility requirements and payments are withheld by the Department for three consecutive points-in-time, the practice's entitlement will be stopped under the PNIP. In addition, practices that have quarterly payment calculated to be \$0 at three consecutive points-in-time will have their entitlement stopped under the PNIP. If this occurs, the practice will need to reapply for PNIP payments.

More information

For more information, go to www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/pnip or call the Australian Government Department of Human Services on 1800 222 032.

References

¹ The PNIP also supports practices to employ Aboriginal Health Workers if they wish; and practices in urban areas of workforce shortage to employ allied health professionals. For more information, see the PNIP Guidelines at: www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider/incentives/pnip.jsp

² NMBA: www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx#nurses

³ For more information, see <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/forms/4512.pdf>

www.apna.asn.au www.healthypractices.apna.asn.au

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