



# CONFERENCES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

## GUIDELINES FOR RURAL HEALTH CLUB MEMBERS

### **CoNS Program Overview**

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The National Rural Health Students' Network (NRHSN) program receives a limited pool of funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA), via the Rural Health Workforce Australia (RHWA), to allow its student members to attend Conferences of National Significance (CoNS).

Approved conferences place an emphasis on rural, remote and indigenous health issues with a national rather than statewide outlook. They can be either discipline-specific or have a general health focus.

Students granted CoNS funding considered representatives of the NRHSN, RHWA, and their Rural Health Clubs. They are required to conduct themselves in a positive, proactive and professional manner, utilizing networking opportunities, experiences and knowledge that will assist them in making career choices, which they may not have been able to afford as a student. Students are required to write a CoNS Report outlining the benefits of attending the conference.

The NRHSN will distribute the limited pool of funding to ensure equitable distribution between health disciplines and Rural Health Clubs endeavouring to maximize the number of students attending significant conferences. The total number of students funded to attend each conference is at the discretion of the RHWA / NRHSN E.g. Popular conferences, budget constraints.

### **CoNS Funding – what it includes**

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Ultimately this is at the discretion of the NRHSN, however it will usually include a combination of the conference registration, travel and budget accommodation.

Retrospective applications will not be considered. Students may not apply for funding for conference costs paid prior to the application and approval process.

Funding will be provided for approved conferences as listed on the CoNS Calendar [www.nrhsn.org.au/cons](http://www.nrhsn.org.au/cons) but each application is subjected to an approval / review process.

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1. Read the following guidelines to ensure understanding of criteria.
2. Select preferred conference, transport and accommodation options.
3. Obtain Letter of Support from your Rural Health Club executive.
4. At least 6 weeks prior to conference, submit completed online application [www.nrhsn.org.au/cons](http://www.nrhsn.org.au/cons), along with supporting conference registration information and Letter of Support from your Rural Health Club to [jane@nrhsn.org.au](mailto:jane@nrhsn.org.au) or fax 9820 8383
5. NRHSN will confirm receipt within 7 days. Please email [jane@nrhsn.org.au](mailto:jane@nrhsn.org.au) if not received, as occasionally the online submissions do not succeed.
6. Students and their RHC executive will receive notification via email (and phone call if time is constrained) to advise them of the decision.
7. Successful applicants will be sent their original application to be returned within 48 hours with confirmation of flight times, changes etc.
8. The NRHSN will book and pay for all approved accommodation, registration and travel costs and forward relevant booking information to the applicants.

**Hints for a Successful Application**

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- If you require clarification on an aspect of the Guidelines or the proforma, please do not hesitate to contact Jane. ([jane@nrhsn.org.au](mailto:jane@nrhsn.org.au)) or Phone 03 9860 4700.
- Applicants increase their likelihood of receiving funding if they demonstrate any of the following aspects in their application.
  - Presenting a paper at the conference on behalf of the NRHSN, their Rural Health Club or their chosen field of interest.
  - Consideration of CoNS program budget limitations, seeking alternative funding and reduced conference fees. The NRHSN encourages members to approach the conference conveners regarding the possibility of part or full sponsorship for conference attendance (e.g. to reduce or waive registration fees in return for assistance at the conference).
  - Alternative funding can be sought from their Rural Health Club, their university's student union or external sources to assist in subsidising the total cost of conference attendance.
  - Please contact the NRHSN if you would like assistance with a template letter for requesting registration discounts or waivers and sponsorship to attend conferences.

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- The NRHSN will book and pay for students conference expenses unless agreed otherwise.
  - It is the student's responsibility to research and provide adequate details of conference registration, appropriate accommodation and mode of transport (via their online CoNS application from [www.nrhsn.org.au](http://www.nrhsn.org.au)) to assist with accurate bookings.
  - NRHSN members are limited to funding for one conference per year. Portfolio holders may apply more frequently
  - Funding will be provided for approved conferences as listed on the CoNS Calendar ([www.nrhsn.org.au/cons](http://www.nrhsn.org.au/cons)).
  - Students wishing to apply for a conference omitted from the CoNS Calendar must provide adequate supporting information when submitting their online CoNS application form.
  - Recipients of CoNS funding are required to provide a CoNS Report within **four weeks** of attending the conference.

**Expense Categories**

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**1. Registration**

- The NRHSN will cover the registration fees (including the conference dinner if requested to facilitate networking).
- Send us a completed Conference Registration form, with your preferred plenary sessions, workshops and special requirements e.g. dietary requirements, to assist us in meeting your needs.

**2. Accommodation**

- CoNS funding will cover accommodation close to the conference venue to the amount of \$70 per night.
- The applicant must cover the extra costs above \$70 per night. Please state that you agree to this on your application form.
- Please supply accommodation contact / website information on the application form.
- It is recognised that due to travel constraints some students may need to arrive the day before the conference and as a result accommodation for this night will be granted.
- Students are encouraged to consider backpackers and Youth Hostels. We have a membership to YHA Australia.
- In the event that students are incorporating other events into their conference itinerary E.g. study, clinical placements or personal matters additional accommodation costs will not be funded.

Expense categories cont'd....

### 3. Travel

- Flights, train and bus tickets are covered under CoNS funding.
- Please research best value flights available before filling in form. We advise you to look at the comparative Virgin Blue flights even if Qantas or other airline's are marginally cheaper because they provide much more flexibility to change or cancel flights.
- Please make sure you fill in all fields, otherwise flights may be booked on the wrong date or time or destination. We advise you to read the airlines cancellation policy.
- If you have more than one return flight that needs to be booked then please fill these out on a separate Travel Proforma.
- In the event that students are incorporating other events into their conference itinerary e.g. study clinical placements or personal matters additional travel costs incurred may not be funded – this will be at the discretion of the NRHSN.

### 4. Additional Expenses

- Students seeking reimbursement for additional expenses must have prior approval from the NRHSN.
- Reimbursement will be paid upon receipt of the relevant Financial Report (see APPENDIX B below). No retrospective reimbursement will be granted.
- Meals, apart from the Conference Dinner are not covered by CoNS funding.

## **Student Responsibilities**

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### 1. Pre-conference

- Provide a completed application at least six weeks prior to conference.
- Successful applicants are required to check the details of the original application form to confirm the details within 48 hours. If changes are required they must be submitted on a new Online Application form ensuring the changes fall within the overall funding allocation, as these additional costs may not be covered by the NRHSN.
- Once the registration, accommodation and travel bookings have been made by the NRHSN, any subsequent changes and the associated costs related to these bookings, become the responsibility of the individual student. (See the Cancellation Policy in Appendix C below.)
- All students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the NRHSN objectives and activities by visiting the website. [www.nrhsn.org.au](http://www.nrhsn.org.au)

### Pre-conference Responsibilities cont'd...

- **Students presenting a paper** on behalf of the NRHSN should consult the NRHSN website to view the following to ensure understanding of the Network.
  - Policies and Procedures <http://www.nrhsn.org.au/policies>
  - NRHSN presentations <http://www.nrhsn.org.au/presentations>
- A copy of the abstract and the full paper must be sent to the NRHSN Executive [exec@nrhsn.org.au](mailto:exec@nrhsn.org.au) at least two weeks prior to the conference for feedback, to ensure accurate representation of the Network and its activities.
- These papers will then be kept on record, be displayed on the NRHSN Website, and remain the property of the NRHSN.

### 2. During Conference

- Students attending conferences are considered representatives of the NRHSN, RHWA, and their Rural Health Clubs and are required to conduct themselves in a positive, proactive and professional manner.
- They are required to attend the full conference and are encouraged to promote the NRHSN program whilst attending the networking functions. It is hoped that the experiences and knowledge gained will assist them in making career choices.
- Should a student fail to attend a conference without sufficient reason, all applications from this student's RHC will be discounted for CoNS funding until a written explanation is received and approved by the NRHSN Executive.
- If the reason is not satisfactory the matter may be taken further and may result in the RHC not being approved for funding to send any further Club members to conferences in that financial year, or costs associated with the conference being repaid by the student.

### 3. Post Conference

- Recipients of CoNS funding must provide the following Reports within **four weeks** of attending the conference. Visit [www.nrhsn.org.au/cons](http://www.nrhsn.org.au/cons) for past CoNS Reports.
  1. Conference (CoNS)Report (Appendix A) - Email to [jane@nrhsn.org.au](mailto:jane@nrhsn.org.au) and your RHC.
  2. Financial Report (Appendix B) - Email to [jane@nrhsn.org.au](mailto:jane@nrhsn.org.au)
- The CoNS Report is then posted on the NRHSN website to assist with evaluation of the benefits of the conference by fellow students, the NRHSN, and stakeholders.
- Students are encouraged to give their RHC a presentation or report to their club for inclusion in newsletters as a way of promoting the benefits of the program.
- Should the student fail to provide a CoNS Report, they will be considered ineligible for future funding and may jeopardize their Rural Health Clubs future funding.

## **APPENDIX A**            **Conference Report**

- A *personal reflection* on the conference, including mention of:
  - The student's general impressions of the conference.
  - The sessions/presentations/speakers during the conference that made the biggest impact on the student.
  - How the student feels the conference has contributed to their knowledge of rural health issues, indigenous health issues and enthusiasm for rural practice.
  - How the student feels that attending the conference has benefited their Rural Health Club and the NRHSN.
- A brief discussion of any meetings between the NRHSN student representative and conference delegates representing other rural health key-stakeholder organisations, and the outcomes thereof.
- A copy of any presentations made at the conference.

## **APPENDIX B**            **Financial Report** (for pre-approved additional expenses)

- A breakdown of the costs subsidised by the NRHSN – e.g. registration costs and travel and accommodation.
- The relevant receipts/invoices that include a tax number
- A breakdown of the other costs incurred by the student as a result of attending the conference. (providing prior approval has been arranged)
- Reimbursement is paid directly to the nominated bank account details listed: Bank Name, Account Name, and BSB Number (6 digits) and Account number.

**NB** The NRHSN reserves the right to reject reports if they do not satisfy the aforementioned criteria.

## **APPENDIX C**            **Cancellation Policy** - for the use of any NRHSN funding

- Including but not limited to CoNS, NURHC, Face 2 Face, and Additional Pool of Funding. The NRHSN is funded by the Department of Health and Ageing through taxpayers' Money and therefore has an obligation to ensure that funding is spent to the greatest benefit.
- When Rural Health Clubs and individual members receive funding from the NRHSN to Attend/ organise events and activities they are expected to do so as per the details provided in their funding application. If for any reason that the activity does not take place, the funding must be returned in full to the NRHSN.

- Flights will be booked where required, in accordance with the information provided by members on the online CoNS Application Form / Travel Proforma that they submit. If a member changes or cancels a flight for any reason after flights have been booked, that member is individually responsible for all costs incurred.
- Where possible, the NRHSN will transfer the flight into another members name, or accept a voucher from the airline that allows transfer of names and the student will only be liable for the costs involved with changing the flight. If however, the airline does not allow names to be transferred, the member will be liable for the entire cost of the flight. It is the responsibility of the member to read the terms and conditions of the airline.
- Where other costs are pre-paid by the NRHSN including accommodation and conference registration, and are not refundable, then any member cancelling their attendance will be individually liable for the cancellation costs.
- By accepting the funding and providing the NRHSN with travel, accommodation and registration details, or Tax Invoice in the case of a RHC, the member is deemed to have accepted these terms and conditions.

#### **APPENDIX D**            **Letter of Support**

Applicants will need the full support of their Rural Health Club Executive as evidenced by a Letter of Support (email) from the Club's NRHSN Senior Representative, or President to the NRHSN Project Officer ([jane@nrhsn.org.au](mailto:jane@nrhsn.org.au)).

The letter should include the following:

- Applicants name
- Rural Health Club Name
- How long student has been a member.
- Current and past positions of responsibility and examples of activity.
- Confirmation of support for attending a particular conference.
- Endorsement of suitability for representing the NRHSN organisation