



**Joint media release
27 October 2015**

Inaugural Rural Health Bursary awarded to dedicated Aboriginal medical student

A third year Aboriginal medical student from Flinders University (Darwin cohort) has been announced as the recipient of the inaugural MDA National and Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) Rural Health Bursary for 2015.

Anne-Maree Nielsen's working life has revolved around Aboriginal healthcare, both as a registered nurse and also as an Aboriginal researcher.

She plans to use the Bursary funding of \$7000 to undertake a clinical placement on Thursday Island.

The Bursary is being generously provided by MDA National as part of its sponsorship arrangement with RDAA.

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) has actively supported the initiative and jointly selected the successful recipient with RDAA and MDA National.

"We are delighted to be awarding this important national Bursary to Anne-Maree" RDAA President, Dr Ewen McPhee, said.

"It was clear from her nomination that she has a very strong commitment to Aboriginal health, and that as an Aboriginal doctor she will continue that commitment.

"This is critically important, as Anne-Maree will bring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities a strong cultural understanding of her patients — and it is exactly this next generation of doctors that will be so crucial to improvements in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities in the future.

"Given there are currently just over 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and 310 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students in Australia, it is crucial that we nurture the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical workforce as much as we can.

"We thank MDA National sincerely for making this important Bursary possible."

Anne-Maree said her passion for Aboriginal health, and for making a difference in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, had been with her since childhood.

"I am the daughter of a Wakka Wakka woman from South East Queensland, and it is from these roots that my passion for Aboriginal health evolved" she said.

"As a future Aboriginal doctor with similar worldviews, beliefs and experiences as my Aboriginal patients, I will be in a prime position to provide empathetic and culturally appropriate care to my community — and my transition to being a medical professional will only serve to enhance a greater awareness and respect for the mutuality, reciprocity, sharing and trust with my Aboriginal clientele which is consistent with holistic healthcare outcomes.

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“As the recipient of the MDA National and RDAA Rural Health Bursary for 2015, I have been given an extraordinary opportunity to indulge my passion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in one of the most beautiful Australian environments, as I have chosen to undertake a 6 week placement on Thursday Island as part of the Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service.

“I relish the opportunity to learn medicine in a remote environment rich with Torres Strait Islander culture, made possible by this Bursary from MDA National and RDAA.”

MDA National President, Dr Rod Moore, said the Bursary stems from the relationship between MDA National and RDAA, and a shared understanding of relevant issues.

“Rural doctors often experience different issues from their counterparts” he said.

“It’s important that we encourage, support and nurture our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors for the benefit of the wider community.”

Dr Moore said Anne-Maree’s energy and passion for Aboriginal health and research was obvious in her application, making her a worthy winner of the Bursary.

“Anne-Maree’s professionalism is outstanding” he said. “Her experience as a registered nurse and also as an Aboriginal researcher positions her for great success in her chosen field.

“The Bursary will help Anne-Maree achieve her aims of providing empathetic and culturally appropriate care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. MDA National is proud to be part of this.”

Media interviews are available.

A high resolution photo of Anne-Maree is available by contacting Patrick Daley.

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