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sonographer expertise

## **ASA/ASAR Statement on Commonwealth Prac Placements**

As part of the 2024-5 Budget, the Australian Government announced the introduction of the Commonwealth Prac Payment. Commencing 1 July 2025, this initiative enables students to manage the costs associated with undertaking supervised mandatory placements as part of a higher education course.

Students of nursing, midwifery, social work and teaching will be able to access \$319.50 per week. The scheme will be means-tested and is intended to supplement any other income support students may receive.

While the Prac Payment is a step in the right direction, more needs to be done.

The Australasian Sonographers Association (ASA) and the Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry (ASAR) strongly urge the Australian Government to extend the scheme to sonography students.

'Placement poverty' is just as real for sonography students given mandatory placements run over an extensive period of time. Students need to be engaged in supervised ultrasound practice for a minimum of 3 days/week over a 2-year period, full-time equivalent to become accredited sonographers.

Being excluded from the Prac Payment scheme detrimentally impacts the over 1,100 sonography students across Australia as placements cost a lot in unpaid leave, travel, accommodation and living costs in an environment where training places are limited due to the costs of supervision.

This places additional pressure on the existing sonography workforce, which is already under significant strain. There is increasing patient demand for quality ultrasound services – the most highly utilised diagnostic imaging modality in Australia plus an existing significant workforce shortage of qualified sonographers. The [2023 Skills Priority List](#) shows that this critical shortage applies right across Australia. Sonography is also one of the most feminised professions in Australia with more than 76% of sonographers being women.

The ASA and ASAR call for the Australian Government to expand the Prac Payment scheme to sonography students to ensure the supply of qualified sonographers helps alleviate demand for vital ultrasound services and incentivises the next generation of sonographers.