



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact: Samantha Dickson, NCO at
Environmental Health Australia**

Phone: 0423 437 732

Email: samantha.dickson@eh.org.au

Investing in the Future: EHA Calls for Urgent Investment in Environmental Health Scholarships as part of \$234.3M Pre-Budget Submission

By investing in environmental health scholarships, Australia can build a stronger Environmental Health Officer (EHO) workforce, safeguarding public health, reducing foodborne illnesses, and saving billions in productivity costs.

BRISBANE, QLD, February 17 2025

Environmental Health Australia (EHA) is urging the Australian Government to invest \$56.3 million in endowments and scholarships to secure the future of the environmental health profession. This investment, outlined in EHA's Pre-Budget Submission 2025–26, is crucial to addressing the severe workforce shortage that is limiting the ability of local and state governments to safeguard public health.

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) play a critical role in protecting communities from foodborne illness outbreaks, water contamination, air pollution, and climate-driven health threats. However, with a 30% workforce shortage, an ageing profession, and declining university enrolments, urgent action is needed to attract and retain the next generation of EHOs.

EHA is calling for targeted funding to support students and early-career professionals through scholarships, grants, and cadetship programs. This investment will ensure that talented individuals have access to accredited environmental health education pathways and can gain practical experience in the field.

“Without investment in the environmental health workforce today, communities will remain vulnerable to preventable public health crises tomorrow,” said Melissa Burn, EHA National President. “We need

to attract new talent to the profession, and financial support through scholarships and endowments is a key solution.”

The Case for Investment

Workforce Shortages: Environmental health has been identified as one of the top three skill shortages in local government (ALGA 2022 Workforce Survey).

Declining University Pathways: The closure of accredited environmental health courses has limited opportunities for new students to enter the profession.

High Cost of Study: Financial barriers prevent many potential students from pursuing environmental health qualifications.

Essential Public Health Protection: EHOs are frontline public health professionals ensuring food safety, clean water, and safe environments—critical for disaster response and climate resilience.

EHA’s Proposal: \$56.3 Million Investment in the Future of Environmental Health

The funding would support:

- Scholarships for environmental health students to remove financial barriers to entry.
- Cadetship programs to provide hands-on training and career pathways.
- Endowments to universities to sustain and expand accredited environmental health programs.
- Professional development grants to retain and upskill EHOs in critical areas like disaster response and climate health.

“Investing in environmental health education today will strengthen our public health workforce for generations to come,” said Ms Burn. “This is not just an investment in students—it’s an investment in community safety and public health resilience.”

EHA is urging the Australian Government to commit to this funding in the upcoming federal budget to ensure every community has access to skilled EHOs who can respond to current and future public health challenges.

The submission document can be seen here: <https://www.eh.org.au/documents/item/1658>

“We protect people from hazards in their environment!”

- Ends -