Country students get flying start with health scholarship

Applications open today for the 2013 “Give Them Wings” health scholarship program, offering a smooth landing at university for students from country Victoria.

Two nursing and two allied health students will be awarded a scholarship in 2013, with each receiving $2,500 towards their living expenses, as well as a Royal Flying Doctor experience.

The “Give Them Wings” Scholarship is a partnership between the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Victoria and Rural Health Workforce Australia, the peak body for Australia’s Rural Workforce Agencies. It is generously supported by fundraising from the Bayside Auxiliary of RFDS Victoria.

Last year’s inaugural “Give Them Wings” winners were Ella Bouman, a nursing student from Panmure near Warrnambool, and Kara Hazelman, a physiotherapy student from Kyabram.

The initial program was so successful, that the number of scholarships has been doubled this year. The scholarships are available for young country people making the transition to first year university.

RFDS Victoria CEO Scott Chapman said: “The scholarship is another way we can work to improve health outcomes in Victoria, with the help of our generous supports and in partnership with Rural Health Workforce Australia.”

Greg Sam, CEO of Rural Health Workforce Australia, said encouraging more country students to pursue health careers in rural and remote Australia would help address Australia’s shortages of rural health professionals.

“These scholarships will help because students from a rural background are more likely to return to the country once they graduate,” said Mr Sam.

Applications for the 2013 “Give Them Wings” scholarships close on 28 March. Further details, including the application form, are available at www.rhwa.org.au/GiveThemWings

Note: Interviews with last year’s winners available on request

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Note to editors:

About Rural Health Workforce Australia
Rural Health Workforce Australia is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to making healthcare more accessible in rural and remote Australia. It is the peak body for the national network of state and territory Rural Workforce Agencies which recruit and support health professionals in rural and remote communities. RHWA also supports the National Rural Health Students Network, which represents Australia’s 29 university Rural Health Clubs.

About the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Victoria)
The not-for-profit Royal Flying Doctor Service has been taking the finest care to the furthest corners of Australia since 1928. The service provides 24-hour emergency cover to 80% of the Australian continent, via a modern fleet of specially equipped aircraft. RFDS Victoria provides a number of primary health services within Victoria whilst also supporting those living, working and travelling in rural and remote Australia.