



Aunty Agnes Shea Scholarship Program

Scholarships – Aboriginal Early Childhood Educators

Application and Assessment Guidelines

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1. Background

Inaugural Patron of Yerrabi, Aunty Agnes Shea OAM was a highly respected Elder of the Ngunnawal People of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and surrounding regions. For many decades, Aunty Agnes was a strong voice for Aboriginal People and her Community, advocating, among many things, for better education of younger generations. By providing opportunities for Aboriginal people to gain educational qualifications, Yerrabi hope to continue her legacy by contributing to the growth of a knowledgeable and skilled Aboriginal workforce educating and caring for future generations. This Scholarship fund is dedicated to her memory and continuing legacy.

In 2024, Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation received funding from the ACT Education Directorate for “The Aunty Agnes Shea Early Childhood Scholarships Program” to enable Aboriginal people to access early childhood education qualifications or enhance their existing early childhood education qualifications.

Over 50% of all First Nations children in the ACT live in the north of Canberra (AEDC,2021), and approximately 558 First Nations children are aged 0-5. (Connected Beginnings, 2024) Despite 93% of the ACT’s First Nations children attending a preschool program, 43% were developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains (AEDC, 2021). This rate is almost double the non-First Nations percentage. Only 27% of First Nations children were developmentally on track in all five AEDC domains, well below the national First Nations and non-First Nations average (AEDC, 2021). The ACT’s early development outcomes for First Nations children have been declining since records began in 2009. 90% of a child’s brain develops in the first five years of life, with 80% being developed in the first 1000 days (Centre of the Developing Child, 2024).

Early intervention and being developmentally on track in early childhood is linked with lifelong equity, health, literacy, income, workforce and life satisfaction outcomes (Centre of the Developing Child, 2024). It is imperative that ACT’s First Nations children have the best start in life through the provision of culturally appropriate, targeted, education supports that are integrated with health and family support services to achieve Closing the Gap targets by 2031 CTG 6&7 & Aboriginal Educators lead and enhance their development and education CTG8.

Yerrabi aims to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal Early Childhood Educators in the early education sector in the ACT to support Yerrabi’s vision of a highly qualified and sustainable Aboriginal workforce which meets the cultural obligations and needs of Aboriginal children and families.

2. Glossary

Term	Definition
WWVP	Working with Vulnerable People card
Yerrabi	Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation

3. Scholarship Program Details

The Aunty Agnes Shea Early Childhood Educator Scholarship Program will provide opportunities for Aboriginal workers wanting to further their knowledge, skills and careers in Early Childhood Education in the ACT. The Scholarship Program is also available to Aboriginal people wanting to pursue a career in the Early Childhood sector.

The Scholarship program will provide both financial, study and wrap-around support for scholarship recipients to promote a positive and fulfilling learning experience ensuring high levels of completion.

3.1. Eligibility Criteria

Individuals will be eligible for the scholarships if they:

1. identify as Aboriginal[‡] – confirmation of Aboriginality* will be requested
2. fit one of the following the criteria:
 - a. be working in a Koori Preschool – priority target cohort, or
 - b. be working in an ECEC setting – secondary target cohort, or
 - c. be interested in working in the ACT's ECEC sector – tertiary target cohort
3. hold a WWVP card and National Police Check, and the ability to pass the CYF Suitable Person Records Check.
4. are able to enrol in an approved course within six months of receiving the offer of scholarship. *If evidence of such enrolment is not provided, the applicant will be advised in writing that their scholarship has been withdrawn.*

Individuals are not eligible for scholarships if they:

1. do not identify as Aboriginal
2. do not intend to pursue a career in the Early Childhood Education and Care sector in the ACT
3. do not qualify for a WWVP card
4. cannot clear a CYF Suitable Person Records Check
5. cannot get a clean National Police Check

[‡]Scholarships are available to Torres Strait Islander people; however, priority will be given to Aboriginal people in recognition that we are on Aboriginal land.

*Yerrabi can help applicants with the process of confirming Aboriginality.

3.2. Criteria for Scholarship Streams

- Bachelors
 - Prior education/experience:
 - Year 12 ATAR of 60 or above
 - other Australian Qualification
 - work experience
 - overseas qualification, or
 - Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
- Diploma
 - Prior education/experience:
 - Cert III Early Childhood Education and Care – priority will be given to those who have completed it through the scholarship program
- Cert III
 - Prior education/experience:
 - Non-required
 - Be willing to complete the Diploma upon completion of the Cert III

3.3. Scholarship Funding Criteria

The Aunty Agnes Shea Scholarships for Aboriginal Early Childhood Educators will consider financial support for:

- pay of course fees for:
 - CERT III of Early Childhood Education and Care,
 - Diploma Early Childhood Education and Care,
 - Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (Birth to 5 years)
- purchase leave for the scholarship holder for study release or attendance at classes
- purchase of course-required materials, textbooks and other learning aids
- purchase of learning support services such as tutoring.

In certain circumstances changes to proposed expenditure items/services can be negotiated and agreed prior to expenditure, e.g. if those earmarked for later years no longer meet the needs of the scholarship recipient.

The funds cannot be used for:

- retrospective costs for progress already made towards an Early Childhood Education qualification,
- costs for qualifications other than the CERT III of Early Childhood Education and Care, Diploma Early Childhood Education and Care, Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (Birth to 5 years),
- proposals for funding more appropriately available from other sources,
- other proposals for expenditure may be excluded on a case-by-case basis.

4. Procedures

4.1. Application Process

1. Applicants are required to complete the online application form and upload their resume.
2. Applicants will be notified of receipt of their application and provided information on the decision-making process with 5 working days of receipt of the application.
 - Potential applicants will be advised that the number of applications may exceed the number of available scholarships, therefore not all applications will be successful, even if an applicant meets all the eligibility requirements.
 - Applicants may also be offered partial funding for their studies.

4.2. Assessment of Applications

1. In the first instance, the Program Manager will assess all applications for scholarship funding to ensure that they meet all eligibility criteria as detailed above and notify any applicants that don't meet the criteria their application won't be progressed.
2. The Program Manager will arrange for an interview with eligible applicants to:
 - discuss the program and commitment in full,
 - develop the expenditure proposal, and
 - get details of 2 referees.

3. The Program Manager will put together an Applicant Pack for each applicant to be provided to the Scholarship Selection Committee (the Committee), these packs will include:
 - application form
 - referee checks
 - include details of the funding required in an expenditure proposal
 - include copies of all other relevant documentation including any in principal agreements provided by the applicant's employer
 - Manager's reflections
4. Applications will then be evaluated by the Committee to determine each application's merit and rank them against the following additional criteria:
 - the priority cohort
 - their application
5. Applicants may be invited to attend an interview with the Committee or a sub-group of members, which will provide another opportunity for the applicant to demonstrate their commitment to completing their study and contributing to the education and care sector.
6. The Committee will decide according to the Committee's Terms of Reference.
7. The Committee's decision will be final.
8. Applicants will be advised in writing of scholarship decisions within 5 working days of the Committee's decision.

4.3. Successful Applicants

1. Successful applicants will be sent a Letter of Offer which include the amount funding offered and the Aunty Agnes Shea Scholarship Aboriginal Early Childhood Educators Agreement (Agreement).
2. The Agreement must be signed by all parties within 14 days of receiving it for the offer to be accepted.
3. By accepting the scholarship, the recipient will be required to abide by the terms and conditions set out in the Letter of Offer and the Agreement, including:
 - respond to communications and requests from Yerrabi in a timely manner
 - maintaining accurate records, as applicable e.g. course details and expenditure
 - submitting invoices or requests for purchases for approved goods and services for payment by Yerrabi in a timely manner
 - providing documentary evidence of progress and continuing enrolment (if applicable) in their studies to qualify for each financial year's allocation of their scholarship funding until the final instalment
 - advising the Program Manager of any changes to study and/or personal details
 - notifying the Program Manager of completion of course
4. Additional details about the obligations of accepting a scholarship will be provided to successful applicants with their Letter of Offer.

4.4. Unsuccessful Applicants

1. In the first instance unsuccessful applicants will be advised of the decision in writing.
2. Eligible unsuccessful applicants will be placed on a reserve list according to their ranking pending the acceptance of scholarships of successful applicants.
3. The unsuccessful applicant will be provided information on other potential sources of financial or other support to enable them to pursue their career.

For more information on the Aunty Agnes Shea Scholarship Program please contact us at elena@yerrabi.org.au.