



Opt in from 1 January 2020

From 1 January 2020, eligible existing Bonded Medical Places (BMP) and Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) scheme participants can opt in to the Bonded Medical Program (Program) new arrangement.

The Bonded Medical Program, established in 2001, provides students with a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) in a medical course at an Australian university, in return for a commitment to work in eligible regional, rural or remote areas for a specified period after completion of their medical course.

This commitment is referred to as a Return of Service Obligation (RoSO).

The Program provides:

- a standard 3 year RoSO to be completed over an 18 year period from the day you finish your medical course
- a more flexible approach in undertaking RoSO, where RoSO can be on a non-continuous basis, full-time or part-time work, and fly in/fly out work in eligible locations
- clear and consistent processes to assist participants in managing their obligations using an online web portal to facilitate easier self-management of RoSO

The Bonded Return of Service System

To support the new arrangement, the Department of Health online web portal, the Bonded Return of Service System (BRoSS), will allow bonded students and doctors to self-manage their RoSO and identify eligible locations where they can work.

Functions of BRoSS will be released throughout 2020. The first phase, commenced 1 January 2020, was made available to 21 Australian universities where they can use BRoSS to manage the new applicants firm offer list.

The second phase will provide the ability for existing participants to log in to BRoSS to check their personal details are up to date, use the information in the Learn and Plan sections, and agree to participate in the Program by completing Part VD of the *Health Insurance Act 1973 (Act)* in the Sign section.

Self-management of RoSO including planning and recording of events are currently in development and will be released progressively.

Opt in considerations for existing scheme participants

Eligible existing participants can choose to opt in to the new arrangement any time from 1 January 2020. MRBS Scheme students will be eligible to opt in any time after completion of their medical course.

Opt in is voluntary for existing participants. The decision to opt in will depend on the benefits the new arrangement offers a participant and the current stage or phase of their existing arrangement. Participants who choose not to opt in will keep their existing contract or deed of agreement. All participants are encouraged to keep their existing contract or deed of agreement obligations up to date.

How existing scheme participants opt in to the Program

From 1 January 2020, eligible participants will be able to email the department at

BRoSS@health.gov.au advising they would like to opt in.

The department will review the participant's record to check all contractual or deed of agreement obligations are up to date. Participants will be notified of their eligibility to opt in to the new arrangements and will be provided with log in details for BRoSS. Participants will need to log in to BRoSS to review and agree to participate in the Program. Once this is complete, the participant has entered the Program under the new arrangement.

What to do if your existing scheme contract or deed of agreement is not up-to-date

Participants can contact the department to discuss available options. This is recommended regardless of whether a participant chooses to opt in to the new arrangement or stay on their existing contract or deed of agreement.

Eligible locations to complete RoSO

Eligible locations for bonded participants are classified using any of the following: Modified Monash Model (MMM) 2-7; Distribution Priority Areas (DPA) for General Practitioners; and Outer Metropolitan District of Workforce Shortage for all other specialities

The Modified Monash Model (MMM) is a geographical classification that categorises different areas in Australia into seven remoteness categories. Link - <https://www.health.gov.au/health-workforce/health-workforce-classifications/modified-monash-model>

The Distribution Priority Areas (DPA) system uses the best available data to identify those communities most in need of General Practitioner (GP) services. Link - <https://www.health.gov.au/health-workforce/health-workforce-classifications/distribution-priority-area>

A District of Workforce Shortage (DWS) is an area where people have poor access to specialist medical practitioners. Link - <https://www.health.gov.au/health-workforce/health-workforce-classifications/district-of-workforce-shortage>

Legislation

The conditions and requirements of the Program are legally binding. More information about the details can be found in Part VD of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2019A00070> and the *Health Insurance (Bonded Medical Program) Rule 2020* <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2019L01513>

The Rule provides more detail to assist participants to make an informed decision to opt in to the Program.

While BRoSS is being progressively released throughout 2020, your reporting obligations as specified in the *Health Insurance (Bonded Medical Program) Rule 2020* are delayed.

The timelines set by the *Health Insurance (Bonded Medical Program) Rule 2020 (Cth)* that require the participant to provide information and evidence under sections 15 and 16 will be delayed until a future date nominated by the department.

The department has implemented a transition period where the participant's obligations to provide information and upload evidence will be delayed until BRoSS is fully functional.

The Rule has been amended to formally establish this transition period, which means current participants of the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) and Bonded Medical Places (BMP) schemes who have opted in to the Program cannot be liable for any administrative penalty arising out of not complying with time frames set out in the Rule. The amendment, *Health Insurance (Bonded Medical Program) Amendment Rule 2020*, is available at Federal Register of Legislative Instruments for your information.

The department will advise you when BRoSS is fully functional and will nominate a date from which all the time frames for providing information and evidence will commence.

We encourage you to keep your Program reporting obligations up to date, by email to BRoSS@health.gov.au

Further information

Department of Health website: health.gov.au/new-arrangements-bonded-medical-program

Contact the Department of Health

- Telephone: 1800 987 104 (Monday – Friday 8:30am – 5:00pm AEST)
- Email: BRoSS@health.gov.au