

MEDIA RELEASE

TUE 19 MAY 2026

Resilience recognised

Four Queensland medical students awarded scholarships as AMA Queensland Foundation launches annual tax appeal

Four incredible Queenslanders are a step closer to becoming doctors, after being awarded \$10,000 AMA Queensland Foundation scholarships.

The Foundation's 2026 Medical Student Scholarships were awarded to Adeena Thankakumar (Townsville), Shreya Somasundaran (Townsville), Edwin Packer (Toowoomba) and Hannah Newsome (Gold Coast) to help them meet their living expenses while completing their medical studies.

Foundation chair Dr Dilip Dhupelia said the four Foundation scholarship recipients have demonstrated significant resilience.

"These four individuals have experienced substantial personal, financial and health challenges, and we are honoured to give them the opportunity to continue their studies despite those difficulties," he said.

"Their clear commitment to medicine and the perseverance they've shown so far will undoubtedly enrich the Queensland communities they will go on to support, once they qualify as young doctors."

Dr Dhupelia said students often need a financial buffer to make it through medical studies, particularly in the clinical years where placements require time away from part-time work, or even relocation across the state. Over the years, the AMA Queensland Foundation has supported 43 medical students to complete their studies with scholarships totalling \$615,000.

"When financial support from family is unavailable, or other challenging financial circumstances arise, some medical students experience significant hardship - and this is a need the Foundation seeks to fill with our scholarship program," Dr Dhupelia said.

"This year the Foundation received a staggering 90 applications for assistance, demonstrating a clear need in the Queensland community for additional financial support for medical students. It was an incredibly difficult task to choose just four recipients."

Today, AMA Queensland Foundation launches its annual End of Financial Year tax appeal, raising funds to support next year's scholarship recipients.

"All donations received will be used to support more aspiring doctors to serve our Queensland community," Dr Dhupelia said.

"There are many more medical students like Adeena, Edwin, Hannah and Shreya who, without the support of the scholarship, may not finish their studies.

"All of our donors have made a meaningful impact on these recipients' lives, and we thank them for it."

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

Adeena's story:

Currently in her final year of medicine at James Cook University (JCU) in Townsville, Adeena's experience growing up in Coober Pedy after migrating from India has provided the inspiration to want to work in underserved regions, particularly in the areas of infectious disease and health policy.

Adeena's family have worked hard since their arrival, but recent circumstances have proven financially difficult with her father suffering an injury. As the eldest of four daughters, Adeena has been supporting herself with two part-time jobs while providing for her family where possible.

"Both roles will be temporarily interrupted due to my upcoming rural placement, limiting my ability to maintain a consistent income during this period," she said.

Adding to Adeena's instability has been the loss of approximately \$6,000 worth of belongings either damaged or stolen by house squatters early this year.

"I have experienced ongoing financial hardship, including housing instability, eviction due to rental arrears, and reliance on food relief services."

"This scholarship will provide essential support for my rural placement in Cooktown, including travel, accommodation, and basic living expenses. It will also allow me to replace necessary study equipment, such as my laptop, and ensure continuity in my academic work," she said.

Edwin's story:

Edwin is currently in his final year in The University of Queensland's Rural Medical Program in Toowoomba, completing a Bachelor of Biomedical Science before embarking on the MD. He is keenly interested in critical care and rural and remote medicine.

Both Edwin and his wife are in their final year of the same medical program and neither has the financial support of their parents.

"My mother raised my siblings and I largely alone and was a great inspiration and support to me entering medical school. She passed away from metastatic breast cancer during my first year, which greatly impacted my studies and support system," he said.

Up to now, Edwin has supported himself with part-time roles but was recently made redundant while undertaking a rural placement away from Toowoomba. His wife has been similarly struggling to find shifts around clinical placements.

"The job market in Toowoomba is limited, and finding a casual role with my restricted availability has proven very difficult," he said.

"The scholarship will help me with daily living expenses like petrol, food, rent and utilities, buffering us against the rising cost of living in a household where both of us are studying and without wider financial support," he said.

Hannah's story:

Hannah is currently in her first year of the MD at Griffith University, Gold Coast. Growing up on a farm near Glen Innes has motivated Hannah to pursue medicine.

Australian Medical Association Queensland – Media Release

“I have seen firsthand the desperate need for qualified health professionals in rural areas and I’m passionate about being part of the solution to the healthcare shortage in rural Australia,” she said.

Having previously completed a Bachelor of Psychological Science with first-class honours, Hannah was excited to begin her medical degree in 2025, but sudden family ill-health forced her to defer.

“Due to stress and financial hardship, I was unable to relocate to the Gold Coast to take up my position,” she said.

While Hannah worked hard over the year to alleviate this, the cost of relocation has remained too great and Hannah has restarted her first year of medicine commuting from some accommodation she has secured in Brisbane. Adding to her stress, is a newly diagnosed eye condition.

“I am unable to drive at night, which makes commuting to campus and placements incredibly difficult, and I will require expensive treatment for this condition to provide partial correction.”

“The scholarship will be life-changing, allowing me to can engage fully in my studies and address some of the pressing financial concerns that are creating additional stress,” she said.

Shreya’s story:

Shreya has already completed a Bachelor of Biomedical Science with Honours in Medical Research and is now in her final year of the MBBS at James Cook University (JCU).

A first-generation immigrant who grew up in a single-income household with her mother working two jobs to support the family, Shreya said these experiences have equally shaped her clinical goals.

“I am eager to address healthcare inequities and work in underserved populations, integrating this with research.”

Up to now, Shreya has supported herself through casual employment, but this is limited due to clinical placements in her final year. Due to her previous degree, she has also almost exhausted her HECS/HELP loan limits. Alongside this, her mother has also recently developed a neurological condition which has reduced her capacity to work.

“As my mother’s primary support, I have done my best to assist her where possible. However, balancing the responsibility of supporting myself while contributing to my mother’s care has created significant financial strain for me.”

“Receiving this scholarship will enable me to focus on my clinical training while supporting my mother and working toward providing for my family and giving back to my community,” she said.

Background:

- AMA Queensland Foundation was established in 2000 as the charitable arm of AMA Queensland, with a mission to improve medical conditions in areas of need.
- The scholarship program was implemented in 2004 to financially support disadvantaged students to undertake medical training.
- The AMA Queensland Foundation also offers GP Registrars training and research bursaries and supports an annual social cause.
- In 2025, three JCU students and one UQ student were awarded scholarships.