LONG TAN BURSARY

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

2002

Purpose of the Bursaries

Long Tan Bursaries are awarded to assist needy children of Vietnam veterans to establish themselves in full-time, tertiary education by providing a number of them with a bursary in their first year of full-time, tertiary education.

The bursaries are directed towards candidates whose further education should lead, on completion, to them being able to support themselves through gainful employment, after obtaining a qualification that allows entry to a rewarding career.

Description of the Bursaries

The value of each bursary will be $6,000. This money will be paid out in varying amounts over the year.

Each year, 30 Bursaries will be on offer, including five each in Queensland and New South Wales, with the largest Vietnam veteran populations. Four bursaries will be offered in each of the remaining States and two each in the Northern Territory and ACT.

From time to time, particularly in the smaller States and Territories, there may not be sufficient eligible children for the State or Territory quota to be met. In such cases, the unused grants are to be allocated to the other States and Territories where there are suitable applicants, in proportion to the number of applications received from them in that year.

Tertiary education is considered to include vocationally-oriented courses, e.g. those at TAFE, business colleges, art schools etc.

The Australian Vietnam War Veterans Trust, short title VVT, will administer the Long Tan Bursary Scheme for the Repatriation Commission and Department of Veterans' Affairs.

ELIGIBILITY FOR BURSARIES

To be eligible to apply for a Long Tan Bursary, a person must be:

- the child of a Vietnam veteran;

- under the age of 25 years when applying (unless exceptional circumstances exist);
• planning to enrol in the first year of full-time post secondary education in Australia, in an approved course of one or more academic years' duration;

• within the means test which is eligibility on financial grounds for Youth Allowance educational benefits; and

• not a previous recipient of a Long Tan bursary.

Within the eligibility criteria, those selected are to be the most deserving candidates of merit as assessed by the Trust.

Applicants must be Australian residents or, if not, planning studies in Australia.

Each course must be of a standard approved by VVT. In all but the most unusual case, that course must be one where Commonwealth educational support benefits are payable.

As this scheme is to assist children in their first year of full-time tertiary study, those planning second degrees, professional training such as College of Law, honours years, graduate diplomas, masters' degrees or doctorates are ineligible for assistance under this scheme.

AWARD OF BURSARIES

The primary criteria for award of a bursary are:

• the child is assessed by the VVT as being in necessitous or deserving familial circumstances such as those which could put the child at risk of harm or could preclude the child from proceeding to tertiary education without the bursary; and

• the academic prospects of the child are assessed by the VVT, as indicating that the child is likely to successfully complete the first year of tertiary study.

Weighting of Criteria

• Necessitous or deserving familial circumstances - 60%

• Academic aspects - 40%

Determination of Necessitous or Deserving Familial Circumstances

Financial need is an element of both necessitous and deserving.

Deserving familial circumstances include health and other non-financial personal circumstances.

The financial circumstance of those awarded bursaries must be such when selected that the applicant qualifies for a continuous payment of full-time educational benefits under Youth Allowance or a replacement Commonwealth educational benefits.
benefit, for example Abstudy or Austudy. Those receiving those other benefits (which includes Veterans' Children Education Scheme (VCES)) must meet Youth Allowance assets and income tests.

All family income is included for the purpose of determining the need for financial assistance, except where the applicant child is classed as independent by VVT. That is, a child married or in a defacto relationship of some duration or with a child, or classed as "Homeless" for the purposes of Youth Allowance.

**Familial Circumstances**

Although assessment is of the applicant, the nature of the bursary demands that the familial circumstances and its impact should be taken into account when assessing academic merit as well as deservingness.

Familial circumstances relate to the level of family dysfunction that is disadvantageous to the student in the transition to tertiary study.

Examples of causes for the family dysfunction are, but not limited to; domestic violence, substance abuse or alcoholism, physical and mental illness, separation, divorce or death of parents that are related to the veteran’s war-service.

Evidence of the familial circumstances is to be supported by personal statements and documentation such as those from doctors, the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service or other relevant counsellors' reports.

The greater the degree of financial need for assistance with educational and living costs, the more deserving is the applicant. This is moderated by the degree to which the planned education meets the objective of leading to a rewarding career.

**Academic Aspects**

Likelihood of successfully completing the first year of a tertiary course.

Bursaries are only to be recommended for applicants who have the academic ability and motivation to satisfactorily complete the course for which they are accepted.

Applicants applying for assistance must be assessed by the VVT assessors as having the capacity to complete the course of tertiary study proposed. The normal standard set is the ability to complete the planned course in the minimum time plus one year.

In determining merit, vocational students are assessed separately, with allowance made for both the vocational and university candidates, for the particular course requirements and the applicant's capacity for that course. What course a child seeks a place for and what they are likely to obtain is taken into consideration.

Assessment of merit is not confined to formal results in examinations, but takes into account all activities, hobbies and interests that point to possible success in the chosen career path.
To assist in the assessment of academic merit, applicants need to provide evidence of their last 18 months of educational achievement and to initiate an academic referee's report to be sent direct to VVT.

VVT has arrangements with all State and Territory authorities for the confidential early release direct to it, of end of Year 12 or (if applicable Year 10) results and university and TAFE place offers, to assist timely assessment.

If an applicant has not previously achieved a high level academically, but is motivated towards success or has done volunteer work or has work-related experience which indicates a high probability of success in the chosen course, that will be taken into account in determining whether assistance should be given. This is particularly important for those who may wish to re-enter educational activities.

**Definitions**

"Child" means the natural child, adopted child or eligible step-child of a person who is an Australian Vietnam veteran.

Step-children must have resided with or been financially supported by their veteran step-parent for five of the last 10 years.

Applicants must be under 25 when applying, unless exceptional circumstances exist which prevented the child undertaking tertiary education earlier, e.g. severe ill health of the veteran which adversely affected the family.

“Familial circumstances” means those circumstances that contribute to a level of family dysfunction that is disadvantageous to the student in the transition to tertiary study. Examples of causes for the family dysfunction are, but not limited to: domestic violence, substance abuse or alcoholism, physical and mental illness, separation, divorce or death of parents that are related to the veteran’s war-service.

"Vietnam veteran" is as determined by the Repatriation Commission.

"Tertiary course" includes those offered by universities, TAFE, business, or other accredited tertiary education institutions.

"Deserving" means that the applicant is assessed as unlikely to be able to pursue his or her chosen educational path satisfactorily without the receipt of the bursary.

"Merit" directed towards the candidate's academic capacity, motivation and suitability for the education planned and the career choices which follow.

**SELECTION PROCESS**

The VVT processes are reviewed annually to take account of the VVT operational experience and continuing changes in Australian tertiary education and Commonwealth educational benefits.
Currently, there is a four-stage process. The first stage is the checking of applications for eligibility and completeness. Those ineligible are advised with a right of review given. Those whose applications are not brought to an adequate standard of completion or cannot provide necessary supporting documentation are not further processed.

The second stage is a desk officer assessment independently by two staff of needs and merit on the 60:40 basis, with the objective of producing a first shortlist.

The second stage has two concurrent steps. The first is assessment by an honorary educational assessor for each State, with SA assessing also for NT, and NSW for the ACT, of academic merit, taking due account of the circumstances of study, with all vocational candidates assessed together. For Tasmania, Victoria assesses but with a Tasmanian adviser.

Those local assessors are Corresponding Members of the national selection committee. That committee, the Vietnam Veterans Trust Education Committee (VVTEC) consists of five other members, two educationalists, together with two veterans and an educationalist chairman.

The second step is an assessment on the basis of need alone, of the same applicant group. The two veteran members of the national selection committee perform this task. The objective of the second stage is to produce a second short-list, the places upon which are proportional to the number of State or vocational applications.

The third stage consists of two steps. The first is a national moderation by the Committee's educational sub-committee, of the State and vocational gradings on merit alone with the needs sub-committee performing a similar task. The second step is the two groups meet to produce a final panel for the full committee for its selections.

All applications and associated papers, plus a summary of the applications, are sent to each VVTEC member well in advance of the selection meeting. Each member independently assesses each applicant against the criteria on the basis of 60% need, 40% merit. Selection is limited to the target number of Long Tan Bursaries to be awarded that year, plus a limited number of reserves in order of priority.

The preferred lists of each member in order of relative priority for each of the selection groups (university, vocational) are given to the Secretary who prepares, for issue at the meeting, a combined list, in order of selection preference.

At the selection meeting, members compare their candidate preferences and the VVT collectively establishes the candidates for each of the two separate groups whose selection is clear and those whose non-selection is equally clear. Debate then turns on the residual vacancies in the panel and those especially deserving cases that might be added to it.

Selection papers and information are provided only on a need to know basis. Regional assessors have access to information on a limited basis.
At the completion of that process, VVT will provide a recommendation to the Repatriation Commission of those applicants recommended to receive bursaries.

The inclusion of applicants in the list of names provided to the Repatriation Commission will be determined by a majority vote of VVT members. To allow for applicants who are not able to accept the offered bursaries, e.g. changes in study plans, a reserve candidate is to be selected for each State and the two Territories. The arrangements to apply when there are insufficient eligible and satisfactory applicants remaining have been addressed earlier.

VVT will provide DVA with a list of children from which to make a final selection. DVA will be provided with sufficient information by the Trust for the Commission to decide between the applicants and reserves, subject to vacancies, including receiving from the Trust:

- an assurance that the children qualify as needy children of Vietnam veterans, age, details of any particularly relevant factors, e.g. abused by parent;

- veteran's name and service or file number to allow DVA to confirm eligibility.

**Results of Applications**

VVT is to advise all unsuccessful applicants as soon as it is clear that they will not be amongst those recommended.

DVA (or the Minister) is to advise the successful bursary applicants and VVT as soon as possible after receiving the VVT recommendations. DVA is to advise the applicants that they will be contacted by the Trust on grant offer and acceptance. VVT then takes responsibility for the remaining actions.

**Repeat Applicants**

Unsuccessful applicants may reapply in future years for assistance under this scheme.

**Acceptance of Offers Must Be Made Within 14 Days**

To allow for the financial assistance to start studies to be effective, offers are to be accepted within 14 days. Offers that are not accepted within this time are to be made to the reserves in order of priority. Reserves will also have 14 days in which to accept an offer.

**Awards Subject to Offer and Acceptance of a Place**

The bursary is provided for the course in which the applicant is offered a place and accepts that place, not the courses for which they may have applied. Therefore, a bursary will only be paid once the offer details are finalised, full-time enrolment has been confirmed and assurance given that financial dependence under the means test remains.
Payments

Initial payments for course start up costs are made together with the first monthly payments as soon as the offer/acceptance steps are complete and banking arrangements made.

Generally $1,000 will be given at the start of the academic year, with $500 paid in mid-year for the second half-year's expenses. The balance of the $6,000 is paid in 10 monthly instalments during the academic year (March to December). In exceptional circumstances, e.g. recovery of an overpayment, these rates may be varied at the discretion of the VVT.

For those whose studies are not to start until mid-year, the residual part of their bursary is to be carried forward into the next academic year, subject to the continuation requirements above.

Recovery of Overpayments

If overpayments occur, they will be recovered gradually, without causing undue hardship to the bursary recipients who are affected.

Bursaries Depend on Satisfactory Progress During the Year

Continuing payment of the bursary for the full period is subject to satisfactory academic progress, continuing full-time enrolment in the first full-time year of an approved course and confirmation of continuing financial eligibility. The number of subjects studied each semester must be a full-time study load as defined by Centrelink or an equivalent body.

The VVT conducts a mid-year and an annual review of progress. Those awarded bursaries must follow the VVT's mid-year review processes.

Bursary recipients must also do well enough, academically, for their grant to continue.

Failure without a satisfactory reason could merit suspension or termination of the bursary in exceptional situations.

Recipients must pass 50% of the subjects in which they are enrolled in any semester. If they do not, the bursary is normally terminated. It might be continued provisionally if the reason for failure is acceptable to the Trust, e.g. illness, bereavement, personal trauma.

If results at the mid-year review show unsatisfactory progress, the Trust's Educational Advisory Committee will review the case and decide whether to terminate, suspend or continue payments provisionally.
If results are not good enough, the recipient must put their case in writing as to why the grant should not cease. Supporting evidence is required, e.g. a medical report or a student counselling report.

**Deferment**

Given the intent of the bursary, applicants may not defer enrolment but must enrol in the year of the award. Some, however, may be in courses which do not start until mid-year and their 12-month bursary would be spread over the calendar year.

Where a bursary recipient ceases their studies temporarily for reasons acceptable to VVT, their bursary may be suspended for a maximum period of one year.

**Course Changes to be Agreed in Advance**

Sometimes, major changes are needed (other than to subject choice and timing) in study plans. In some such cases, grants can be continued. There are restrictions, however, to ensure that the original purpose of the grant is preserved.

All course changes during the period of the bursary must be approved by the Trust in advance. Students cannot assume approval and must ask the Trust before changing their enrolment details.

Generally, if a course change and any resulting new qualification is deemed by the Trust to be satisfactory, the grant may continue.

Course change proposals will only be approved where the Trust considers them beneficial for the student.

**Certificate of Award**

All applicants selected for bursary assistance receive a Certificate of Award that is presented to them, if practicable, at a function in the region where they were selected.

**Appeal Provisions**

As the bursary is by selection and there is a fixed quota each year, there can be no right of appeal on merit grounds against the decision to award or not award a bursary.

In most cases, bursaries will terminate with the satisfactory completion of the first year of full-time study. Similarly, payments will not normally be suspended at other than the recipient's request. However, from time to time payments may be terminated because of, for example, repeated academic failure or failure to respond to requests for key information. Similarly, payments may be suspended on occasions to obtain key information or to encourage satisfactory academic performance in future.
Successful applicants have the right to appeal suspension or termination of bursary assistance to VVT which has established an internal VVT decision review process. There will be a further right of appeal to the Repatriation Commission.

Confidentiality

The VVT's selection considerations are to remain confidential to it. Material of a personal nature will not be released to DVA without authorisation in advance by the child.

However, a confidential word picture of each recommended candidate will be provided at the completion of the selection recommendation process for the Commission's use.