

AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'  
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

**AVCAT**

Transforming Lives Through Education

Tertiary  
scholarships  
for the children  
& grandchildren  
of veterans



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# History of AVCAT

- First established in 1985 as the Australian Vietnam War Veterans' Trust (AVWVT)
- Initial members were from the Vietnam Veterans' Association, Australian Defence Services Council, Legacy and the RSL
- In 1988, Australia and New Zealand received \$6.17m from the Agent Orange Class Action in the USA
- Long Tan Bursaries were launched on 18 August 2000 and funded by the Department of Veterans' Affairs
- An education assistance scheme continued with payments to assist the children of Vietnam Veterans until 2002 when the AVWVT operations ceased

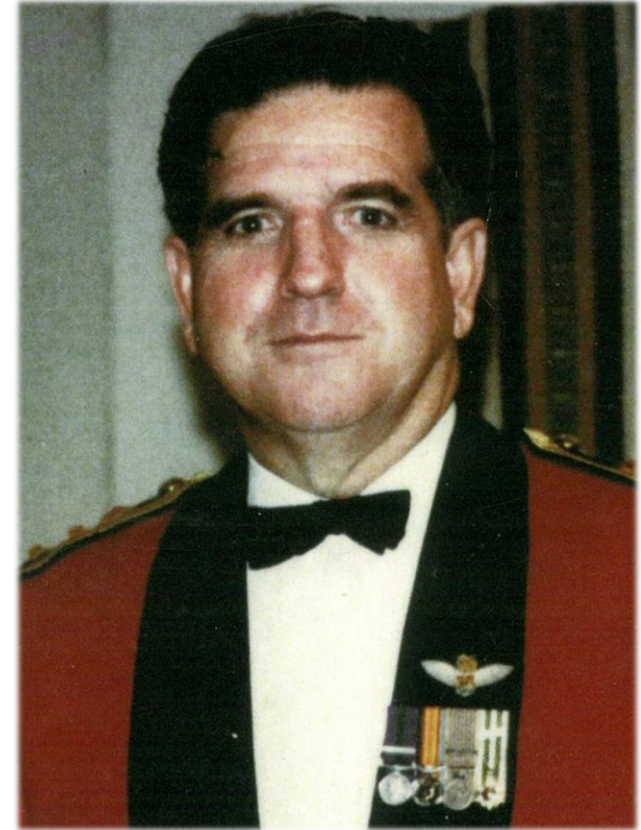


# History of AVCAT

- “It was decided that there should be a legacy from the Agent Orange money in Australia...”
- “...that legacy was an organisation to continue to provide scholarships to the children and grandchildren of veterans from all conflicts...”
- “...doing the same job, but funded differently...”

Pat Gowens, Executive Director AVWVT

- In 2003 the Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) was formed



*Brigadier Pat Gowens (Retd)  
Founding CEO, AVCAT*



# History of AVCAT

- National independent charity
- Expanded the scholarships to include both the children and now grandchildren of veterans from all conflicts and other levels of service
- Funded through Department of Veterans' Affairs, Ex-Service Organisations, Corporate and Individual donors
- 3023 scholarships awarded since 2003
- Added an Alumni led mentoring program in 2023



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CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

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# Our Work

Providing tertiary education scholarships to the children and grandchildren of ex-serving veterans

# Our Goal

Support veteran families by assisting scholars to reach their academic and career goals



# Some of our sponsors



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**



**RSL**  
Queensland



**AIRBUS**

**DEWC**  
ELECTRONIC WARFARE IS OUR PASSION



AUSTRALIAN  
WAR WIDOWS NSW LTD



**GDS**  
Global Defence Solutions Pty Ltd

**BRAVERY**  
TRUST™ | *Supporting  
those  
who serve*

**VETERANS  
BENEVOLENT FUND**  
RSL & SERVICES CLUBS ASSOCIATION



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# The Issue

- Effects of conflict on veterans and their families
- High rates of :
  - mental health disorders
  - family violence
  - financial difficulties
  - substance abuse
  - unemployment
- Poor educational outcomes for dependants
- Discontinue university due to financial difficulties
- Cycle of disadvantage and welfare support



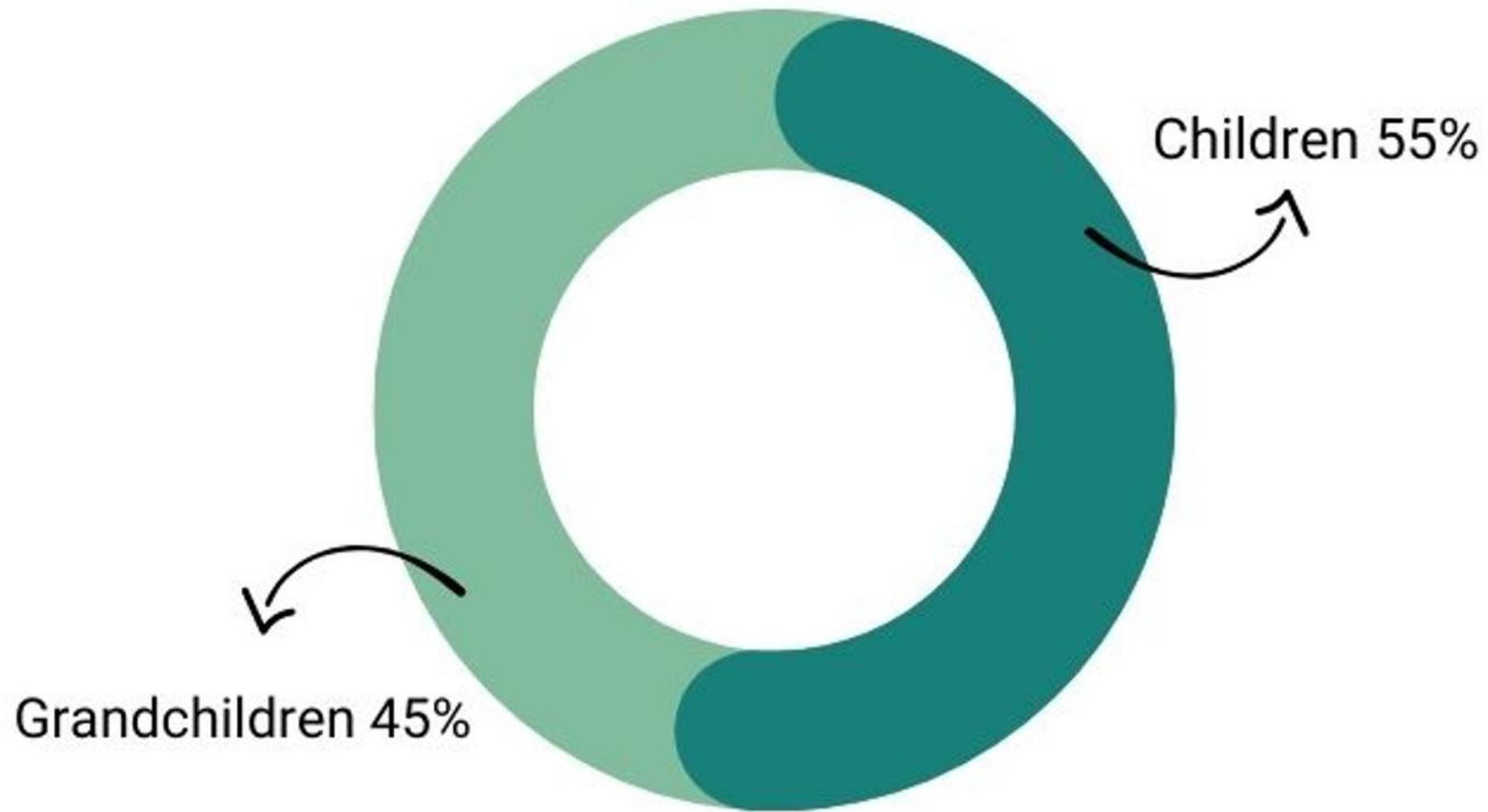
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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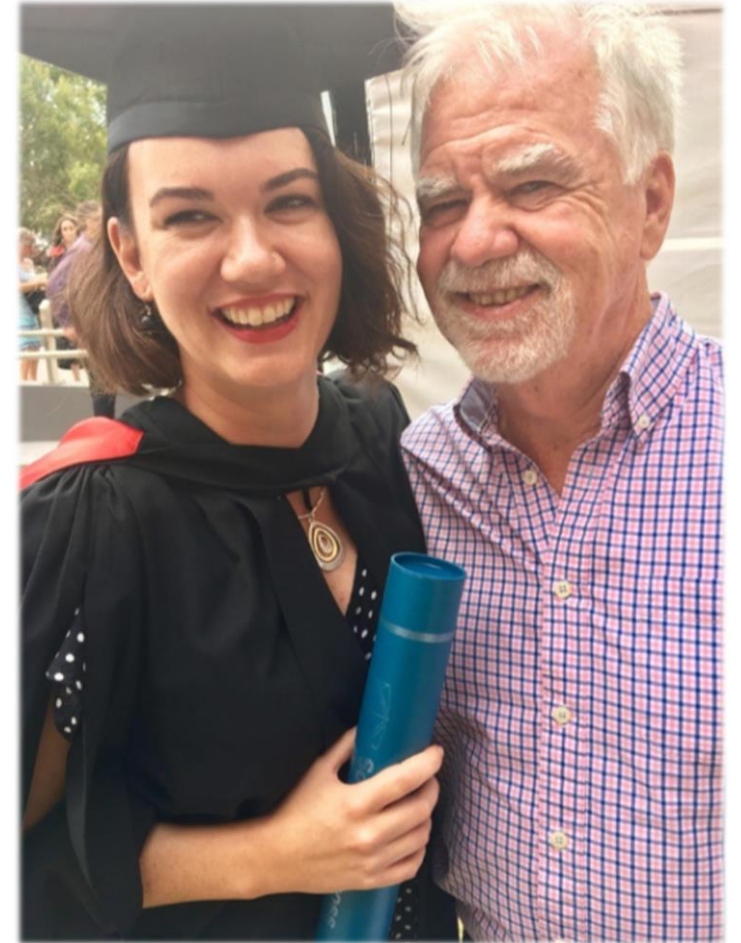
# Relationship to the veteran



2022 snapshot

# Our scholarships

- 3-year tertiary scholarship - breaks the cycle of disadvantage
- 205 applications for 93 new scholarships in 2023
- Applications independently assessed
- Application & Ongoing eligibility
- Promotion / EOI / Offer & Acceptance / Payments are AVCAT managed
- Mid-year and Annual Reviews of academic progress
- Presentation events and online "Meet My Sponsor" events
- Just under \$1m in scholarships given out in 2021
- Sponsored Scholarships paid out was 57% of this total
- 3023 scholarships awarded since 2003



# Eligibility Criteria

- Be a child or a grandchild of an ex-serving veteran. People who are serving in the Reserve Forces (SERCAT 3, 4 & 5 – Rendering Service) are considered to be serving so the applicant child or grandchild is not eligible
- The veteran must be an Australian ex-serving veteran with operational service including eligible war service, war-like service and peacekeeping/peacemaking service OR 3 or more continuous years of full-time other service, as a member of the Australian Navy, Army or Air Force
- Children include adopted children, ex-nuptial children, stepchildren & foster children
- Planning to enroll or enrolled in a tertiary course of study (recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework) for one or more academic years at a university, TAFE or a registered training organisation in Australia
- Be studying or planning to study full-time - priority is given to those who have not previously undertaken tertiary education
- In receipt of, or eligible to receive a means-tested Commonwealth government education payment such as Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY, Austudy



# How Applications are Assessed

Applications are considered by a team of independent assessors and AVCAT's National Selection Committee on the following:

- **Financial need**

- Applicants should be eligible on income and assets grounds for full-time Commonwealth Government means-tested educational benefits like Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY or Austudy
- Income, household assets and liabilities are reviewed
- Applicants who have a greater degree of financial need for assistance with educational and living costs will have a higher chance to be recommended for a scholarship

- **Academic potential**

- The ability of the applicant to complete the nominated course of study
- Recent academic results and an academic referee or employer report is used

- **Deservedness**

- Considers the impact of the applicants' personal, health and family circumstances
- Deservedness is based how the veteran's service in the Australian Defence Force has impacted the family's health and wellbeing
- Applicants need to detail the health conditions of the veteran



# How scholars use their funds

AVCAT sees itself to be an 'enabler' of the scholar to attain their qualification and not to prescribe to them how they spend the scholarship funds.

Each scholar's circumstances are different, and their needs also change over the period of their course.

Many students require assistance in the every day needs of just living and studying so paying off their HELP debt is not an immediate priority.

For example, scholars can use the funds to:

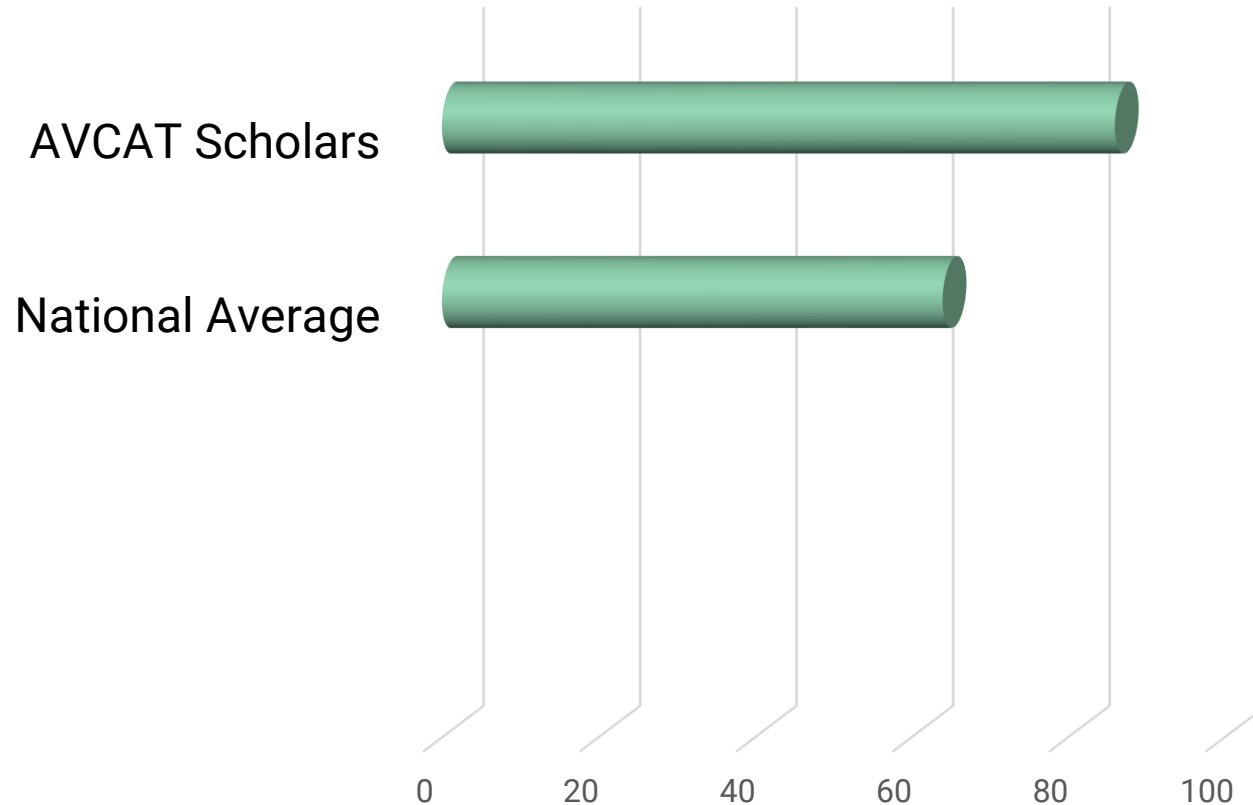
- Pay for accommodation
- Pay for groceries and other daily essentials
- Purchase study needs such as textbooks, computer, internet access
- Pursue hobbies at university – balancing study and home
- Transport to and from classes and study placements - especially with courses in nursing / medical / teaching
- Rural travel back home on semester breaks
- Provides independence and encourages budgeting their finances



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# Our Results

Tertiary Completion Rates



**83%-85% of AVCAT scholars** ➤  
- have completed their scholarship,  
- have graduated or  
- are continuing their tertiary education

**National average tertiary completion rate is 64%-66% after 6 years of study \***

**2020 was an exceptionally difficult year for me and if it weren't for the scholarship money motivating me and allowing me to continue studying, there would have been a strong chance that I would have dropped out. – AVCAT scholar**

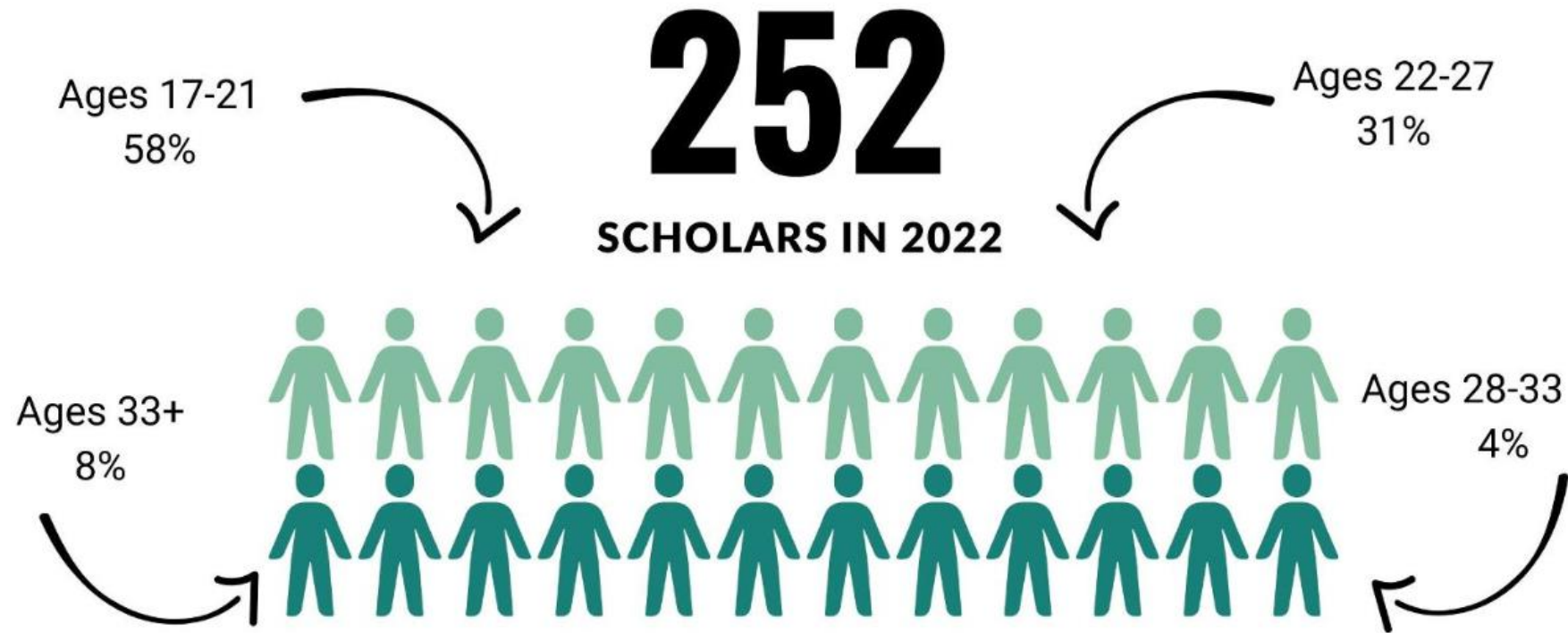
- Norton, A., Cherastidtham, I., and Mackey, W. (2018), Mapping Australian higher education 2018, p32, Grattan Institute
- Australian Government Department of Education and Training 2005-2020).

➤ AVCAT scholars 83% (2018-20120, 85% (2017-2019)

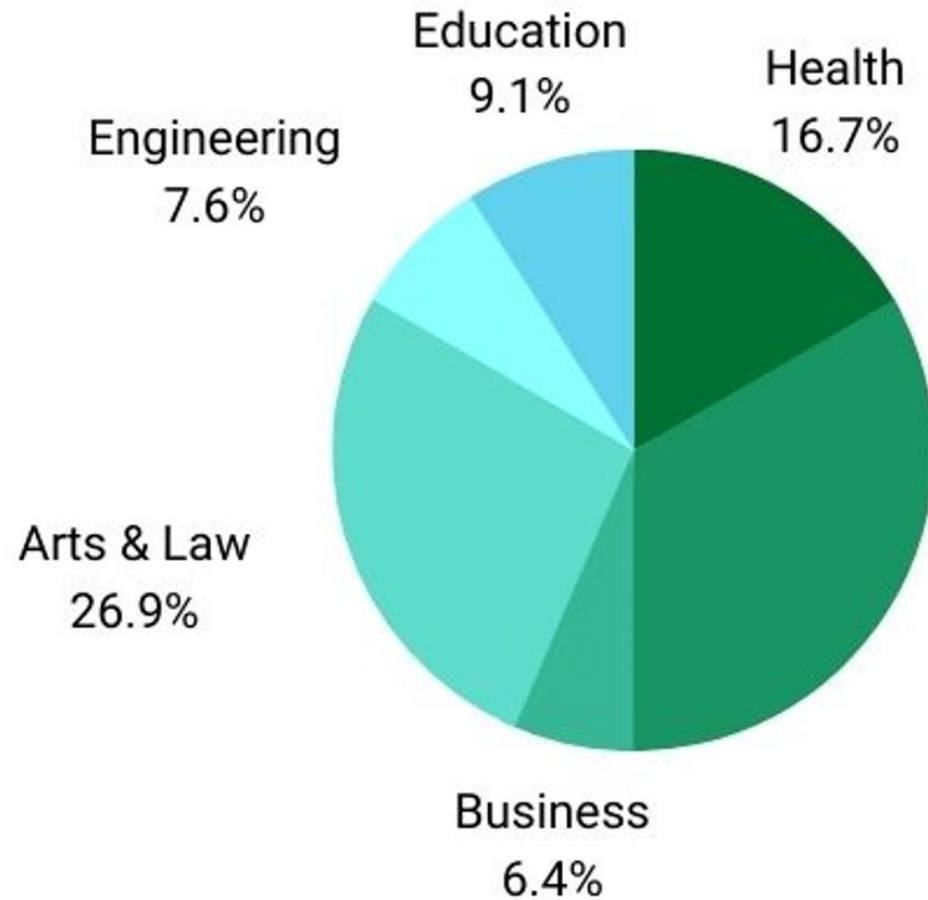


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# Our 2022 scholars



# What do our scholars study?



Level of Study	Percentage
Certificate/Diploma	10%
Undergraduate	82%
Postgraduate	8%

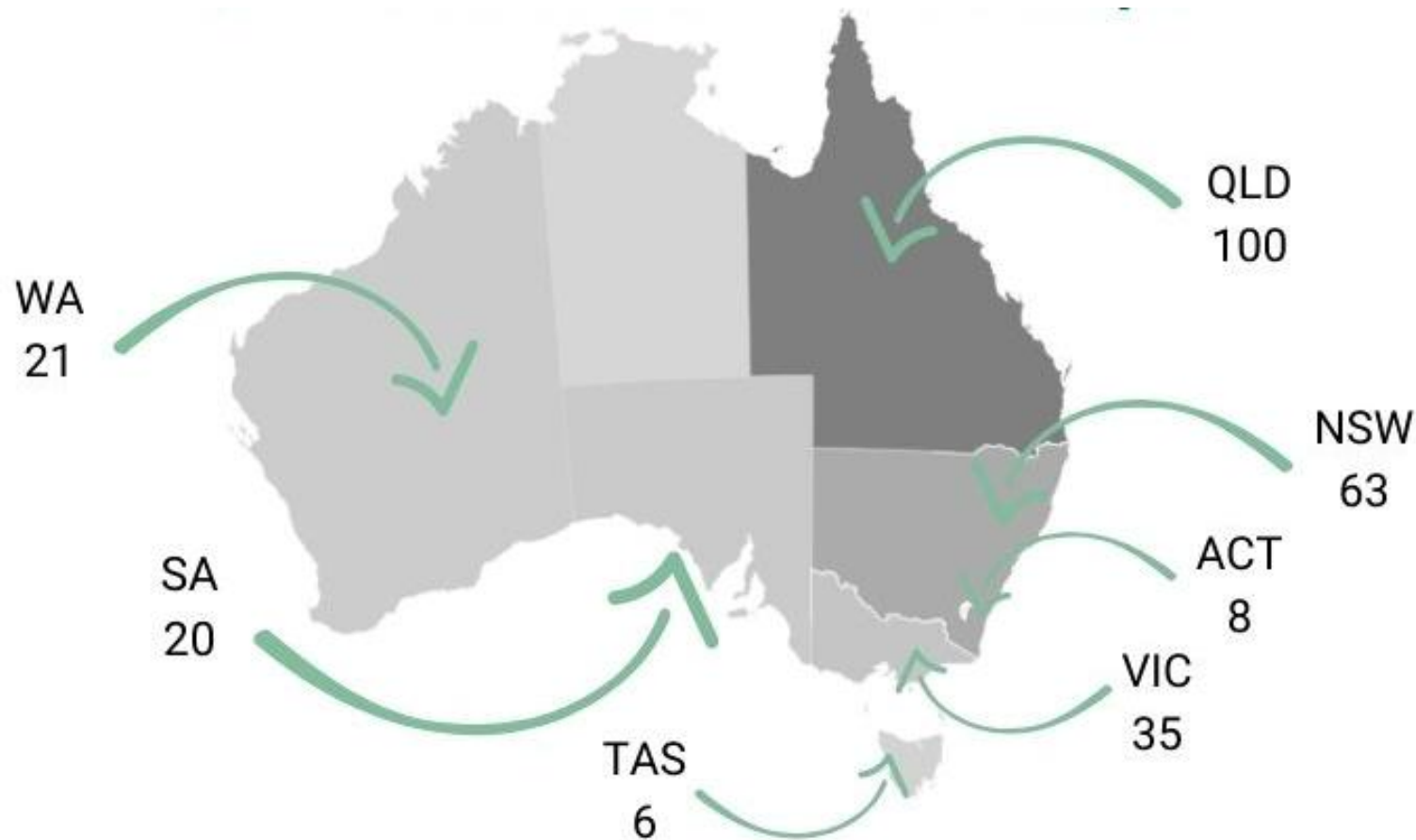
Science  
33.3%

SCIENCE includes

- Physical- physics, chem, astronomy, geology, meteorology, oceanology,
- Natural Science: biology, zoology, microbiology
- Human Science: psychology, global politics, economics – people and their actions

2022 snapshot

# Where do our scholars study?



2022 snapshot

# AVCAT Alumni and Mentoring

- Pilot program over four months during 2021/22
- Engaged a specialist trainer to develop the program and train the mentors
- We trained 10 AVCAT Alumni to be mentors
- We matched them with 10 existing scholars
- The program was evaluated for effectiveness and suitability, and was a resounding success
- So, in March this year, AVCAT will commence our Alumni Mentoring Program



**AVCAT**  
**Alumni**  
**NETWORK**

# Scholarship Investment Opportunity

	3-year scholarship at \$5,000 per year	3-year scholarship at \$6,000 per year
Scholarship support	\$15,000	\$18,000
Admin. Fee	\$2,670	\$2,670
GST	\$267	\$267
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$17,937</b>	<b>\$20,937</b>

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# Thank You

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