

## MEDIA RELEASE

# Inaugural recipients of the Gippsland Primary Health Network scholarships for allied health

23 May 2024

Three allied health students at Federation University in Churchill are the inaugural recipients of Gippsland Primary Health Network's new scholarships.

As part of a \$500,000 commitment, Gippsland PHN will provide scholarships to three new students a year for 12 years, supporting them to succeed in their studies without the stress of financial pressure.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, presented the scholarships at a function at the university campus on Wednesday.

Recipients were Gianna Ziero from Drouin West who is studying a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Honours), Jake Kallady from Warragul who is studying a Bachelor of Physiotherapy (Honours) and Anna Solomon from Morwell who is studying for a Bachelor of Social Work.

Ms Proposch congratulated the students who she said were worthy recipients. "We know the cost of tertiary study for Gippsland students can be significant, especially with travel and accommodation," Ms Proposch said. "These scholarships are designed will to alleviate those pressures.

"It will also support the pipeline of local health professionals in order to address ongoing workforce issues. We know that young people who study in Gippsland are more likely to remain in Gippsland."

Gianna said the scholarship would help pay for fuel to travel to the Churchill campus and to dedicate more time to study.

From a young age, Gianna knew she wanted to help people, particularly young children, and seeing the care her three-year-old brother received from his occupational therapist helped her settle on Occupational Therapy as a career.

"My overall goal is to become a practising occupational therapist in my community and help reduce the waitlists in allied health," she said. "I'm really loving the course so far and the OT cohort of students are so lovely and it's lovely being in a small class. Everyone's just working with each other."

Federation University launched its Gippsland allied health programs to help tackle local workforce shortages, beginning with Occupational Therapy in 2020, followed by Physiotherapy in 2021 and Speech Pathology in 2022. It has since expanded to include social work last year.

At its state-of-the-art Allied Health and Activity Centre, allied health students learn in modern teaching spaces with the latest technology designed to simulate clinical settings.

Ms Proposch said the scholarship initiative aligned with Gippsland PHN's vision of a 'Measurably healthier Gippsland' and would ultimately support 36 students.

According to the 2019 Gippsland's Future Health and Community Services Workforce report commissioned by the Latrobe Valley Authority, the number of physiotherapists in Gippsland is projected to grow from 167 in 2016 to 237 by 2036; occupational therapists would grow from 150 in 2016 to 212 in 2036; and speech pathologists and audiologists would grow from 79 in 2016 to 113 in 2036.

"One of our strategic objectives is to strengthen workforce capability," Ms Proposch said. "We want to assist clinicians in having access to the best practice training and education and also help primary care providers attract and retain staff, supporting the delivery of safe, high quality services."

***Caption:***

***Pictured at the Federation University scholarship presentation are (from left) Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, Jake Kallady from Warragul, Gianna Ziero from Drouin West and Gippsland PHN Board Chair, Nathan Voll.***

**ENDS**

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