

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Ambulance Services



Wednesday, 30 October 2024

BRINGING CARE CLOSER TO HOME WITH SPECIALIST GRANTS

The Allan Labor Government is making vital allied health services more accessible, opening the next round of grants to support speech pathology and occupational therapy students to make the move to regional Victoria.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today made the announcement, encouraging students like first-year recipient, Claudia, to apply for the second round of the Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy Student Grant (SPOTS) Program and take up a rewarding career outside of Melbourne.

Grants of up to \$15,000 will be available to domestic and international students to help them relocate and settle – alleviating the costs of accommodation and moving.

Reaping the benefits of her grant, Claudia is now employed as an Occupational Therapist at Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton.

A recent graduate of Latrobe University, Claudia says the funding supported her to settle into her new community and began her rewarding career providing Victorians with the specialised care they need closer to home.

Speech pathologists and occupational therapists play a crucial role in helping people, in particular those with a disability, improve their everyday communication and participation in daily tasks.

Part of the Labor Government's *Supporting Students with Disabilities and their Families initiative*, the previous round awarded grants to 108 final year Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy students across Victoria, totaling over \$1.5 million.

The \$7.5 million investment in this program is supporting more than 430 grants of up to \$15,000 each, with a final round of grants set for 2026.

The SPOTS program is just one of many Labor Government initiatives to improve and upskill Victoria's healthcare workforce, including last year's \$270 million investment to make nursing and midwifery studies free, and to recruit and train 17,000 nurses and midwives.

Applications can be submitted at health.vic.gov.au/speech-pathology-and-occupational-therapy-student-grant-program.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"All Victorians should be able to access the care and support they need, no matter where they live – this program is playing an important role in delivering more specialist health services in our regional towns."

"This program is not only helping to grow our regional health workforce, but also kickstarting the careers of young, talented speech pathologists and occupational therapists."

Quote attributable to Goulburn Valley Health Occupational Therapist Claudia

"Thanks to the grant, the move from Melbourne to Shepparton after completing my studies was made much easier. It meant I could settle into my new surroundings and focus on starting my new role."

Media contact: Max Resic 0435 256 250 | max.resic@minstaff.vic.gov.au