

Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



Friday, 24 November 2023

DELIVERING YOUNG REGIONAL VICTORIANS THE CARE THEY NEED

The Allan Labor Government is making it easier for young regional Victorians with disability to access allied health services, and backing new healthcare workers to take up a rewarding career outside Melbourne – with relocation grants for graduate speech pathologists and occupational therapists now available.

Premier Jacinta Allan and Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards today visited Bendigo Health to announce the new \$7.5 million program that will support more than 400 graduates start their career in regional or rural Victoria.

Speech pathologists and occupational therapists play a critical role in helping people with disabilities improve their communication and participation in everyday tasks. Increasing the regional allied health workforce will mean more young Victorians can get the care they need, when and where they need it – helping them thrive.

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.

Applications for the first round open today, with the second and third round grants open to eligible students in 2024 and 2025 respectively.

The grants program is part of the Labor Government's ongoing investment to grow the size of Victoria's healthcare workforce – with a pipeline of more than 7,000 workers joining the system since the \$12 billion *Pandemic Repair Plan* was launched in 2022.

This includes more than 2,500 healthcare workers recruited from overseas, with one in four now working in regional Victoria.

The *Victorian Budget 2023/24* also invested a further \$440 million to train and develop new allied health, nursing and medical workers.

Graduates can apply for grants at health.vic.gov.au/speech-pathology-and-occupational-therapy-student-grants.

Quote attributable to Premier and Member for Bendigo East Jacinta Allan

"Young Victorians with disability should be able to receive the care they need, no matter where they live – and this program will deliver just that."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Not only can graduates provide life-changing care for children who need it most, but they can also experience the unique and diverse opportunities that come with living in regional or rural Victoria."

Quote attributable to Minister for Disability Lizzie Blandthorn

"Children with disabilities deserve the best care, no matter where they live – by boosting access to services in regional Victoria it will mean no longer having to travel for important speech pathology or OT appointments."

Quote attributable to Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards

"We know how important it is to grow our allied health workforce in Bendigo – these grants are an important incentive that will help us encourage graduate speech pathologists and occupational therapists to make the move."

Media contact: Lily King 0499 791 387 | lily.king@minstaff.vic.gov.au