



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **\$10,000 Scholarship to help Pre-school Children**

24/08/2015

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Jacinta Curley, Speech Pathologist at Sunraysia Community Health Services (SCHS), has been successful in her project submission for the Ian Dickie Scholarship. The project will help children in the kindergarten years, and kindergarten staff, in the area of speech and language development.

The scholarship, valued at up to \$10,000 annually, aims to provide an opportunity for an SCHS program area or employee to trial and develop new models of excellence, innovation and leading edge service delivery. The Award honours the ethos of previous Board member, Ian Dickie. Ian Dickie was a Board Director of SCHS for 18 years who sadly passed away in June 2012. Ian valued and loved his time with SCHS as a volunteer, working towards making SCHS what it is today. Ian simply wanted SCHS to deliver services to the community in a way that he would expect to be able to access and receive health services. Eighteen years is a tremendous contribution to improving and maintaining the community's best health.

Ian's strength was that through his extensive networks he was the 'voice of the community', keeping SCHS in touch with what the community was seeking in health services and where they could improve. The Ian Dickie Scholarship was established to recognise Ian's significant contribution to SCHS.

This year's successful project is the Kindergarten Capacity Building Pilot Project. It will aim to support staff working with children experiencing speech and language difficulties and increase identification of children requiring support from speech pathology services. The funding will be used for a qualified SCHS Speech Pathologist to support a key link worker in each kindergarten, to support children experiencing speech and/or language difficulties in 3 and 4 year old Kindergarten.

Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) data, from testing undertaken during the first year of school, indicates children entering school in the Sunraysia region are less ready for school in several areas, including speech and language development, than children in other areas of the state. This project aims to engage with kindergarten staff, to increase children's speech and language skills, and support children to reach their potential.

This project will increase communication between Kindergartens, relevant clinical staff and school principals or staff coordinating the transition to Primary School enrolment. A resource will be developed by Ms Curley to help Kindergarten staff identify children requiring intervention and provide additional training for Kindergarten staff working with children who have speech and/or language difficulties. It is hoped the model will be able to be self-sustaining in the future, and be able to be rolled out to additional kindergartens, and possibly long day care centres, over time.



Ms Curley said she is “delighted with her success in being granted the scholarship and excited to be leading this 12 month project”. Through her passion and enthusiasm for providing ongoing support to clients and carers in the community, she hopes children in the community will ultimately benefit from the increased knowledge and training that will be provided to kindergarten staff involved in the Mildura LGA.

SCHS Speech Pathology Services, as part of the Child Health Service at SCHS, provide assessment and intervention for children aged 0-6 years and adults over 18 years, who are not otherwise engaged with speech and language services. There is an open referral system at SCHS via the Doorway to Health team, so a referral can be made by a parent or carer calling SCHS on (03) 5022 5444.

**END**

Media enquiries to:

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Photo opportunities regarding this project are available on request. Please contact Jacinta or Hodi Beauliv, Business Development Officer on 5022 5444 to arrange an appropriate time.