



IMMERSED in health sector



FIVE health science students began immersing themselves in Mount Gambier's community this week as their six-month work placements in the region's health services commenced.

The Flinders University students are participants in the university's IMMERSed program, which provides students from a range of health disciplines with the opportunity to live, work and study together in a rural environment.

Although each student is studying a particular discipline, each will work with local speech pathologists, paramedics and nurses to gain an appreciation of the way their chosen vocation interacts with others in the health sector.

Participant Chloe Slarks, who was raised in Mount Gambier, enjoyed last year's pilot program so much, she is doing it again this year.

"It's such a great opportunity," Miss Slarks said.

She said it made her much more confident in her studies to become a paramedic due to the amount of practical experience she gained.

South Australian Ambulance patient services manager Andrew Thomas, said the program produces job-ready

students because they become part of a working team.

"It's a greater consolidation of their academic training," Mr Thomas said.

Speech pathology student Tennille Loxton said she appreciated learning about the other disciplines.

"You don't realise how much they impact one another," Miss Loxton said.

IMMERSed program coordinator Julie Forgan said the length and multidisciplinary focus of the program better prepares the students for the health workforce.

"The ability to work inter-professionally is vital for optimum patient care," Ms Forgan said.

"The students also have time to get involved in the community both socially and vocationally," she said.

Mayor Steve Perryman said this was one of the perks of the program for the local community.

"Our motivations are a bit selfish - we'd like them to stay on after their placements are completed," Mayor Perryman said.

"If we can convert them over to our region, it will be all the better for it," he said.

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STUDYING TO SAVE LIVES: IMMERSe participants Chris Cahill, Tennille Loxton, Caitlin Milne, Kristy Bennets and Chloe Slarks