

**Internship Pilot Project**  
**Shepparton Community Share**  
**&**  
**La Trobe University**



we would like to acknowledge that we are on Country of First Nations peoples.  
we acknowledge the beautiful and unique Country, waterways and animals of  
these landscapes. Elders of these communities and their Ancestors are the  
continuing traditional custodians. we acknowledge their living culture and  
their continuing roles in the life of these communities.





**Retaining ‘home grown’ social workers in Greater Shepparton – A partnership between La Trobe University and not for profit employers.**

**Trish Quibell**

Shepparton Community Share: [tquibell@thebridge.org.au](mailto:tquibell@thebridge.org.au)

**Corina Modderman**

La Trobe University: [c.modderman@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:c.modderman@latrobe.edu.au)

# Introduction, a simple decolonising act of reciprocity



Trish:

- Goulburn Area
- Quality Improvement Manager for Shepparton Community Share
- Executive Manager Research and Development Primary Care Connect
- Advocate for social work

Corina:

- Dutch Down Under since 2009
- Recruited from overseas for leadership role in child protection
- Lecturer in social work and social policy at the Shepparton campus
- Passionate about social work



# Structure of this talk

- Context
- Our vision & process
- Findings
- Outcomes
- Limitations

# Context

- Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards: placement in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year 14 weeks full time.
- More and more difficulties to provide required number of placements – **competitive field and organisation capacity.**
- Less social workers are able to ‘**voluntarily**’ provide field education – neoliberal context, complexity, less funding, workload.
- Field education may cause **financial strain** for some students –lengthy unpaid field placements.
- Little support in tertiary education to support student placements in terms of **workload and sessional staff.**
- Social work Shepparton campus – 2017 -2020 First year of 4<sup>th</sup> year placement.
- **Innovation and accepting diversity** in field education models offer opportunities for social work education.
- **Funding and Employment models for role/position rather than qualification**

(Kalliath et al., 2012; Cleak et al., 2012; Gair et al., 2018; Zuchowski et al., 2014; Zuchowski et al., 2019)



# Outstanding social work vacancies September 2020

Job Search   Profile   Career Advice   Company Reviews

**What**   **Where**

social work ×   Any Classification ▾   Shepparton & Goulburn Valley ×   **SEEK**

All work types ▾   paying \$0 ▾   to \$200k+ ▾   listed any time ▾

72 jobs found   Sorted by **relevance** ▾



# SHEPPARTON COMMUNITY SHARE

*Innovating, collaborating and building capacity*







# Our vision and process

- Create our **own future workforce**, bridging the gap from study to employment and career exposure in the not-for-profit sector.
- The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare was funded by DHHS to develop a **model for workforce development** which coincidentally dovetailed with local conversations, so we combined the two.
- The first cohort of 4<sup>th</sup> year students provided a perfect cohort to pilot a new model of **transition from study to employment**.
- An added extra to fieldwork placement, the **opportunity** to embed within a local agency, get on the job experience, build a resume, be paid within the sector.
- The initial plan was to offer one internship per agency we ended up offering five because of the **quality of applicants**.

# 'New paid internship keeps Shepparton social work students in town'

<https://www.sheppnews.com.au/news/2020/03/02/1064777/new-paid-internship-keeps-shepparton-social-work-students-in-town>

For SCS and La Trobe Shepparton this was collaborative from the very start:

- wanted to work with local students and the 4th year La Trobe cohort.
- wanted to 'package up' internship and field ed within SCS
- Four HR managers worked together to undertake the recruitment, shortlisted together, interviewed together and selected together balancing agency preference and student preferences.





*David Tennant, CEO FamilyCare*

*'Fieldwork placements are a good starting point but sometimes it feels a bit like 'show and tell' as an intern the student became 'One of our people' for 12 months. It changes the context'.*

# Outcomes

What HR Managers tell us:

- Impressed with the quality of applicants
- Working together made the pilot work and increased profile

What CEO's tell us:

- The partnership provided validity and positive exposure of the organisations
- Got more out of it than we had to put into it.

The outcomes for La Trobe:

- Capacity building in field education – partner of choice
- Industry relevant and industry informed collaboration
- Deliver employable graduates

what the interns tell us:

- Allowed students to embed in the agencies see what ‘practice’ looks like as an employee, build confidence.





# Limitations

## What we are doing different next year:

- We will continue to run the project locally.
- Recruiting currently but providing more information on the agencies.
- Being more specific in the position descriptions to allow students to critically evaluate the type of role they want to apply for.

## Future questions:

- Agencies are funding the internships internally through vacancy management but it is possible that budget pressures could change this in future years.
- Do we expand to include other agencies in the project – question of trust and validity.
- Do we take on more interns – if we grow within the four can we cover the field ed component (limited social workers inhouse and pressure from other providers, universities and TAFE for placements).
- Do we offer internships outside of social work – Identify gaps and seek to fill those i.e. Business and IT.
- Continual pressure to take placements can become counter productive.

# References

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