

# Media Release



**19 March 2026**

## **St John of God International Health caregiver named a Bullwinkel Scholar**

St John of God International Health, Learning and Development Programs Manager James Somerville, has been awarded a prestigious 2026 Bullwinkel Scholarship from the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) Foundation, recognising his leadership in strengthening nursing capability in Australia and Timor-Leste.

James is one of 22 registered nurses from across Australia selected this year for the highly regarded annual Bullwinkel Scholarships program. Each year, 21 scholarships are awarded in memory of the Australian Army nurses killed on Bangka Island in 1942, with one scholarship honouring the sole survivor, Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel. Recipients are known as Bullwinkel Scholars.

Driven by a strong commitment to health equity, James is passionate about empowering local clinicians and strengthening systems that enable long-term, community-led improvement.

James' scholarship is awarded in memory of Lieutenant Lorna Florence Fairweather, ensuring her story and service continue to inspire contemporary nursing leaders.

St John of God Director International Health and Registered Nurse, Jenny Tait-Robertson congratulated James on his achievement and said she had no doubt he will honour Lt Fairweather with the same compassion, integrity and courage she embodied.

"Being chosen to carry Lieutenant Fairweather's legacy speaks volumes about James's dedication to nursing, his natural leadership, and his commitment to ongoing professional growth," Jenny said.

"As a leading not-for-profit, for-purpose provider of high-quality health care and community services, St John of God Health Care plays a vital role supporting communities and those with the greatest unmet health needs. James' work in Timor-Leste reflects this commitment in action," she said.

"In his role with St John of God International Health, James leads the design and delivery of development programs in Timor-Leste that strengthen clinical capability, build leadership confidence and support a sustainable local health workforce."

James partners closely with nurse leaders and multidisciplinary teams to develop contemporary, evidence-informed learning initiatives that promote safe, high-quality care in diverse and often low-resource environments.

The scholarship holds particular personal significance for James, who also serves as an Australian Army Reservist, it represents not only professional recognition, but a strong connection to a legacy of service, courage and leadership, values that continue to guide his work.

"Being selected as a Bullwinkel Scholar is an incredible honour," James said.

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Through the scholarship, James will undertake the Nurse Unit Manager Leadership Program, further enhancing his ability to mentor emerging leaders and influence system-wide improvement.

The Bullwinkel Scholars Program honours the service and sacrifice of Australian Army nurses during the Second World War.

Following the bombing of the SS Vyner Brooke, on 16 February 1942, 21 Australian Army Nursing Service nurses were executed at Radji Beach on Bangka Island, Indonesia. The sole survivor, Vivian Bullwinkel, later became a pioneering leader in Australian nursing, advocating for improved education, professional standards and recognition for nurses nationwide.

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## **Media contact**

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## **About St John of God Health Care**

St John of God Health Care (SJGHC) is one of the largest Catholic providers of health care services in Australia. Established in Western Australia in 1895, we are a *not-for-profit private health care group and a ministry of the Catholic Church*.

*We employ 16,000 caregivers (staff) across Australia and New Zealand and operate 25 facilities comprising more than 3200 beds in Australia and New Zealand, as well as home nursing, disability services and social outreach programs.*