MEDIA RELEASE

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Passionate young Scholarship winners head to Cairns for National Rural Health Conference

Two extraordinary young people passionate about aged care and the LGBTIQ community in their respective regional hometowns are the 2017 recipients of the Des Murray Scholarship awarded by the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA).

Shanae Eikelboom, 20, of Albany, WA, and Harper Dalton-Earls, 26, of Lismore, NSW, have received the honour for their commitment to and advocacy for their areas of interest and will be guests of the NRHA at the 14th National Rural Health Conference in Cairns this week.

The highly regarded Scholarship was established by the NRHA in 2000 to recognise the major contribution made by Des Murray to the rural and remote health community, as a key player in the sector at Commonwealth level and through his work with the NRHA.

Shanae Eikelboom has worked within the aged care sector since the age of 17. She mentors new staff in her workplace and is a strong advocate for the rights and needs of elderly people in her local community.

Shanae says, “I love my job - it makes me who I am. I’m just so passionate about delivering care throughout the final stages – weeks, months, years of people’s lives - and making them and their family members feel comfortable and feel happy in a safe environment.”

Harper Dalton-Earls is currently studying a Bachelor of Social Welfare and is a volunteer co-ordinator of Fresh Fruits, an LGBTIQ youth support group in Lismore. Harper’s own experience as a transgender man motivates him to support other young people who are questioning their sexual or gender identity in what is already a challenging time in their lives.

“I became involved with these groups because I wanted to make a difference in the lives of other young people, helping those dealing with family issues and gender identity, offering support and the message to just keep trying because it does get better.

“I was nominated for the Scholarship by a colleague and to be a recipient is such an honour, I never expected such a thing,” he said.

“I’m so looking forward to taking in as much as I possibly can, across a variety of areas, and bringing it all home so I can better support my community.”

An interview with this year’s winners can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/YPxMD0Zbq3E

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