

Extra support is needed for graduate nurses

By Rachel Jackson

Graduate nurses are starting a diverse and challenging career during a pandemic and will need a supportive environment, according to nurse Alex Johansson.

“It would be irresponsible for these new nurses not to receive extra support during this time,” said Ms Johansson, who works at the Portland District Hospital.

21-year-old Brittney Silva is in her second year studying a Bachelor of Nursing at Victoria University in St Albans, and she has only completed one placement so far in the course.

“I feel underprepared,” said Ms Silva. “It makes me pretty stressed out.”

Ms Silva said she completed her first-year placement in her second year and will need to complete three placements next year in order to graduate.

Ms Silva said she completed her first placement in aged care at Port Arlington, which is an hour and a half drive from where she lives in Bacchus Marsh, and she only received two and a half weeks' notice of commencement.

“I was lucky enough to get accommodation through my friend that I didn't need to pay for,” Ms Silva said.

During the placement, Victoria went into a snap lockdown and Ms Silva said she was told to pack her belongings and drive one and half hours back to her home in Bacchus Marsh.

Two days later, Ms Silva said she received a call that informed her she could return to placement.

“It was an absolute pickle,” Ms Silva said.

As Bacchus Marsh was a hot spot area, Ms Silva said she needed to receive a negative COVID-19 test before she could return, and she missed 32 hours of placement while she was waiting.

In order to make up for these hours, Ms Silva said she worked 7AM to 7PM shifts, as well as 13 hour shifts from 10AM to 11PM.

“It was very exhausting,” Ms Silva said.

Ms Silva said she has completed most of her course online, and she has done lab simulations from home.

“I feel like I’ve missed out on so much,” Ms Silva said. “It actually makes me question whether I want to do it or not.”



Ms Silva has completed most of her nursing degree from her desk at home. (Photo: Rachel Jackson)

Student nurses on placement have needed more help than other students in previous years, according to Ms Johansson.

“Nursing is such a hands-on job the best way to learn something is to go out and do it,” Ms Johansson said.

Ms Johansson said the first year or two after graduating is a massive learning curve, and she is a “firm believer” in creating a supportive environment for new nurses.

“As long as they are able to get the most out of their clinical hours I believe there will still be amazing nurses graduating in the next few years,” Ms Johansson said.