US student gets the Shoalhaven slant

By ADAM WRIGHT

A STUDENT from Western Michigan University (WMU) is a trailblazer in a program that has placed her in the Shoalhaven for the next three months.

Jamie Meyers is a final-year Masters student in Occupational Therapy at WMU.

As part of her fieldwork program, she will spend three days a week in the Occupational Therapy Department at Shoalhaven Hospital and two days a week at the Australasian Occupational Science Centre (AOSC) at the Shoalhaven Campus.

AOSC director Dr Alison Wicks will supervise her in some research projects and community engagement.

"There is no other fieldwork placement in the world for occupational therapy students that combines research with clinical experience," Dr Wicks said.

"It's a really unique opportunity to understand the theory and get to see it applied in reality," Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital senior occupational therapist Danielle Vaughan will be supervising Ms Meyer through the reality part.

Mrs Vaughan is no stranger to overseas placements herself, having recently worked in Canada and the Republic of Ireland as an occupational therapist.

"It will be good to find out about the experience of Jamie's placements in the US and see what she thinks of our hospital system.

"Plus, it's always good to have a new set of eyes working here," Mrs Vaughan said.

Ms Myer said she was looking forward to gaining new experiences and seeing the ways Australians do things.

"In the end it will make me the best OT I can be," she said.

"I'm looking forward to getting out and seeing what there is to see while I'm in Australia.

"I've already seen my first kangaroo in the wild," she said.

Dr Wicks said it was a unique opportunity for Ms Myer.

"The international fieldwork program that combines practice, research and projects is the first and only such program for occupational therapy students offered anywhere in the world.

"The program was developed in 2008 by AOSC in collaboration with Shoalhaven Hospital at the request of the University of Western Ontario in Canada.

"Four Canadian students have participated in the program.

"Jamie will be the first student from the US. The program provides students with diverse learning experiences and enables them to test theories in real life situations. The international component helps to develop skills in working with people from different cultural backgrounds and in different settings," Dr Wicks said.