

## 2017 NAFEA Applicant Winner

I am a fourth year Occupational Therapy student and have recently completed a 7 week rural placement in Mount Isa. Prior to this placement, I had little experience in rural locations and welcomed the opportunity to work in and interact with a rural community.

This rural experience allowed for professional growth within myself. I gained experience and knowledge around the diversity of health between metropolitan and rural settings and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. I was given increased responsibility and autonomy that allowed me to develop a wider range of professional skills such as teamwork, case management, communication, documentation, flexibility and cultural safety; which are universal across many settings. In addition, I had the opportunity to work in a multidisciplinary team, deliver care to a larger and diverse patient caseload and attended various professional development conferences. From this experience, I am now more confident in my abilities as a health professional.

Many personal benefits also occurred from my rural placement. Surrounded by a supportive rural community allowed for various opportunities for participation in community events. Such events included community balls, rodeos, sporting teams and community fairs. I was able to easily make friends with members of the community and explored the natural beauty of the surrounding countryside. Furthermore, being in a rural community meant I lived close to work and was able to develop a strong understanding of professional/personal boundaries.

I value the opportunity I was given to do a rural placement and I am amazed with the professional and personal benefits that arose out of it. My interest in working in a rural community has increased and is now an area I will definitely consider when I graduate. I encourage all students to attend a rural placement, where you can enhance your knowledge and skills and develop your own positive impression of life in a rural community.