

2019 NAFEA Scholarship Recipient – Emma Hay

This year I stepped out of my comfort zone and completed a seven-week occupational therapy placement in the Northern Territory. I was based at the newly established Palmerston Regional Hospital, on the Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEM) ward. This provided me with the opportunity to work with people over 65 years experiencing a wide-range of issues, including cognitive impairments, bone fractures, hip replacements, Parkinson's disease, cancer, mental illness, arthritis, epilepsy and malnutrition. This saw me completing the occupational therapy role during admission, goal setting, intervention and discharge planning, along with the support from my two fantastic supervisors.

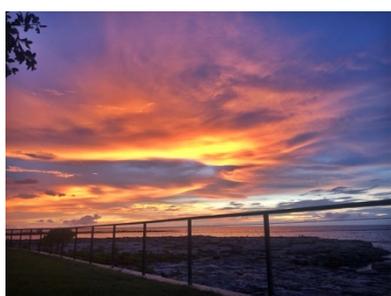


This rural practice education experience provided me with a range of professional skills, including experience with First Australians and a different culture, new communication skills, increased autonomy, confidence, and a deeper understanding of the difficulties both health practitioners and patients experience in a more remote area of Australia.



One of the biggest highlights on this placement was taking my patients on home visits. Being able to gain first hand exposure to the way people live in rural NT communities was something I never imagined. This experience allowed me to increase my competence and appreciation for Indigenous cultural and rural living in a way that wouldn't be achieved in an urban location.

Living in Darwin provided me with a great work life balance. Outside of placement hours saw me making new lifelong friendships, admiring beautiful sunsets, swimming with crocodiles, cruising up the Katherine Gorge, exploring the beautiful Litchfield National Park, swimming at Edith Falls, enjoying local markets and eating delicious food. Not to mention – I experienced some unbelievable, tropical storms!



Before completing this placement, I had no intention of considering working in a rural setting. After experiencing the sense of community and greater breadth of clinical knowledge and skills required, I would certainly consider working in a rural setting. The NT has certainly won my heart.

However, none of this would have been possible without the generous support from NAFEA. Relocating to a different part of Australia for seven weeks came with significant financial constraints. It was because of NAFEA that I could fully immerse myself in an incredible experience without being held back by the costs of living. Thank you NAFEA for all you do to support students like myself.