

## 2019 NAFEA SCHOLARSHIP REPORT – ELLIE TZAFERIS

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The year of 2019 was a very busy and exciting year for me, with my final placements for my degree being undertaken. Ever since I started the course, I always had a goal of being able to undertake a placement outside of Melbourne and experience rural life, as I was open to opportunities for potential rural work as a graduate dietitian.

In March of 2019, I was allocated a Food Service Placement at Bendigo Health. Although it was only a short three-week block, I was able to have my first experience in a rural setting and acquire great organisation and communication skills with the dietetics department and the patients. At the end of this placement, my peer and I were required to present a PowerPoint to the dietetics department and surgical team revolving the use of clear fluid supplements. This was a great experience as it allowed me to develop confidence in presenting in front of a range of clinicians, which is a skill necessary when working in the clinical setting as a dietitian. Not only do I reflect on the clinical experience I gained here, but also the friendships made at my accommodation with the medical students also undertaking placement. To be able to interact with like-minded people and form some great friendships is something I love looking back on, and added to a positive and enjoyable experience at Bendigo.

Following this rural experience, it led me to seek out further opportunities outside of Melbourne, where I was placed at Northeast Health Wangaratta for five weeks for a community health project. Again, staying in accommodation with medical students allowed me to form some great friendships and made me feel more at ease in the rural setting (considering I was the only student from my course there). As I was undertaking this placement, I began to notice that the communication, work ethic and team environment at Northeast Health was so empowering and cohesive, and I was made to feel as though I was not just a student, but also a member of their team. This type of environment has become a major motivation for me to seek out post-graduate work in the rural setting, as I believe I resonate with the qualities and practice I witnessed when on placement there.

I am extremely grateful to have received a NAFEA scholarship for my final year of dietetics, as it allowed me to pursue my goal of undertaking rural placements outside of Melbourne. As it can be costly living away from home for several weeks, this scholarship helped to cover the cost of accommodation and travel expenses. My advice to future students is to take every opportunity and really seek experience outside of your hometown, as it can really give a new perspective and make for such a positive experience. Since completing my course two months ago (and having a well-deserved break), my goal is to look beyond Melbourne for an exciting work opportunity in the New Year!

