

NAFEA Scholarship report

In October 2019 drove 9 ½ hours to Broken Hill in rural New South Wales. I stayed in Broken Hill for 8 weeks to complete my final placement for my Masters of Speech Pathology. This placement was the highlight of my whole degree and taught me invaluable skills that I can't wait bring into the workforce next year.

I worked as a Speech Pathologist in a rural school as part of a student-led program, where I was able to deliver therapy independently and liaise with parents and teachers, an opportunity I had not had before. Working at a rural school gave me the chance to work with children from a range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, in particular children from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.

I am so thankful for the experience of working with this particular population, as I was able to learn first-hand how to adapt my sessions appropriately to best support children who use Aboriginal Australian English versus Standard Australian English.

I was also lucky enough to attend several interdisciplinary professional development sessions as part of the placement. Here I developed my skills working within a multidisciplinary team, including with Occupational Therapists and Social Workers.

Since being home after the placement, I am continually discovering how unique and beneficial these skills are. When I have attended job interviews employers were impressed by my experience working with a diverse population as well as working within a multidisciplinary team.

I am so thankful for the assistance I received from the NAFEA scholarship, as whilst the placement was incredibly supportive, there were food, travel and general living costs associated with living in Broken Hill for 8 weeks. I was nervous commencing the placement knowing I would have no income for the 2 months, in particular as I'd never lived out of home before. The NAFEA scholarship enabled me to live comfortably for the placement, and also take up extra opportunities that I may not have taken for fear of associated costs (such as weekend trips to national parks and heritage sites).

I am so excited to bring my knowledge from this placement into the workforce next year, and I am definitely considering moving back to Broken Hill to work in the future because of the fantastic experiences I had.

Katherine Ashbolt