

In October 2019 I, a second-year nursing student, travelled to Nhulunbuy in East Arnhem land. The five-week voluntary placement offered me an immersive experience into Indigenous culture as well as a sneak peek into what it's like to work in a remote community of Australia. Receiving a scholarship from the NAFEA made this placement accessible and afford to me.

Working in the community and surrounds of Nhulunbuy, East Arnhem land has clearly demonstrated the importance of equitable access to healthcare for all people in Australia. I can confidently say that the amazing staff at Gove district hospital and Miwatji Aboriginal health cooperation has inspired me to chase a career in remote nursing. I love the increased scope of practice available to staff and the chance to provide holistic care to each patient and their family. Working and living in Nhulunbuy over the past five weeks allowed me to immerse myself in the community, meet people and learn about how other people live. Completing my five-week placement has built my confidence to return in the future when I have more experience and knowledge.

The scholarship I received from the NAFEA was an invaluable resource allowing me to complete this placement. With the money I received I was able to afford the flights and accommodation as well as an allowance of fresh food. Having safe accommodation and affordable transport allowed me to thrive in Nhulunbuy and make the most of the experience. Access fresh fruit and vegetables was another priority for myself, I wanted to maintain my healthy lifestyle even though I was away from home. Having the NAFEA scholarship allowed me to achieve these goals and eased the pressure of being away from home and without work and income.

Working with the staff and among the community in East Arnhem land I have acquired many skills which I can take home to Victoria. Working in the community I gained experience using CARPA (Central Australian Rural Practitioners Association) a book designed for use in remote Australia allowing nurses to diagnose and treat common illness when Doctors are inaccessible. Working in the emergency department of the hospital I improved my skills completing clinical techniques I have learnt through university which all the staff members welcomed. In addition to improving my skills within the hospital I was invited and encouraged to be taking part in education days which were just as beneficial. Due to the relaxed environment of the healthcare system in Nhulunbuy questions were always encouraged and the staff were welcoming of students. As a result of all this support I feel I have a great deal of knowledge and skills to share with my own cohort when I return home.

A combination of all of these experiences across the five weeks enables me to significantly improve my professional skills and I look forward to sharing my knowledge with my classmates when I return to University next year. The overall experience has been very enjoyable, with support from fellow students and staff, amazing land to see and enjoy on the weekends my five weeks in East Arnhem land has been a highlight of my nursing career.

Olivia Curran