

2019 NAFEA Scholarship Report

How has the experience contributed to acquiring professional skills?

As a student of Nutrition and Dietetics, it is required that I meet the competency standards set by the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA, 2015) before I can be eligible to graduate. By meeting these standards it demonstrates that we possess the skills required to practice professionally in the field of nutrition. While not all students will undertake a placement in a rural or remote location, there are many benefits in doing so. Prior to completing my remote placement at Apunipima Cape York Health Council in Cairns, I did not possess these skills required to practice as a Community Dietitian. At the completion of my 6-week placement in Cairns my supervisors and I agreed that I had demonstrated all of the elements from the competency standards required for student dietitians. Domain 1.5 (DAA, 2015) requires the demonstration of cultural competence such as the ability to reflect on my own culture and its influence on practise and to work respectfully with people from different cultures. In a metropolitan location, this particular domain may have been difficult to demonstrate in practice, while, at Apunipima I had the opportunity to work alongside many Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

How has the experience influenced your personal motivations to work in a rural setting?

Prior to the completion of my community nutrition placement in Cairns, I wasn't sure which field I aimed to work in post-graduation. After the experience of working in an amazing organisation such as Apunipima, surrounded by supportive co-workers who are passionate about making a difference in Cape York Communities, I was positive that this was now my dream job.

How has the NAFEA scholarship assisted with undertaking a rural placement?

Student placement can often cause financial difficulties for those who are not financially supported by a spouse or family member. Moving temporarily to a remote location in addition to managing without paid work can be even more difficult. Completing my student placement in Cairns required me to book accommodation in a popular tourist city during a peak time of year whilst continuing to pay rent for my house in Brisbane and my weekly food. This would not have been possible without assistance from NAFEA. While I did have some money saved, it wouldn't have been enough for the entire 6 weeks away from home. As such, receiving the NAFEA scholarship allowed me to spend less time stressing about how I was going to 'make ends meet'. Instead, I felt financially comfortable and was able to focus my attention on acquiring the required professional skills of a Dietitian.

References:

Dietitians Association of Australia. (2015). National Competency Standards. Retrieved from <https://daa.asn.au/maintaining-professional-standards/ncs/>