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My name is Samantha Jeffree and I studied a Bachelor of Behavioral Science (Psychology) and Bachelor of Social Work, graduating in December 2019. In July of this year, I travelled to Alice Springs, Northern Territory, to complete my final Social Work placement. Over the course of 16 weeks I completed 500 hours of placement with Territory Families and worked in remote Aboriginal communities surrounding Alice Springs. Rural placement was an opportunity I was extremely excited to undertake and the NAFEA scholarship made it possible.

The NAFEA scholarship made rural placement more accessible to me and assisted me greatly throughout the 16 weeks, as it reduced the stress around expenses and costs. The NAFEA scholarship permitted me to rent student accommodation and travel from Brisbane to Alice Springs independently. This financial assistance allowed me to focus completely on my placement and engage in experiences and learnings wholly. Through this, I was able to develop my knowledge, understanding and gain both personal and professional skills that have assisted in transitioning into practice.

Placement within the context of Alice Springs and remote communities was completely different to my experiences in any other part of Australia. I faced many new experiences and daily challenges through which I was able to develop my professional skills and refine my framework for practice. I had the opportunity to work with many diverse populations, organisations, families and individuals that taught me about the importance of culture, collaboration, connection and communication. Working within remote communities was an invaluable opportunity to advance my understanding of the complexities Indigenous families' experience every day that impact health and wellbeing. I appreciated the importance Aboriginal people placed on connection and relationships and learnt to change my approach to practice, focusing more on the person and their experiences than the situation. It was a privilege to experience life in remote communities, to speak with community members and to learn from them and the memories made I will cherish forever.

Due to this placement and the NAFEA scholarship, I found my passion, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and fell in love with the Alice Springs community and culture. I have been fortunate enough to find employment in Alice Springs and will be moving back in January to commence work in Intensive Family Support.

I am incredibly grateful to the NAFEA team that made my rural placement possible. Rural placement is something I would highly recommend to all students, the experiences and learnings that you take away from it will see you grow both professionally and personally.

Samantha Jeffree