

Hello 😊 In my final and fourth year of my Nutrition and Dietetics degree I had the opportunity to travel to Weipa (a small mining town in the Cape York peninsula) for my community and public health placement.

I have been anticipating my community and public placement with much excitement from my first year of university and being able to complete my placement in Weipa really allowed for an immersive experience full of professional and personal learnings. I spent 5-weeks working on a project at an Aged and Disability care service in a Napranum (an Aboriginal community that is a 10-minute drive from Weipa) with the aim to listen and learn from the identified stakeholder groups to ensure the meals made at the centre are satisfying for the clients. Through this experience I was able to build my capacity to adapt and tailor my communication to the wide cross-section of stakeholders, whether we had the opportunity to yarn with the Indigenous Elders or the Support-workers or meet with the Manager and Chef. I also learnt about the importance of always looking to and build on the existing strengths of a community to implement the initiatives and what this looks like in practice.

I also had the opportunity to attend multidisciplinary professional learning experiences on zoom as part of the placement. Here I developed my understanding of other professions such as Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech pathology and Medicine as well as the value of culture and community for our First Nations people.

In the 5 weeks that I was in Weipa, I became much more receptive to the prospect of working in a rural setting. This was because two reasons. Firstly, becoming more familiar with the challenges faced by Indigenous people living in remote communities like Napranum really highlighted the need to have an increasing number of health professionals that are able to dedicate themselves to learning alongside the community about closing the gap. Simultaneously, the tangible sense of warmth and hospitality that I felt in the community created a welcoming environment that I loved being in.

The NAFEA scholarship assisted me immensely during my placement, because the financial strain of travelling as well as the cost of living in a remote community were lifted and as a result, I was able to wholly focus on my learning and embrace opportunities to meet and build lifelong friendships which I would have been hesitant to do otherwise to do. Once again, I am truly grateful for NAFEA's extension of generosity and support and would 100% encourage any future students to take the leap and to consider a rural placement.

- Misa Mojarrabi