

Stewart Roper

Stewart Roper was born in Scotland and immigrated to Australia with his parents when he was six years old, settling in Elizabeth to the north of Adelaide.

Stewart's original tertiary studies were in zoology and biochemistry. After several years travel and work in a variety of areas he embarked on a nursing career, becoming a registered nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH) in 1984.

Following several years at the RAH, Stewart commenced work at Flinders University, Adelaide, in 1988 as a biology lecturer in the undergraduate and postgraduate nursing courses.

In early October, 1990, Stewart finished packing the back of the Valiant ute, pulled over the tarpaulin and farewelled family and friends. His destination was Amata in the remote north-west of South Australia, 1500 km away. He had never driven further north than Port Augusta, only 300 km from Adelaide.

Following orientation with Nganampa Health Council in Alice Springs, Stewart headed south for hundreds of kilometres on corrugated dirt roads to Amata, where the people were nearly all dark-skinned and spoke another language, yet he was in his home state of South Australia. Everyone he approached seemed indifferent to him when he introduced himself as the new nurse, but very interested in how much he wanted for the ute.

Stewart's original intention was to stay for six months to a year. He eventually left after nine and a half years full time as a community health nurse. Stewart still works with Nganampa Health Council and returns regularly some twenty years after his arrival. He's not completely sure how this happened, but somehow the character of the people and magic of the landscape overcame the challenges of living and working in such a remote location.

In addition to nursing duties, Stewart has also been involved with the health service and communities in interventions to reduce petrol sniffing and promote sexual health. He is currently employed as a projects officer with a wide variety of duties including entering and updating biographics, and assisting with child health and immunisation, ophthalmology, audiology and sexual health programs.