

Student paper

Carol Mudford¹

¹National Rural Health Students' Network

The conference gave me the opportunity to meet health professionals and people from organisations across the country, hear about contemporary issues and successes, and contribute recommendations for government and organisational action.

Overall, I was inspired and awestruck by the passionate dedication of everyone there. It is heartening to see the genuine compassion and understanding that rural health professionals have for their clients and their communities, and the passionate zeal with which they advocate for them. The conference, and the people I met there, have made me proud to be entering the rural health workforce, and excited about the future.

All the presentations and speakers were interesting and informative, covering a wide range of topics and issues surrounding all aspects of rural health, from the National Disability Insurance Scheme, to mental health, Indigenous health, equity and access, aged care, and much more. Of particular interest to me, as a student, were the sessions surrounding future workforce issues. It was fantastic to see student issues being discussed at a national and political level, and to hear professional recognition of the inequity within the current system, especially for nursing and allied health students. The NRHA embraced these issues, such as the inequitable lack of support for rural nursing and allied health placements, and the insufficient number of graduate/intern placements for new-graduates. This was recognised in one of the 15 final recommendations to government from the conference.

Seeing the value and recognition of student issues to the health professions at a broader level has made me realise how vital the student voice is. As we are the future workforce, and this workforce is facing shortages and serious issues, it is now clear to me that ensuring student equity, and providing training pathways for rural careers, is essential. Therefore, our experiences and our perspectives on the health system, and the training systems, make a valuable contribution to the health reform discussions.

On top of all the health-related business of the conference, the social calendar was also jam packed and made for a fun and busy week. With 100 students, and another 900 rural delegates, we met like-minded friendly people at every turn, and explored the sights of Adelaide.

In all, I am very grateful to the NRHSN for their Conferences of National Significance funding (CoNS), and I strongly recommend to every student out there to make the most of this opportunity. Check out www.nrhsn.org.au.