

Managing expectations and being flexible for sustainable course delivery

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For many years, the Northern Territory Medical Program, Flinders University, has placed final year medical students in Nhulunbuy, a small very remote Northern Territory town, for 6-12 week placements. These students learn much from exposure to a broad breadth of patient presentation. They learn through placements in the regional hospital, Aboriginal Medical Services and General Practice. The curriculum is defined by daily events within the context. The main goal of these placements is to strengthen the students' exposure to clinical medicine and the remote context.

In 2014 NTMP offered a 6 month duration placement in the local hospital for students in their penultimate year. The difference for these students is the important curriculum focus on learning clinical knowledge and developing clinical reasoning skills despite context.

The context of this remote town was one in significant and rapid change impacting on the population health. This change was brought about by the loss of more than 1000 jobs at the alumina refinery.

This presentation will explore the strengths and challenges of learning the fundamentals of clinical medicine within a remote community. In particular we will present the specific issues identified by the students and the teaching staff as the time progressed and importance of a flexible responsive relationship with the university program. The impact of the refinery closure on the student learning experience will be discussed.