

Student Clinical Placement Accommodation Website Portal— a collaborative stress-free approach for students

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Aims: To provide easy access to low-cost, high quality accommodation for health science students on placements in South West Victoria and South East South Australia through a custom designed website utilising owned, leased and partnership accommodation.

Method and approach: Accommodation is recognised as being a major factor in supporting students on rural placement.

The Greater Green Triangle (GGT) University Department of Rural Health purchased or leased suitable housing in various towns around the GGT region and entered into partnership agreements with rural health services to share existing student lodgings.

A custom designed website was created with a student portal consisting of a fully automated online booking system, similar to 'wotif'. The website included details of accommodation and information pertaining to each town in the GGT region. It has been expanded to include the following program functions:

- bookings
- payments
- cancellations
- emails
- policies.

Progress/outcomes: The website has been designed so that it is a gateway of information on the region.

Students find it easy to locate and self-book accommodation online to suit their needs.

It has greatly reduced the administrative tasks for Departmental and Hospital partnership staff. Once students are registered on the website, whether they utilise the accommodation or not, they are provided with information on social and educational activities being conducted each week in their placement town, encouraging them to immerse themselves in the town and its people.

Conclusions: The GGT UDRH has seen a considerable increase in the number of students undertaking placement in the region over the past 10 years.

The number of student placement weeks has grown from 1000 in 2005 to more than 5000 in 2013. We anticipate similar numbers in 2014. The Department has also been recognised as the highest performing UDRH in this program area since 2005.

This clearly demonstrates the value of the online booking system and of the accommodation that is available in this region.