

# Enhancing Rural and Remote Health Care Through Community-Focused Clinical Placements

## The challenge

- Clinical placements expose nursing students to various health care settings, influencing their career decisions in the early years of study.
- Allowing nursing students to experience healthcare provision in rural and/or remote communities is crucial for developing a future health workforce with broad skills and a good understanding of the social determinants of health.
- However, ensuring sustainable healthcare services in these regions poses a challenge due to high costs, communication barriers, and a lack of support structures.



“After this experience, I’ve fallen in love with remote area nursing, and that’s what I want to do.”

## What did we do?



- Holmesglen Institute of TAFE approached APNA to develop bespoke clinical placements for its nursing students in remote communities.
- The first placement took place in late 2024, with second-year student Elise Sims travelling to the remote Indigenous community of Maningrida in the Northern Territory.
- Our team overcame logistical challenges, from ensuring the placement met compliance requirements to getting her there without any available commercial flights—the Royal Flying Doctor Service came to the rescue.
- On placement, Elise applied everything she learned in her coursework. She worked on projects related to rheumatic heart disease, chronic condition management, and early childhood health.
- Elise consolidated many clinical skills and had opportunities she would not have had in an acute setting. She faced challenges unique to remote nursing, including being the only student nurse and navigating cultural differences while working in the community.
- The placement inspired Elise to shift her career focus to remote area nursing, and she says APNA’s support was crucial to ensuring she had the best experience.

## What did we learn?

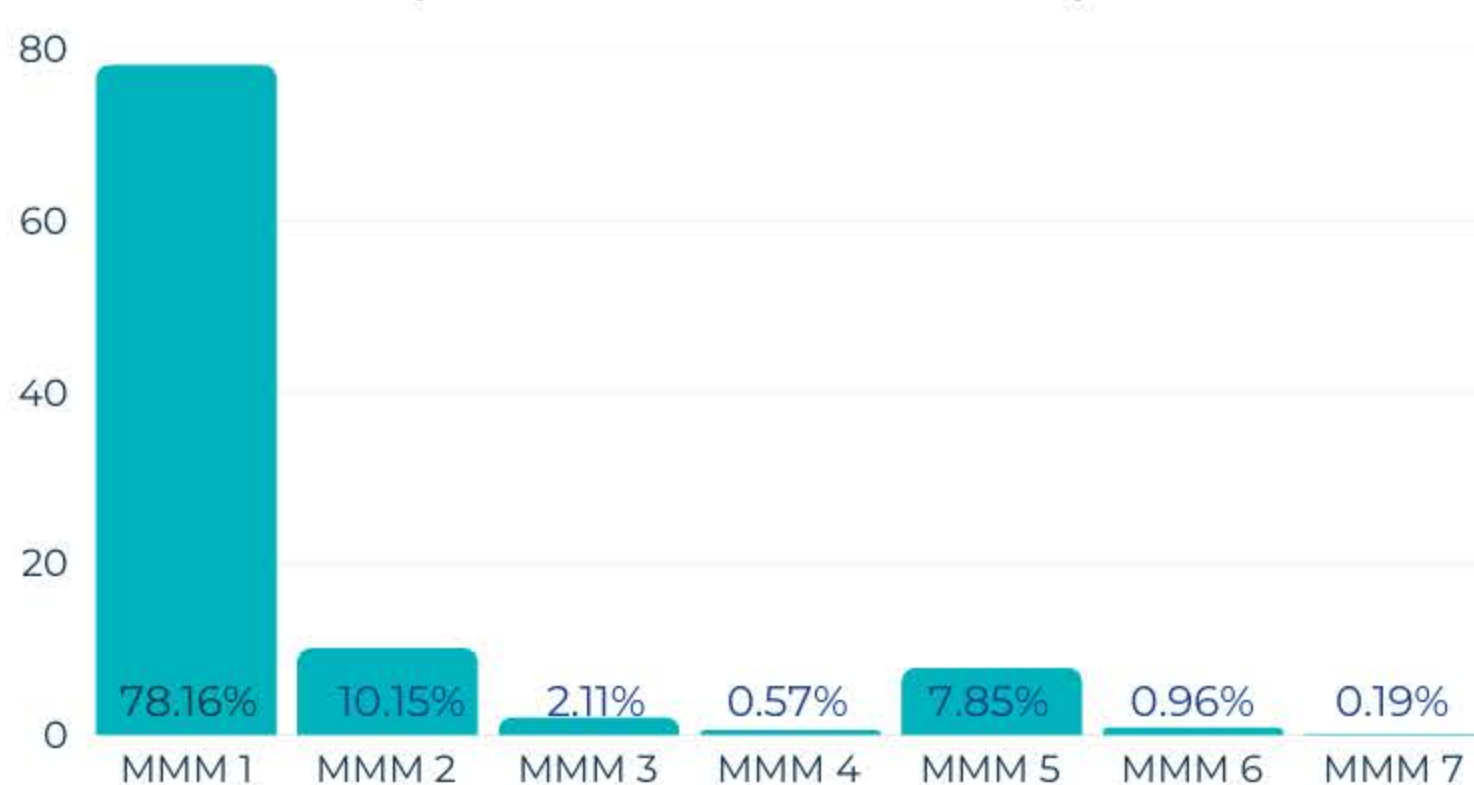
- Remote placements offer unique learning opportunities not typically found in urban or acute settings, giving students a broader understanding of primary health care and community involvement.
- Challenges experienced in a remote setting highlight the complexities of working in an isolated setting, as well as the need for self-advocacy and cultural training.
- Cultural competence is essential, particularly in remote areas where local customs and traditions must be respected.
- Hands-on experience in a remote community can inspire long-term career choices and increase interest in rural and remote health care.
- However, it is challenging to arrange placements outside of metropolitan areas thanks to time, travel and accommodation costs - so far, close to 80% of our placements have been in Australian cities.
- It is also easier for education providers to send students on placements in acute settings.

## What’s next?

### Facilitate respectful consultation with local healthcare professionals and the community to ensure:

- Placements are mutually beneficial, supporting students, workplaces and supervising nurses.
- Delivery of authentic, well-structured placements centred on community development and social determinants of health.
- Students are welcomed, supported and involved in community activities.
- Connections are created that will see students returning after graduation.

80% of placements occurred in capital cities.



Placement count by remoteness (Modified Monash Model)

To learn more about APNA’s National Nursing Clinical Placement Program please scan the QR code.

placements@apna.asn.au 1300 303 184

