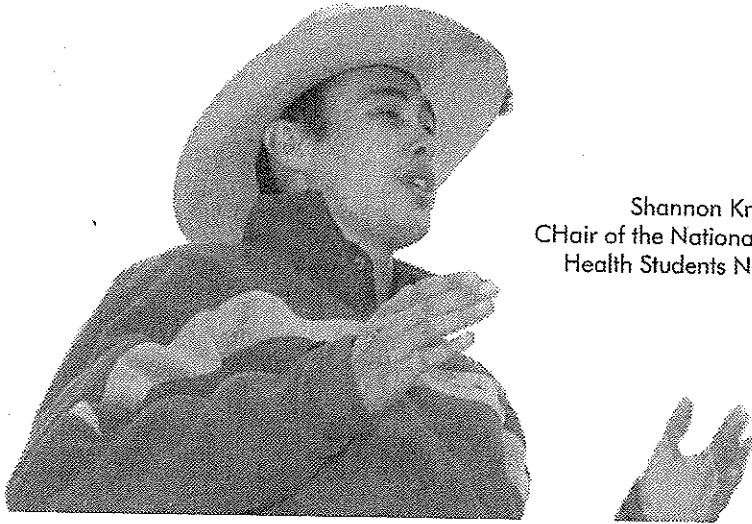


DOES ANYONE NEED A DOCTOR?

Rural Appreciation Weekend
1-4 October 2010



Shannon Knott Co
CHair of the National Rural
Health Students Network

OVER THE OCTOBER long weekend, 130 health students from across Australia came together for the annual "Rural Appreciation Weekend" (RAW). This event is unique in that it is not only targets medical, nursing and allied health students in a multidisciplinary fashion but it also promotes the lifestyle that can be achieved in Rural Australia.

Many of the students remarked that they had never been so far west before and certainly have never been on a working farm. When students arrived out at "Oakfield" farm Dunedoo they were introduced to what would be their accommodation for the next few nights - tunnel army tents! Again many students had not been camping before so this was very much a new experience for them.

On the first night everyone were treated to a meal at the local "Bowling Club" and were able to mingle with some of our well known locals identities, including Deputy Mayor Murray Coe and Mayor Peter Shinton, who welcomed the students to the Warrumbungle Shire and let them know the story of how they ended up in the bush. Tour guests finished their first night off around the campfire sharing stories with the other RAW delegates.

Day two saw the students welcomed to country by Wayne Krause, a Waradjuri man who performed a welcoming ceremony and shared stories about the land that they were on.

It was then down to work with the students being broken up into small teams and rotated through workshops including snake bite first aid, Indigenous Cultural awareness and other workshops designed to give them a

taste of farming life such as a farm tour and sheep work with local rouseabout Mick Smith. The naivety of some students really showed on this day with one student asking how we mowed the grass on the property. But that is what the weekend is about - to educate city students about the ways of the country and importantly to show them that they can have a great work-life balance out in the bush if they choose to work there. Certainly the Saturday night of RAW was all about showing the students that we can have fun out here in the bush! Students partied the night away in the shearing shed at "Oakfield" with a mock bush ball set up on the farm for them.

The Sunday of RAW was designed to give students a taste of what it is like to work in rural communities. They first heard from Dr Peter Brendt from the Royal Flying Doctors Service in Dubbo who highlighted the great opportunities that can be had through working in rural and remote Australia. He shared many of his adventures of working with the RFDS and particularly told students about how much he enjoyed working out in the bush. Sophie Heathcoate, a remote area nurse next spoke about her views on remote nursing and how enriching a career path rural health is. Sophie inspired students through the experiences she has had and her passion for rural health. Students also heard from Trish Neal, a Gamilaraay woman from Collarenebri, spoke candidly about the issues facing Indigenous Australians in remote Australia and how our students could make a real difference in closing the gap. She followed this by cooking

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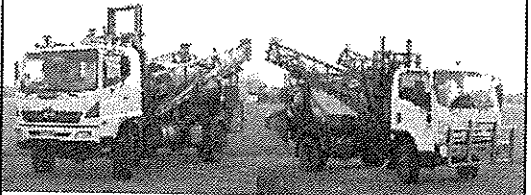
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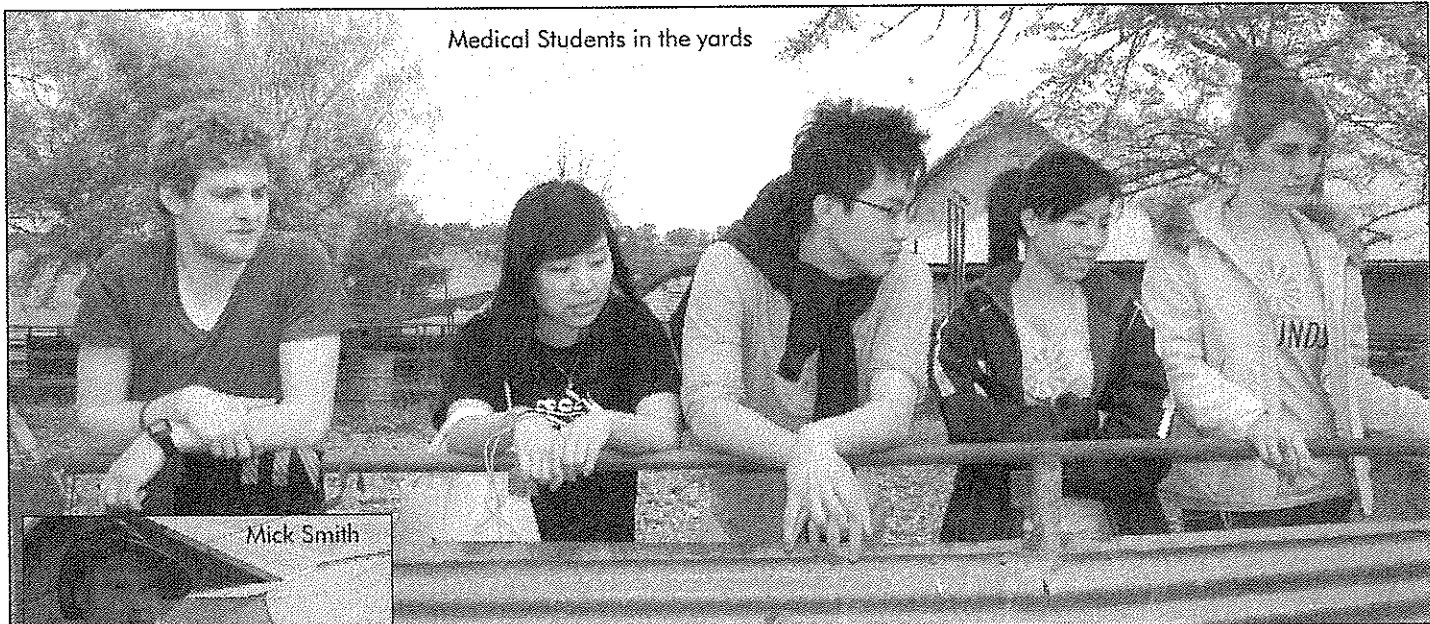
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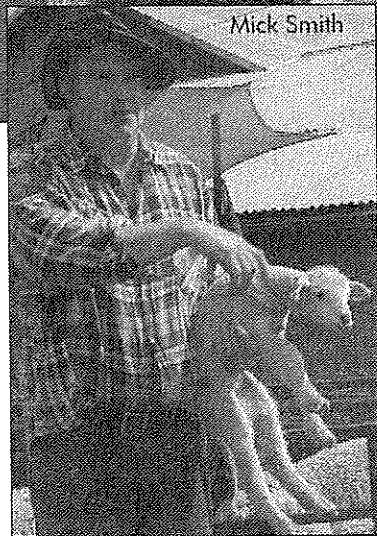
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Medical Students in the yards



Mick Smith

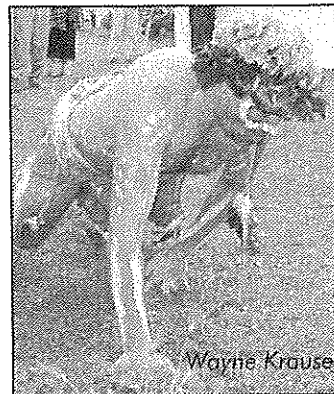


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"Jonny Cakes," (a type of damper made by many Aboriginal peoples) with her partner Donny for all the delegates at RAW.

RAW delegates finished their weekend by participating in team challenges, designed to get them working together in multidisciplinary teams as well as to push them beyond their normal boundaries.

Overall the weekend was a huge success. Students came away with a much greater appreciation of rural lifestyle and were able to see first-hand that they can achieve their desired work-life balance by choosing a career in rural or remote Australia. Here's hoping many of them choose to work out here when they graduate!



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