

What a RAW-esome weekend!

Nikki Temple

The 2010 Rural Appreciation Weekend (RAW) was held from the 1-4 October at the 'Oakfield' property owned by the Nott family in Dunedoo. Approximately 130 multi-disciplinary students from medicine, nursing and allied health converged on the farm for a weekend of camping, farming workshops and cultural activities. We were also fortunate enough to hear from a number of speakers who had worked in the local rural community in various health practices.

The adventure kicked off with a long bus trip that saw us arriving in Dunedoo just after 4pm on Friday. All of the delegates were invited to attend dinner at the local Bowling Club that evening where we were welcomed to the area by Shannon Nott and the Warrumbungle Shire Council Mayor Peter Shinton. Saturday involved a tour of the Oakfield Farm, snake envenomation display (that of course included first aid), cultural training workshop complete with boomerang throwing, and sheep work demonstrations.

Sunday consisted of guest speakers who provided a great deal of insight into working with those living in rural communities. The guest speakers – Peter Brendt an intensive care doctor from the Royal Flying Doctors Service, Sophie Heathcote a remote area nurse, and Patricia Neal who works in Indigenous health – treated us to their personal experiences both moving to and living in rural communities where they now work as highly esteemed health care professionals. Students from the National Rural Health Student's Network also spoke about the network and what opportunities exist to encourage student involvement. The RAW Country Championships on Sunday afternoon saw the rural health clubs come head to head in a friendly competition that tested our sheep herding, team work and problem solving abilities.

A huge thank you to everyone who contributed in organising RAW 2010, especially the members of the Nott family who so kindly let the delegates take over their farm for the long weekend. An honourable mention is also needed for Kay Kent who did such an amazing job in organising the trip for the seventeen lucky SHARP members who participated. Lastly, the weekend would not run as smoothly without the support of all rural health clubs involved, their members and sponsors of the event.

RAW 2010 provided a unique opportunity to meet new students, both from our own University and others, with similar interests, to experience living in the bush and to understand how future health care professionals will make a difference working in rural communities. This weekend is a must for all health students and I can't wait to head back next year!