

STUDY RURAL GUIDE

PREFACE

Welcome to the Study Rural Guide 2022!

A joint initiative between UNSW MedSoc, RAHMS, AWMSS, CHUMS, PMS, WRUMS, this guide is a comprehensive resource which answers the many questions students may have when considering a rural placement for Coursework, ILP/Honours, or Phase 3.

We are very grateful to the contributors for their help putting together this guide. It is this generous giving of time which reflects the established culture of students helping students in UNSW Med.

2022 UPDATES

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With warmest regards,

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WHY GO RURAL

Going rural is a pretty damn fine time. It opens up massive opportunity to create memories, learning opportunities and friendships you'll truly value once we graduate. Here's a quick rundown on some of the major advantages for students going rural compared to the city-slickers.

Academic opportunity

While Sydney hospitals are saturated with students from UNSW and more, rural health campuses have far less competition. Thus, rural placements offer virtually any ward-round, clinic or scrub-in experience! For example, cannulation and clinical skills, sitting in (and assisting!) birthing suites. It's not uncommon for consultants to know students' names, giving incredible opportunity to make connections from as early as 3rd year. Smaller classes mean lectures are run as tutorials, usually by consultants who guide you in a clinically relevant manner. UNSW has invested millions of dollars in the campuses, making them beautiful environments for study and leisure. Students have out-of business hours access to uniwide, air-con, free printing, fully-stocked medical libraries, plush sofas, and plenty of large screen TVs for after class movie screenings.

The people involved in your placement

The Rural Clinical School societies run everything from one-on-one mentoring, academic and clinical tutorials, to social and sporting events. Whether you're interested in getaway road-trips to sprawling beaches, the snow or the wine country (#culture), heading out of the city has a lot to offer. Your Clubs are your main point of call, but throughout the year, they also engage with RAHMS for rural focussed support and MedSoc as the peak representative body for rural advocacy to Faculty. The administration and teaching staff are incredibly approachable, understanding and accommodating. Students feel more like colleagues than staff as they join you for trivia, dragon-boat races, pool parties, and Bachelorette screenings on the weekends.

The rural lifestyle

While we all as students cringe at Sydney's traffic jams, rent in excess of \$250/week, and pretty crammed lifestyle, the rural campuses have great options for super cheap accommodation close to the RCS. While these places can be walking distance from your air-conditioned lecture theatre, houses and apartments either in a National Park or on the beach are an easy drive away from the hospital and are much cheaper than those in the Greater Sydney Area.

Coffs Harbour



CLINICAL ALLOCATION POLICY

The Guidelines for the Allocation of Students in the Medicine Program to Clinical Environment (hereafter 'the Guidelines') governs the preferencing and allocation process in UNSW Medicine. We highly encourage you to understand all sections of the guidelines to allow you to make an informed decision when deciding your Coursework or Phase 3 preferences. Important points from the Guidelines are contained below*.

PLEASE NOTE: At the time of publication of this Guide (March 2019), the Guidelines were under review. The editors do not expect the Guidelines to change significantly, however we encourage students to read the updated Guidelines when they are released by the Faculty. *For the current guidelines please click here.*

1. Rural Student Entry Scheme (RSES) students receive priority for rural sites, for both Coursework and Phase 3. There are approximately 18 spots at each of the four Phase 3 rural sites (Albury-Wodonga, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, and Wagga Wagga), resulting in around 72 Phase 3 rural spots overall. Each cohort in UNSW Medicine contains approximately 54 RSES students. Therefore, RSES students can generally assume they will receive whichever rural site they preference for Phase 3, if it is their first preference (this is less true for Phase 2). The exception to this would be where a rural site receives more first preferences from RSES students than there are spots, following which a computer will randomly select the required number of students, as per the Guidelines.

2. RSES students are required to undertake an extended rural placement for a minimum of 24 months. RSES students can expect to spend Phase 3 at rural campus. Therefore, an RSES student who completed Phase 1 at the Kensington campus and who is wishing to remain in Sydney for Coursework can attempt to do so by preferencing first a metropolitan site. However, such students should be aware that if there are unfilled rural sites based on first preferences, it is likely that RSES students will be allocated to those unfilled rural sites, even if they did not preference a rural site as a first preference (see 7.5.4 in the Guidelines).



CLINICAL ALLOCATION POLICY

3. Students completing Phase 1 at Port Macquarie are expected to remain in either Port Macquarie or Coffs Harbour for the entirety of their degree.
4. Swaps must be organised within two weeks of allocations being announced. Swaps between two metropolitan sites or two rural sites are allowed. Swaps between a metropolitan and a rural campus will only be considered “in significant circumstances”, and must be approved by the Head of the Rural Clinical School (see 'Contacts' at the end of this Guide).
5. Allocations may be appealed within two weeks of allocations being announced, as per Clause 6 of the Guidelines.
6. Students who complete Year 3 at a rural site will generally be allowed to return to the same site in Phase 3, however there is no guarantee that this will occur.
7. Students who complete ILP/Honours at a rural site will have preference for that same site in Phase 3.

RELOCATION ALLOWANCE

Faculty provides a \$500 Relocation Allowance for students moving to a rural campus in Phase 2 or 3, for extended placements only. This Allowance covers costs of moving and relocating, such as flights or fuel, removal vans, furniture storage, or terminating a home lease, up to \$500. The Allowance will only be paid if legitimate receipts or invoices are provided to the clinical school to which the student is moving within two months of being relocated.

Full details of this allowance, and how to apply, can be found by [clicking here](#).

ALBURY-WODONGA

First edition authors: Lucy McCrum, Damian Gill

Second edition authors: Jordan Vivian, Jimmy Niddrie, Brittany Hill, Lily Fitzpatrick

Third edition authors: Kyle Green, Caitlin Reid, Corinne Antonoff, Dayna Duncan



The border towns of Albury and Wodonga boast the most vibrant communities of all the rural locations. With a population of 100,000 people, 3 universities, 3 hours to Melbourne, and being surrounded by wineries and snow fields, it really has everything. Servicing a health catchment of more than 250,000 people, our two public hospitals are full of a diverse range of general medicine, general surgery, paediatric, rehabilitation and psychiatric placements.

One of the unique things about studying here is the experience of being ‘on the border.’ Albury and Wodonga each have their own hospital which we work between, and that’s not even counting the three private hospitals we have access to! This means plenty of varied experiences, and learning the nuances of both the NSW and Victorian healthcare systems.

ALBURY-WODONGA

Albury Wodonga Medical Students' Society

The Albury Wodonga Medical Students' Society (AWMSS) is a busy group which encompasses Academic, Social, Sporting and Community support. They are also your advocacy representatives to the clinical school and MedSoc via the four year-reps and executive team.

To keep up to date with what the AWMSS team and students are doing, follow our socials and check out our past instagram stories!

- 📘 Albury Wodonga Medical Students' Society
- 📷 alburywodongamedsoc

Academics

The academics team put on tutorials and events throughout the year, including:

- Exam preparation tutorials
- Mock Exams
- Journal Club
- General Tutes
- Case of the week
- Spot diagnosis
- ECG of the week
- Year 3/5 Mentoring

Wellbeing & Community

The wellbeing and community team put on events and initiatives to support you as you move to Albury and integrate into the community, and throughout your years of study. This includes the 'Doctors for Doctors' program, Teddy Bear Hospital, and events including 'Paint and Sip' and the knitting club.



ALBURY-WODONGA

Albury Wodonga Medical Students' Society

Social

The socials team organise events throughout the year from Start to End of Year Dinner and the biggest event on the calendar - Winery Walkabout. Events are also run for students with a variety of interests including picnics, trivia, board game night, and laser tag.

Sport

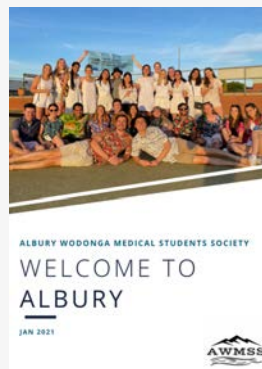
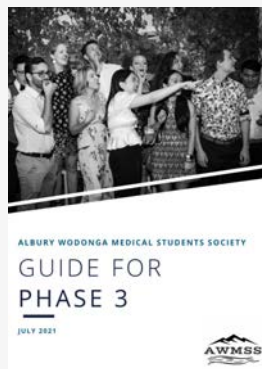
AWMSS students can participate in weekly social sports with CSU, touch footy in the first half of the year and mixed netball in the second half of the year.

Community Connections

AWMSS also has connections with local organisations through sponsorship and support agreements. This includes the Border Medical Association (BMA), and Border Association of HMOs (BAHMO).

Other Resources produced by AWMSS available upon request include;

- AWMSS Welcome to Albury Guide
 - With tips on where to go for the best coffee, ice cream, day trips to nearby towns and local picnic spots and walking trails
- AWMSS Guide for Phase 3
 - An insiders guide on how to tackle each Phase 3 rotation with some local Albury-Wodonga tips & tricks



ALBURY-WODONGA

Studying in Albury

In Albury there aren't sequences, instead students preference the rotations:

- For the first three courses of the year
- For the two courses at the end of 5th year and the two courses for the start of 6th year

You can also note a preference for which students you would like to be with. The clinical school staff are very accommodating

Year 5

Surg	Med	ED		
Med	ED	Surg	Paeds/GP	Paeds/GP
ED	Surg	Med	O&G/Psych	O&G/Psych

Year 6

Paeds/GP	Paeds/GP	Selective	Exams	PRINT
O&G/Psych	O&G/Psych			

Extra academic opportunities in Albury include;

- Weekly simulation lab clinical skills sessions which are excellent on topics ranging from BLS to laparoscopy, run by Dr Eric Moyle (intensivist)
- Most students will be expected to undertake a placement in Griffith, which can be done in paeds, obstetrics, surgery or medicine.
- Most students will complete two of their eight week GP rotation in a rural practice, with the other six weeks in a local Albury/ Wodonga practice
- The selective term in fifth year consists of four one week placements which may include;
 - Anaesthetics
 - Drug and Alcohol
 - Orthopaedics
 - Radiology
 - ICU
 - Ophthalmology
 - Palliative Care

ALBURY-WODONGA

Accommodation

In terms of living, most students live in East Albury, which is walking distance from the hospital. Rent is super cheap, and generally about \$100/week. There is also free student parking at the hospital.

Transport

It is almost impossible to get around Albury without a car as public transport is definitely lacking, and you will have to go to Wodonga. If you're in third year, you may be able to get away with not having your own car if you source a bike or a few good mates to drive with. However, not having your own car or license can pose logistical issues, particularly in Phase 3.

Work opportunities

In terms of earning some spare pocket change and paying for rent, there are plenty of part-time job opportunities throughout the hustling bustling city. People have previously worked in bars, restaurants, catering companies, the cinema, Bottle-O's, retail shops, the roller-skating rink... the list goes on. Tutoring and baby-sitting are also very popular and readily available options.

Lifestyle

What do we do in Albury? If AWMSS hasn't organised your weekend for you, there is plenty to do around Albury. With plenty of uni's in town the nightlife is existent and a good time is always had at Paddy's. A summer afternoon spent floating down the majestic Murray River, or a winter evening huddled around the warmth of the community wood fired pizza oven never goes astray. Being so close to Melbourne there are heaps of cute coffee brunch places - make sure you check out the Proprietor and Early Bird! Places like Beechworth, Rutherglen and Mulwala are all within an hour drive. You can even do a day trip to Falls Creek for a day of skiing in the winter! Melbourne is also only 3.5 hours away - a short drive or a \$30 train!

We should also mention the weather. Albury does get extremes of temperature - very hot and very cold! However, most of the facilities and houses in the area are built well to deal with this weather. Also there is no wind like Sydney and the sun stays out, so it's a nice cold! And if that doesn't comfort you, remember the snow is only an hour and a half away!

THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Submission by Caitlin Reid (2022)

I've been at the Albury Wodonga campus since my 3rd year! Originally a metro student I only intended to come for one year but loved it so much I decided to finish my degree here. The learning opportunities here have been second to none. By the start of 6th year I've been able to intubate patients, perform multiple birth catches, close multiple surgical cases and relocate dislocated hips. AWMSS organises various academic tutes throughout the year and mock exams to guarantee you'll get the most out of your learning. Also, doctors here are eager to teach and welcome students to challenge themselves in the clinical setting.

Outside of medicine, living here has been a dream. Rent costs 1/3 of the cost of Sydney and living 5 minutes away from the hospital can guarantee some more sleep! Finding work is not challenging, I was able to work at the Commercial Club who welcomes Medical students and provides flexible working hours. The local surroundings are gorgeous! Beechworth is a must visit with the beautiful waterfalls, locally produced honey and tasty lolly shop.

Skiing at Falls Creek is very feasible with multiple students often travelling together for day trips. Just 2 1/2 hours drive if you're a keen skier getting away for a day or two is certainly a plus! Closer to home, Albury/Wodonga has a wide variety of hiking trails, including the Yindyamarra sculpture walk, Nail Can and the Eastern Hill lookout. Afterwards, the variety of cafe's is great for a brunch or quick coffee. Early Bird cafe is my personal favourite.

I can not stress how much I've loved learning at the RCS here! I honestly believe that the medical education here will put you in great standing for internship and learning with a smaller and close-knit cohort has only enhanced my med school experience.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any more questions.

Caitlin Reid (Year 6) z5165818@ad.unsw.edu.au



COFFS HARBOUR

First edition authors: Maxwell Fulton, Evan Browne

Second edition authors: Naomi Sirmay, Lucy Yang, Lisha Lobo, Carrie Lee

Third edition author: Anthony Tanous



Looking for that rural academic experience, but can't leave the coast? Coffs Harbour is for you!

Coffs is about halfway between Sydney and Brisbane, and has everything for those who love the outdoors - stunning beaches, pristine rainforests, spectacular lookouts, and an overly sized banana. A population of 75000 means plenty of markets, festivals, and sports, all without the hustle and bustle of Sydney. Academically, this substantial population ensures you see a broad and interesting range of presentations come through the hospital doors.

So what are you waiting for? Choose Coffs for that charming coastal lifestyle and hands-on hospital experience!

COFFS HARBOUR

Academics

Coffs Harbour offers extensive clinical experience. A wide range of facilities are available to you e.g. operating theatre, pathology labs, clinics, ward rounds, meetings, and private practices. Additionally, students are encouraged to scrub in and assist with surgery too, e.g. cesareans, live births, and more! The clinical school is modern, with a relaxed atmosphere and access to the library, printing, NSW health database (useful for PowerChart access), tea/coffee and uniwide. The iSimulation centre in the hospital also offers pretty amazing simulations on childbirth and Basic Life Saving sessions.

Most teachers are great, and some are downright amazing - it's really helpful to have teachers who actually make the effort to teach consistently, and are willing to help outside of scheduled classes. Besides regular bedside teaching, there's also a mentor/buddy system, which is fantastic for getting to know wards, approaching patients in your own time, and free OSCE/ICE training. For third years, Phase 3 students also run non-timetabled tutorials, which are taught from a student's perspective - these are super helpful when preparing for exams!

Exam-wise, all Phase 2 and Phase 3 exams are held in Coffs. It's more comforting to do an exam in your own clinical school, with one of the examiners being someone you know. To support your learning, Coffs also has really amazing admin staff. Alison, our Head of Campus, is also super nice and available. The only few cons about going rural at Coffs Harbour are the use of video conferences, lack of scheduled pracs, and the smaller classes = they'll know if you skip (so don't skip!).

Accommodation

Accommodation-wise, there's room for 12 at the clinical school, where you can live close to the other Phase 2/3 students. Since the clinical school is attached to the hospital, there'll be no need to travel back and forth, but even so, there's free parking at the hospital. 10 minutes drive from Coffs Base Hospital are the beach/tourist strips of Sawtell and the Jetty. To the north of Coffs (around 15 minutes drive) are other great suburbs with newer, larger houses such as Park Beach, Diggers Beach, Sapphire Beach, and Korora. For example, previous Coffs students rented a three-bedroom house on the banks of Bonville Creek in Sawtell for \$130/week per person. The house had 2 single bedrooms and a master for 2 people, 2 bathrooms, a 2-space garage and plenty of street parking, a jungle backyard and sizable front yard, as well as massive living spaces and a waterview veranda! This sun-bathed waterside villa was only 10 minutes drive from the hospital.

COFFS HARBOUR

Transport

Travel isn't too much of a problem within Coffs Harbour but you will likely need a car (or a roommate with a car). While it's a 6h drive back to Sydney, there are regular 40 minute flights available (Qantas, Virgin, and Rex) which can be quite cheap - normally one-way tickets can be booked for around \$60! The train is also a useful option if flights becomes too expensive.

Work opportunities

There are definitely work opportunities in Coffs! Good options are tutoring and hospitality work. Medical reception work is also readily available!

Lifestyle

Social activities are great, with plenty of cafes and restaurants around, as well as surrounding towns and local beaches to visit. The CHUMS group (Coffs Harbour Undergraduate Medical Students) organises fundraising and events for the students like running and swimming groups, multi sports competitions, baking sales for the social event of the year (the Coffs Cup) as well as regular trips to local pubs and clubs for Salsa dancing or Trivia. Our hottest tips are Treeo and Split in Sawtell, Old John's in the Jetty or Hearthfire Bakery in Bellingen for brunch followed by surfing at Diggers Beach, the Promised Land waterfalls, laser tag, ice skating or skywalk. For cuisine, seek out the CBD's Ethiopian restaurant, Mana Chita, or vegan Japanese in Zen Japan . For a nightcap, you'll be looking at one of Coffs' many cocktail bars like Lime or Element .



PORT MACQUARIE

First edition authors: Georgina Dixon, Rachel Beattie

Second edition authors: Katie Richards, Jessica Brown

Third edition author: Georgia Neef



Boasting some of Australia's best and most beautiful beaches, and the first rural school offering a full medical degree (Phase 1 to 3), Port Macquarie is an incredible environment to further your medical education. Despite the beach providing a constant distraction, the amazing teaching, facilities, and RCS staff/doctors/allied health workers guarantee that you will come out with a great tan and excellent experience and knowledge. The coastal beach-holiday feel of the town permeates through to the hospital and everything happens in a relaxed way. There is a healthy balance of work time and play time, with good support and involvement through the different year levels - ranging from peer-tutorials, shared coffee runs, multi-sport, social events, to Friday evening beers at the Tacking Point Tavern or the local brewery - a five minute walk from campus! The town itself has plenty of cafes, so you won't miss out on your brunch-fix.

PORT MACQUARIE

Society

Being the largest of the clinical schools, the Port Medical Society (PMS) has expanded in size markedly, and the number of events and opportunities we offer each year has followed the same trend. PMS organises some incredible events including the annual wine tour, commencement dinner, river cruise, valedictory and graduation dinners, and the annual Port Medical Society Charity Ball. In addition to this, there are plenty of informal social events throughout the year, including BBQs, beach days, inter-phase sports competitions, and of course house parties! Our increase in size has also led to some great sponsorship opportunities, which now allow us to run free events for students such as lawn bowls, and beer and pizza nights. There are also often events run by the hospital that include medical students such as women in medicine evenings, specialty pathway planning, and networking evenings.

Academics

Like other RMS', Port is renowned for its thorough and hands-on teaching. Third, fifth, and sixth year offer an array of in-person tutorials provided by local consultants, regs, and JMOs - these doctors are awesome at what they do, are experienced and familiar with the UNSW curriculum, and go above and beyond to help with your studies. This is in addition to other hospital- and campus-based tutorials that occur multiple times a week, including ECG teaching, exam-orientated anatomy tutorials, and mock Biomed tutorials for 5th years. At the hospital, students are more than encouraged to be involved, such as scrubbing in to assist with surgeries and participating in ward rounds, clinics, pathology labs, and GP consults. These hands-on experiences are prioritised over sit-down tutorials and lectures, so if you find yourself caught up rushing to an emergency C-section when you've got a lecture about to start (or even just stuck fumbling your 3rd missed cannula of the day) - you're all good! If you're keen to do more, doctors are always available outside of scheduled attachments and keen to take you to additional clinical activities.

Outside of this, students are always welcome at further education sessions run for doctors, as well as Grand Rounds and the Port Mac/John Hunter trauma breakfasts which discuss real cases and their management. Not compulsory, but these provide great learning, and are great for portfolio!

Academics cont.

Skills-based teaching also takes place in the Shared Health, Research and Education Campus (SHREC) which is one door down from the RCS. The SHREC is a fantastic new facility shared with other allied health students, and has fantastic resources such as SIM labs, an anatomage table, and a simulated hospital ward for clinical skills teaching. At the SHREC there is also a dedicated research room for 4th year students undertaking their ILP/Honours, along with our ILP/Hons research Coordinator who assists with the development and completion of ILP/Hons projects and makes 4th year life a lot easier.

Both the RCS and the hospital have great facilities available for students such as libraries, computers with access to NSW Health databases, and FREE printing. The RCS also has a great kitchen and common room area, with free tea/coffee, a piano, a BBQ, a pool table, and a ping pong table - keep an eye out for the annual ping pong championship!!



PORT MACQUARIE

Accommodation

The rental market is mildly competitive, but nothing on Sydney - rent is very affordable. Many students tend to live in the Lighthouse Beach area, some live in town (near Flynn's Beach) or near Settlement City, and others live closer to the hospital (Lake Innes area). There are a range of housing options, but definitely check out a few different areas and decide if you want to be nearer to the beach (WOULD recommend!) or to the hospital. It is worthwhile speaking to existing students at the school as you might be able to get a group of people together to take over a sharehouse, or get your hands on some cheap(/free!) furniture - joining the '[Port Medical Society](#)' Facebook group is your best bet to connect with other students.

Transport

A car is pretty necessary, or at the very least, a kind roommate with a car. The RCS is on the hospital campus and so there is no need to travel from the school to the hospital, and there is free student-designated parking. Geographically, the Port RCS is the closest to Sydney. It takes about 4.5 – 5 hours to drive from Port to Sydney (divided highway all the way), or slightly longer by train. There are flights available, operated by Virgin, Qantas, and budget airline REX, so if you can get in at the right time you can often snag a cheap flight.

Work opportunities

Generally, there is work available in hospitality and nannying/babysitting (particularly for the doctors/hospital staff). Tutoring is also a great option if you can get your name out.

Lifestyle

Life in Port Mac is pretty relaxed. Depending on what you enjoy doing, there are plenty of opportunities to be involved in the Port Macquarie community - this is often the best way to make the most of your rural allocation and fully integrate and make friends. Port Mac always does coffee with a view, and there are countless cafes to try. There are plenty of wineries in the area, as well as classic rural town pubs, and a single nightclub that honestly goes off. Most students also play in sports comps be it rugby (girls and boys), soccer, netball, and basketball, as well as the local multisport comp which PMS usually enters a few teams into. The local university also has plenty of student-run parties and events that UNSW students are often invited to. Port Parkrun is a popular Saturday morning activity followed by the local farmers markets and a dip in the sea at one of our 17 beaches! The local koala hospital is just as cute as it sounds, and there are plenty of nearby hikes and quaint small coastal towns to explore.

WAGGA WAGGA

First edition authors: Lucinda Roper, James Kane

Second edition authors: Alec Hope, Jojo Wigram, Digby Allen, Marty Ryan, Maria Joseph

Third edition author: Hugh Malligan, Lucy Bindon



Located smack bang in the middle of Melbourne and Sydney, along the banks of the Murrumbidgee, you'll find Australia's largest inland city. A place so good they named it twice - Wagga Wagga. Boasting an urban population up around 65 000, a brand-spanking new hospital AND a beach*, Wagga is much more than many might expect. So if you're looking to go rural but are scared of missing out on city life, Wagga may just be for you!

*definitions of beach may vary

WAGGA WAGGA

Academics

Being the Regional Referral Hospital for the Riverina you'll get to see people from all walks of life with many varied presentations. Wagga Base Hospital services over 250 000 people, and is comparable in size to all but the biggest Sydney hospitals - and offers the broadest possible scope of practice west of the great dividing range.

Everything will soon be shiny and new, with a brand new clinical school on the way in 2023. In the meantime enjoy the rural charm of Harvey House which has also undergone a bit of a reno featuring enormous flat-screen TVs for lectures and video conferencing, a comfy student lounge - now with table tennis, a library with a range of medical textbooks and of course lovely staff on hand to help.

Look forward to graduation pictures in front of the heritage listed red brick Harvey House - so you can show your children in 30 years time that you really did learn medicine in the country.

As we all know, the people involved in your clinical experience can make or break your placement. If past reports are anything to go by, this is an area in which Wagga excels. Students from all years receive the benefits of the established culture of medical teaching amongst senior consultants, manifesting in weekly ECG teaching, spontaneous bedside tutorials, or maybe even being treated to dinner by consultants when the reg in your team is rotating to a different hospital.

This culture of medical teaching is Wagga's greatest asset. You will get plenty of hands on experience. You'll gain a lot of confidence talking to patients as you'll do it so often, whilst third years can become proficient in taking bloods and cannulating. There's opportunities to scrub in and participate in surgeries, perform PRs and ABGs, assist with births and caesareans, or take part in excellent placement programs with GPs or even at the Junee gaol!

Timetables are flexible - with on ward learning opportunities prioritised over any clashes with sit down lectures. From phase 2 onwards, lectures are personally delivered by volunteers from the local consultants, registrars and junior doctors - who tend to know you by first name through the end of the year. Recordings of Sydney lectures are always available online (although why would you bother!)

WAGGA WAGGA

Accommodation

Accommodation is also one of Wagga's big draw cards. Many students form sharehouses that are visited on the traditional "around the world" house crawl at the start of the year, with rent generally much cheaper than it's Sydney equivalent.

Most students choose to live in Central Wagga, or Turvey Park - and achieve the holy trinity of cheap rent, walking distance to the pubs and cafes, and plenty of space for a bbq or house party!

For incoming 1st and 3rd year students, there is also the option to stay at college through CSU Wagga! This sprawling campus is located just north of the mighty Murrumbidgee River, and makes the UNSW village green look like a front lawn. Expect to meet horse girls, cowboys and realise that vet students are just medical students with a few extra species to learn.

One big insider tip is to make sure you have adequate aircon wherever your new abode may be, with Wagga regularly hitting over the 40 degree mark in summer. Similarly, heating may be an idea for the winter months as it can get quite frosty.

Transport

All places have their cons and as great as Wagga is, it's not exempt. The main downside is the commute. As it happens, Melbourne and Sydney are quite far apart, so despite being half way it is still a good 5 hour drive back to Sydney. There's also the option of catching the train, leaving twice daily at 1pm or 12am, costing \$45 and taking 6.5 hours, on which you can spend some time studying, or more likely watching a movie, reading, listening to music, or of course sleeping. While this may not be ideal for those with a significant other back in Sydney, many happy couples have been known to last the long distance.

Student Life

Whilst Wagga is technically a city, it's a city of a different kind. While you'll find most of the big chains of Sydney, they are likely to be either on or very close to the extraordinarily long main street, Baylis St, meaning everything is easily on hand in one convenient location! The extra time you'll save normally spent commuting around the city to find what you need means you'll have much more time for the great things Wagga has to offer. Whether this be eating out at any number of good cafes and restaurants, visiting local breweries and/or wineries, or of course a visit to the famous Wagga beach - a lovely sandy spot on the banks of the Murrumbidgee river, which is great for picnics or even a bit of a dip - there's no shortage of fun times to be had.

Student life is provided through WRUMS, the Wagga Rural University Medical Society. Expect to enjoy the renowned Wagga 'house-crawl', unofficial RCS approved days off uni for the Wagga Gold Cup races (p.s. don't tell Sydney), paint and sip nights along Baylis street, as well as the hotly anticipated UNSW Med + CSU Vet wine and cheese night at our local wineries.

For the more athletically inclined, Wagga is known as the 'City of Good Sports', Wagga Wagga offers year round sporting activities for locals and visitors. Students can join local teams in golf, tennis, cricket, netball, soccer, aussie rules, rugby, athletics and hockey. Summer activities include fishing, jet skiing, sailing, canoeing, rowing and kayaking in the surrounding rivers, lakes and dams.

In winter, the Kosciusko National Park attract skiers and snowboarders and all year round activities such as bushwalking, camping, indoor rock climbing and bike riding are always popular.

The proximity of the CSU campus also means there is no short supply of people in our age bracket to meet on the sporting field, or out on the town in Wagga's bustling nightlife.

SO YOU THINK YOU WERE SHAFTED?


Bernard Chan, Wagga Wagga, Year 6 (2019)

I distinctly remember receiving the email that sent me to Wagga for two years. It immediately prompted me to despairingly attempt to swap out. I was indignant at the idea of having to move out for the first time, away from family and friends, with very little say on the matter. However, while it was initially challenging, my perspectives changed rapidly following my relocation. I found the teaching to be of a considerably higher quality than I had previously encountered – on most days we would have multiple tutorials taught by consultants. There was a clear continuity in teaching as these doctors taught us weekly, so they understood our progress and needs. Also, living so close to hospital and each other meant there were a lot more opportunities to spend time outside of medicine: playing football; cooking; seeing friends. Finally, I am fortunate enough to be part of an incredibly social and supportive cohort, who have all helped to make Wagga a warm and welcoming environment to live and study in. For all these reasons, fifth year was definitely one of the most enjoyable years of my degree thus far.

Peter Sara, Albury-Wodonga, Year 6 (2019)

I lived in my family home in Western Sydney my whole life. I remember putting so much effort into my preferences and then submitting them with the confidence I would get Liverpool. When I first received the email saying my base hospital will be in Albury, I was shocked. I'd never lived out of home, let alone in the country. Did I need my own car? (yes) Would they find accommodation for me? (no) I wasn't sure how I'd fare with figuring all that stuff out while also studying med. I initially fought the allocation; I found an international student who wanted Albury and pleaded with MedFac to swap. Alas, their policy doesn't allow for international students to be placed in rural hospitals.

Port Macquarie



After some time, I actually started to warm up to the idea. Developing my independence from the nest was an attractive concept so I stopped fighting it and started looking for accommodation. I joined a Facebook group for the campus and had meetups in Sydney with some of the crew before we started our next year. The cohort pretty much divided into groups to find houses together. And yes, I mean houses. Accommodation in Albury is so cheap! We were living in a 3-bedroom house with a backyard for just \$320 a week. Furthermore, our house was just a 2-minute drive/15-minute walk from the hospital! Over the next year I began to forget what it meant to experience traffic, or to struggle to find parking. Gone are the days where I had parked a 15-minute walk from Liverpool hospital after my 15-minute drive. All my friends are within a ten-minute drive from one another in Albury, so meeting up is much easier than in Sydney.

Naomi Sirmai, Coffs Harbour, Year 5 (2019)

I got shafted. Boy was it interesting to read an email suddenly imagine my life for the coming two years panning out completely differently from how I had expected five minutes prior. I had expected I would be at POW, where I had spent the past 4 years, or perhaps at St George, which many of my best friends had preferenced. But no, Coffs Harbour it was, and seemingly without a good reason. Following a pretty scary conversation with my parents, I began to get my plans in order for the coming year. Organising a place to live (an amazing - if haunted - house overlooking the ocean, with two of my best friends), liaising with a new clinical school (the staff are so so lovely), and stress-buying 17 pairs of socks from H&M (I don't know why. I panicked).

Since moving up, I have really settled and made Coffs home. The hospital is a 15 minute drive away, and in Coffs, a 15 minute drive takes 15 minutes - no traffic, plenty of free parking. The doctors are so lovely and really happy to teach - the hospital is a bit quieter - fewer doctors, and less of the hustle and bustle I experienced in metro hospitals. I've been asked to scrub in on almost every surgery I've attended, and there's plenty of opportunity to practice clinical skills like cannulation and venipuncture. As a bonus, our group of 17 really gets along - we have group dinners and hangs often.

Mostly, I have noticed that it is so easy to be calm. Even with big exams looming, the lifestyle is so relaxed and you have so much time for leisure and study that it's difficult to be stressed, which is saying something for me. What I'm getting at is that this has really been a blessing in disguise. As they say, some are born in Coffs, some choose Coffs, and others have Coffs thrust upon them. Or something. The main difficulties for me have been financial ones. Moving out of home can be pretty expensive, and the cost of travelling back to Sydney can add up. That said, there are loads of opportunities for work, and the relaxed, traffic-free rural lifestyle means that you have loads of time to kill. My main source of distress has been missing concerts by my favourite bands who, for some unknown reason, don't come up and play in Coffs. I have been travelling down to Sydney for some and up to Brisbane for others. There are also some great live music nights at the various Coffs bars. Mostly, I have been trying my best to make sure that I don't miss out on the things that make me happy. Friends, music, and nature. Luckily, these can be found aplenty in Coffs.

Lucy Yang, Coffs Harbour, Year 6 (2019)

You're probably not going to believe me when I say everything is going to work out just fine, I know I didn't believe anyone who told me that when I first got my allocation. In a year's time you'll actually look back and feel glad you came to Coffs, I promise. I remember that exact moment of finding out - I was nervous wondering whether I'd get POW or Livo, but rural had not crossed my mind at all. When I saw Coffs Harbour I was in shock, and then went through the five stages of grief the following weeks. I remember the 5th years at that time posted up a pic saying "have Coffs, want less fun" in response to all our swapping posts, and I didn't believe them, or anyone who tried to tell me that going to Coffs was gonna be fine. But it really is lemme break down the fears that I had:

#1 I'm going to lose all my friends and not have enough time with my family.

This was my no. 1 fear, that all my friends were going to be hanging out together all the time in Sydney and forget about me in Coffs. Thankfully, this hasn't been the case.

Friendships take maintenance, but with messages and snapchats (and tagging each other in lots of memes) I've been able to keep close with my friends in Sydney. And when I do go back to Sydney it's like no time has passed. Plus you get a bonus of making new friends/getting closer to those in Coffs. Because you're a small cohort that is always stuck together you become close real fast, and I've definitely made some friends I'll keep for life. I've been living at home my whole life so this was a big change, but I honestly think moving out of home has been a good change, and I appreciate my family more when I do spend time with them. Side note for y'all with relationships, this semi-long distance thing is also very doable, me and a few other people all have made it through (at least one year so far)!

#2 I'm going to miss out on so many things in Sydney

Concerts, events, uni life, extracurriculars.

Sydney just seemed like the place I had to be in for these. But there's so much to do in Coffs as well if you're open to trying new things. Plus you save so much time on commute that you'll have the time to do these things and take time for self development. So far I've done multisports, started learning to surf, took up aerials, took some salsa classes, went to the beach a lot more, had a student society role, went to some great events hosted by CHUMS, went to Coffs Cup, hosted and went to multiple dinner parties, got much better at cooking and adulting in general.

#3 Studying at a small hospital is not going to be as great as studying in a big hospital in Sydney.

This is definitely not true. I can't speak for what it's like in big hospitals, but in Coffs so far the experience has been great. The exposure to cases is more than enough at a medical student level, we only need to know the most common cases, but you see some pretty rare things in Coffs too. The staff are so happy to teach, and you don't have to compete for learning opportunities as much, scrubbing in for surgeries is common, and so is helping to take notes during rounds. Many doctors are also keen to give tutorials, and spend time listening to your presentations. Hope this helps in some way, and if you have other questions feel free to get in touch!

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RURAL RESEARCH: TIPS & TRICKS

Like the sound of completing your research at a rural campus? Here are some tips to get you started!

Speak to the rural clinical school about finding a supervisor and project that's right for you.

It is important to be open and honest about your expectations and what you want to get out of a project. Some people want their ILP year to be flexible to allow for other commitments including increased hours at a part-time job, or trips away some weekends. If you want a publication and to present at a conference, you should also make this clear from the start. Your clinical school will help you find an appropriate supervisor and a project you are interested in.

Be organised!

It is easy to forget deadlines, particularly when you're at a rural campus. Fourth year is less formal, with fewer classes and less contact with other student than any of the other years. Relying on classmates for due dates doesn't work as well! You really need to be on top of when things are due and ask for help early. Equally, don't forget about your gen ed - when you're studying online it can be easy to forget you have a quiz or submission due!

Finding a support network is particularly important in a year that can be isolating.

ILP at a rural location is a very different experience to Sydney. It can be lonely, so take that into account when choosing, especially if you're likely to end up being the only ILP student at your RCS. Even though there are students in other years, you can feel a bit isolated from them.

Consider how much of your project you would like to negotiate yourself.

Many of us think that you have to negotiate a project if you do a rural ILP, and if you do a research project in Sydney you can just slot into an existing project. Whilst this can be the case, you can slot into an existing idea or project. Equally, it is not as daunting to negotiate a project as you might think! "My supervisor mocked up an imaginary one in 7 minutes just to show me how simple it can be. I had thought it would take me months!" (Naomi Clements, ILP in Wagga Wagga)





RURAL RESEARCH: PERSONAL STORIES

Laura Bawden, ILP in Griffith, Year 5 (2019)

I did a fantastic ILP with a paediatrician, looking at allergies in local children. And it was that simple, I kept the study broad and looked retrospectively at data from the local ED. By keeping it simple and broad I was able to find significant results which made the whole year exciting and valuable. Finding the right supervisor is key, so definitely negotiate their exceptions of you before you begin. Try and stay sane, do some clinical time and enjoy a year of being a little less under the pump.

ILP at Griffith is an independent year. There are 3 doctors who have experience in ILP research (paeds, cardio and GP/hospital/obstetrics) and another handful that would love the opportunity to assist with your research. You will have to negotiate the topic and do most of the ethics, however Griffith does guide you along the way. The hospital is very supportive, and any data from their records is easily accessed. You will need to be motivated and be able to do most admin things yourself (organise meetings, submit doco's, hunt down people you need signatures from).

Make sure if you want to do clinical work on the side you have made that clear from the start. If you are in Griffith, you are welcome throughout the entire year, just don't get in the way of the third years! I did many shifts in the ED to keep my practise up!

Drishya Krishnan, ILP in Albury-Wodonga, Year 6 (2019)

I definitely enjoyed my ILP year in Albury - it was the most relaxing and rejuvenating year of med school. However, ILP at a rural campus has the potential to be isolating, so I would definitely recommend roping at least one other person with you to the campus! I lucked out as I had 3 other ILP students with me in Albury, one of whom was also my housemate. Chocolate and wine and murder mystery shows featured prominently that year, as did cuddles with my housemate's puppy - none of which I had any complaints about!

On to the actual ILP side of things, I was pleasantly surprised by the range of projects available for us and it has grown much more in the last 2 years! Many of the local doctors are passionate about research, and there is a considerable range of topics, from ophthalmology to emergency medicine to refugee health (and much more).

However, probably the biggest downside of the year was the ethics approval, which we had to do ourselves. The Albury Wodonga ethics committee meets every 2 months, so in order to have the ILP ready to go by February, I would highly recommend sending in the request by the end of November (for the committee's December meeting).

Throughout the year, we were very well supported, with fortnightly check-in meetings between the ILP students and our campus head to make sure we were keeping on track and to clear any doubts. Although my project was entirely based on clinical records and therefore required no interaction with patients, my supervisor was very happy to have me at her clinic 2-3 days a week (negotiate with your supervisor!), which meant I hadn't completely forgotten how to talk to patients when starting 5th year! I had a few different opportunities to present my project and I was also able to create an educational slideshow video for a training workshop for local registrars.



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

For both Phase 2 and 3, international students are able to select rural clinical schools in their hospital preferences! However, you may be regarded as lower priority than metropolitan students for a spot at a rural campus.

You are also able to go rural for your ILP/Honours year if you wish.

If you would like more information on rural placements and how you can get onto one as an international student, have a look at the Clinical Allocation Guidelines (see 'Clinical Allocation Policy' section above) or contact the Kensington RCS office (see 'Contacts' section at the end of this guide.)

WELLBEING

The wellbeing of students at each RCS is entrusted to the Head of School at each campus, therefore we encourage students at rural sites to approach their Head of School for confidential advice and counselling, contacts for appropriate GPs and psychologists in the area, and special consideration for assessments. The broad experience of students at rural sites has been that their Head of School and associated campus staff are approachable and all too willing to help their students through any problem they may be having.

When the cowpat hits the windmill

The National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN) has produced a guide to staying mentally well whilst on rural placements. This is an excellent resource for students experiencing challenges unique to rural placements. To read the guide please click [here](#)

Keeping your grass greener

The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) has produced a guide for all medical students. The guide encourages students to reflect on their own mental health and de-stigmatise the mental health issues that can affect anyone. To read the guide please click [here](#)



RURAL HEALTH ORGANISATIONS

Rural Allied Health and Medical Society (RAHMS)

UNSW's very own rural health club, comprising of students from all health degrees at UNSW. They are here to advocate for rural and Indigenous health, as well as be a voice for rural students - every rural campus has a representative in RAHMS! The RAHMS representatives organise fun and meaningful events every year, and are always happy to receive feedback about what they can do to help EWE!

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/rahmsunsw/>

W: <https://www.nrhsn.org.au/rahms/home/>

National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN)

A multidisciplinary student network comprising 28 university health clubs (including RAHMS) from every state. It advocates for improving health outcomes for rural and remote Australians and promotes rural health careers to students. They run some great social, career information and professional development events!

W: <https://www.nrhsn.org.au/home/>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/nrhsn/>

AMSA Rural Health

A representative body for rural background students, students on rural placements and all other rural health interests across Australia. They run the annual Rural Health Summit discussing all things rural health!

W: <https://www.amsa.org.au/amsa-rural-health>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/yourAMSArural/>

NSW Rural Doctors Network

RDN is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation committed to ensuring that the highest possible standard of healthcare is provided to rural and remote communities. They offer a whole bunch of great opportunities and support for rural medical students and doctors!

W: <https://www.nswrdn.com.au/>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/NSWRuralDoctorsNetwork/>

National Rural Health Alliance

The National Rural Health Alliance represents 37 national organisations working to improve the health and wellbeing of people in rural and remote Australia. Their members include the Country Women's Association of Australia and the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association.

W: <https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/NRHALliance/>

RAHMS



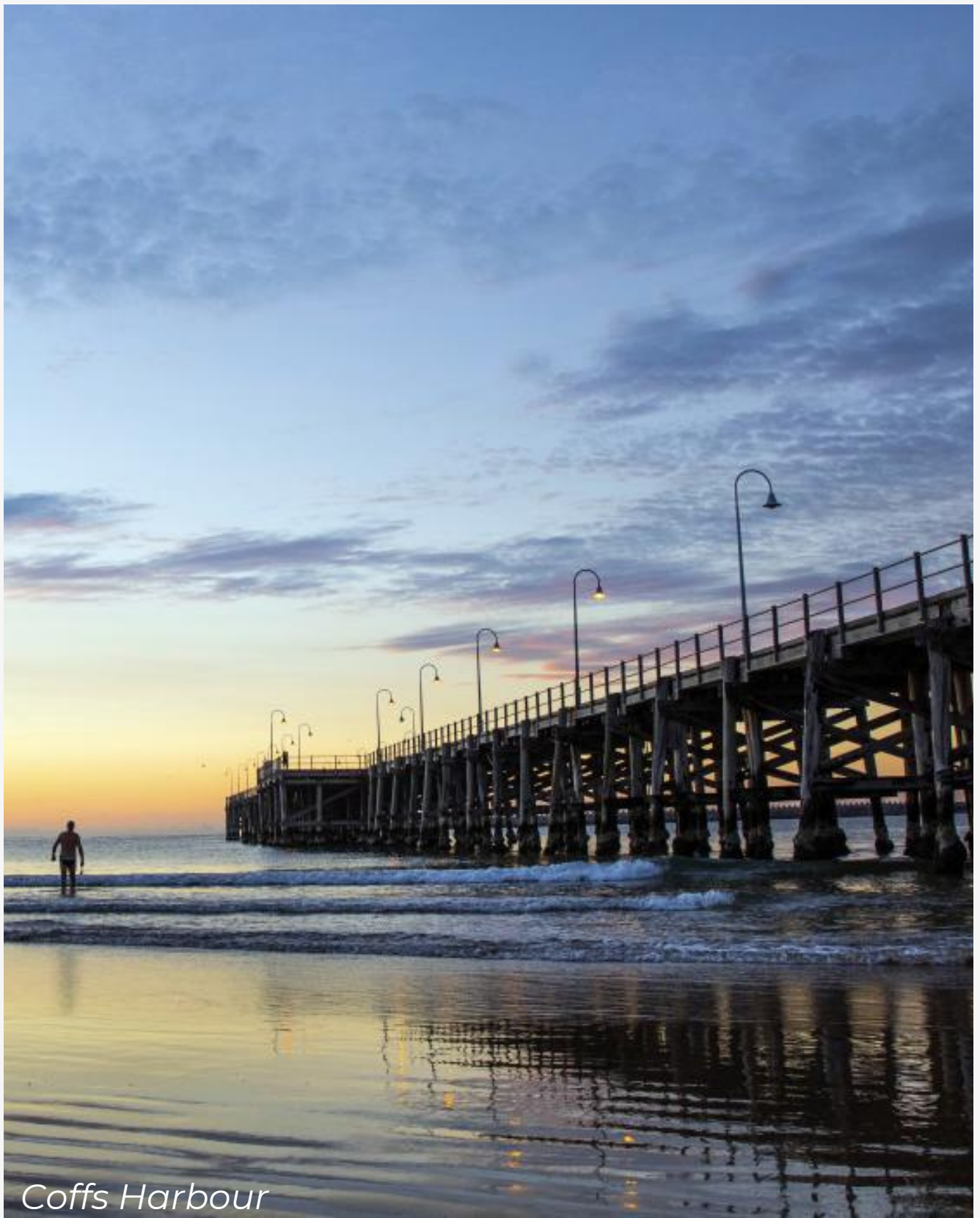
The Rural Allied Health and Medical Society is UNSW's one and only rural health club, involving students from 8 different health disciplines. We are also part of the National Rural Health Student Network which includes rural health clubs from 28 medical schools across Australia.

Our goal is to raise awareness and advocate for rural and Indigenous health as well as inspire and support students just like YOU to take advantage of the amazing opportunities that studying and working in a rural area offers! After all, the first step in closing the health disparity gap is education and awareness of the next generation of healthcare professionals.

So, if EWE would like to be part of big changes to the health of people across Australia, come along to some of our events and get inspired! In 2021 we are running:

- Rural Appreciation Weekend: if you like hands on medicine activities, dinner around a fire, shearing sheep and generally experiencing rural life, this is the event for you!
- Guest speakers: education sessions on rural health and what we can do to help
- Clinical skills nights: learn essential medical and allied health skills for your practice
- Rural high school visits: educate and inspire those from rural backgrounds to study at uni, especially in a healthcare discipline

And much more! Keep up to date with the latest events and news by signing up on the NRHSN website and following our Facebook page using the QR code above, or shoot us an email!



Coffs Harbour
