

18/02/2016

Rural Health West continues to improve attraction of the future health workforce to rural and remote Western Australia

Rural Health West will once again be holding the annual Aboriginal Health Conference on 2 and 3 of July at the Pan Pacific Perth. This conference attracts over 150 delegates, including researchers, clinicians and other rural health professionals who either work in, or have a strong interest in, Aboriginal health.

Having identified the challenge to encourage Australian general practitioners to live and practise in rural and remote locations, Rural Health West also places a strong focus on attracting the future workforce to rural practice. The Rural Health West Future Workforce Program provides health students and recent graduates with opportunities to experience rural practice through vocational experiences, workshops and conferences. The organisation also employs Student and Junior Doctor Ambassadors who promote country careers to Western Australian health students.

Adriane Houghton has recently been recruited to the Student Ambassador program and is the first Aboriginal Student Ambassador for Rural Health West. She is passionate about Aboriginal health and would like to pursue a career where she can impact the lives of Aboriginal people.

Originally starting work in the oil and gas industry, Adriane decided to take a different direction with her career and applied to The University of Western Australia to study medicine three years ago. She is also the mother of two children, aged four and seven.

“The University of Western Australia has always been incredibly supportive of me and other Indigenous students,” said Adriane, “although I am studying medicine and aspire to be a doctor, my children will always be my number one priority. Whenever I am finding the workload difficult, I think about my mother, who is my inspiration. She studied to become a registered nurse whilst caring for four young children and is now an accomplished midwife. She gives me the support and motivation that I need to keep going as she can relate to what I am going through.”

Now in her second year of study, and with the goal of becoming a GP Obstetrician, Adriane is looking forward to having a diverse range of experience working in hospital Emergency Departments, nursing homes, Aboriginal Medical Services as well as in obstetrics.

“Adriane is a great example of how you can study medicine whilst raising a young family,” stated Kelli Porter, Rural Health West General Manager for Workforce, “studying medicine is a huge undertaking, but Adriane is positive and ready to take on the challenge. Her desire to work in rural Western Australia to provide care for Aboriginal patients and having the understanding of their culture will lead to a very rewarding

career. We are very happy to have her join us as a Student Ambassador representing medical students.”

Adriane has always had the intention of applying for Rural Clinical School and then returning to Port Hedland to live and work. Coming from a large family based in Port Hedland, Adriane would like her children to have the opportunity to grow up surrounded by their family. Practising in Port Hedland will also allow her to personally connect with the Aboriginal people in the community as they have known her since childhood.

“Some Aboriginal people do not visit their doctor or go to a hospital when they are unwell as they do not like to be away from their family,” stated Adriane, “by working in the community where I grew up, the Aboriginal patients trust me and they know I will go above and beyond for them. I am able to speak to them on their level, understand their needs and ensure they are getting the best care available.”

The Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Conference 2016 will be a platform for Adriane to network with people who have similar interests in Aboriginal outcomes and who are also advocates for ‘closing the gap’, both in cultural differences and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

“I am really looking forward to attending the Aboriginal Health Conference and meeting other health professionals and Aboriginal leaders from across the country who have the same enthusiasm as I do for equitable health of Aboriginal people. It is inspirational for me as a student to see what practising doctors have already accomplished in Aboriginal communities and what they are doing to further drive improvements in health care.” said Adriane.

The Rural Health West Aboriginal Conference 2016 is an opportunity for all health professionals, researchers and clinicians to address concerns facing the Aboriginal community and network with like-minded peers.

ENDS

Media enquiries:

Jessica Woolfson, Communications and Marketing Officer 08 6389 4500

As the leading rural health workforce agency for Western Australia, Rural Health West is a not-for-profit organisation funded by the State and Commonwealth Governments responsible for the recruitment and retention of a highly skilled sustainable health workforce to meet the needs to rural and remote Western Australians communities.