



# Getting a taste of rural life



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The beginning of another academic year for the students of Notre Dame brings both the reconnection and departure of friends and colleagues. As some students return from their rural escapades, others are only just commencing their adventures, travelling across the countryside to WA's 10 Rural Clinical Schools.

The current shortage of doctors within rural and remote Australia is a widely publicised issue. It is one recognised by medical students, medical professionals and indeed the wider community experiencing its effects first hand. The Rural Clinical Schools provide both Notre Dame and UWA students with first hand experience of rural life, whilst gaining medical training within the hospitals and health services in the area. The recent orientation week for the 2010 cohort of Rural Clinical School students involved a week-long introduction to rural living in preparation

for their departure in early January. With a year that holds both unfamiliarity and a new experience, it is an exciting time that promises to be testing yet adventurous.

The John Flynn Scholarship Scheme is another initiative that encourages medical students to gain experience within rural areas across the country. Students holding this scholarship travel to a specified rural or remote location for two weeks each year for the duration of their degree. It is hoped that the return of students to a familiar rural location will build a sense of rapport and belonging between the student and their respective community.

Each year at Notre Dame, the second year cohort is fortunate enough to spend a week in the Kimberley region of W.A. The week is intended to immerse students into rural life, allowing them to gain greater understanding and experience of both the positive aspects but also the challenges of rural life. During

this week students participate in workshops focusing on Indigenous health, culture and communication, and are then integrated into cattle stations, local businesses and schools across the vast Kimberley region. For most this is a positive and enlightening experience, providing insight and understanding into rural life and the provision of health services in an isolated area.

While doctor shortages will remain a significant issue for years to come as increased student numbers gradually filter through into the clinical setting, it is these fantastic initiatives that serve as a long-term solution to the critically low presence of doctors throughout rural and remote Australia. With the intention to retain doctors to these areas for extended periods of time, it is hoped that the near future brings with it adequate health care for all Australians across the country.