NSW Rural Mental Health Conference

Mental illness has been in the spotlight for governments and the media for a little while now. We have seen ebbs and flows of celebrities announcing their mental illness as a status and slowly as a community it is becoming less taboo and more accepted.

This conference looked at mental illness in the context of it affecting more than the person – but the people and community around them. “Mental health: who cares” was the theme for the conference and sessions were divided into the areas of the person; their family and carers; and, the community as a whole. Different community health areas had some very interesting projects underway to help each area identified to cope and grow from their situation.

Having learnt that I would be doing my nursing new-graduate year in Mildura [north-western Victoria] I found that my interest was heightened and I was more interested in being aware of the issues identified as well as how they were being overcome.

I made my goal of the conference to identify those who work with students and to inform them of the NRHN and how the organisation can help them to provide a positive rural/remote placement. Everyone was very receptive of the “Cow Pat”, as it was identified by everyone I spoke to that a positive student experience increases the likelihood that they will consider a rural/remote location for their future career.

I paid the extra to go to the conference dinner, and again it highlighted the opportunity this has to engage with many whom you don’t meet throughout the days proceedings. This conference had to make the dinner an extra expense as they were unable to find a location large enough to accommodate the numbers. For me, this raises the awareness and importance that is placed on conferences for professional and networking opportunity.

I have since gone on to begin my new-grad year in mental health – and already I have been able to share information from this conference with my new co-workers from information I heard in the sessions as well as the corporate displays. Pointing out the importance of ongoing education and the information made available at conferences can be invaluable.
I encourage all NRHN members to participate and take up the opportunity to attend CoNS whilst a student. There is so much happening out here in the real world – and this can be a huge step in understanding what it is you will be up against and how you can overcome hurdles.

Enjoy it all while you can
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