I would firstly like to again thank Shannon Nott, Shannon’s family (Stephen, Daniel and Daphne) and RAHMS girls, Sophie and Maria for behind the scenes setting up tents, preparing the barn, as well as organising the thoroughly enjoyed activities and speakers for the event. Thanks also go to Jess and Kay for helping out in the many ways they did, and Barry on the coach. The support of these individuals for the weekend, from my perspective as a delegate, made the inaugural RAW a true rural and fun experience. Everything seemed to have been thought out well.

I will definitely say one of the highlights of the weekend were Shannon's tour of the Oakfield farm which I think really brought home the hard work that farming is for the farmers who harvest what we put on the table and buy from the local store. It also presented to me the far-reaching effects of the drought on farmers for getting by, whom I hope will receive the rainfall they desperately need for their crops soon. I came to realise the seriousness of the fly-blown problem for sheep (merino) farmers and how this relates to the issue of musing for the quality of life for the sheep.

It was something new to see a pet emu, and I was taken aback by the strength and gate-crashing willingness of the sheep which I previously believed to be rather docile, calm animals. I found the country to be full of character. I learned this from the above and the weekend activities which were of an interesting and relevant variety: the Aboriginal cultural dancing, boomerang throwing and cultural awareness demonstrations with Ralph and the shearing and sheepdog displays with Mick and his kelpies. Not to forget the stockmanship competition which proved that sorting sheep is definitely not as easy as it looks on McLeod's daughters, but in terms of fun has its moments. Furthermore, Neville and his snakes provided a really professional show which I think kept us all thinking twice about what to wear around the campsite the next day, and the first aiding bandages we should carry with us whenever we go bush.

The campfire near the tents on the first night was another highlight of the weekend. I learned longer sticks are better for toasting marshmallows (thanks Scott and Lisa) rather than the extremities of oneself, and was able to experience camping outside of my previous primary and high-school adventures. I was able to make new friends with the other students from SHARP and RAHMS and hopefully more rural health clubs will be involved in RAW in the future. I think that with the passion for rural health I gauged in a number of attendees at the event that our rural health clubs, societies and the NRHN are in good hands.

Another of the best aspects of the weekend was hearing from 2 rural GPs who communicated to the group the benefits and challenges of practicing rural medicine. From being able to be flexible in your hours, handling a wide range of patient scenarios, and being included and welcomed unconditionally into the community, it was evident from their informal presentations, that while the rural experience calls upon greater multidisciplinary skill and knowledge, that it is definitely something all allied health and medical students should consider before they graduate. This was particularly since the first speaker hadn’t previously considered themselves as going rural when they started out practicing in the city - only to now enjoy rural medicine.

After attending and participating in the RAW 2007 experience, I have not only come away with happy memories, new friends and a deepened appreciation and respect for the farmers; but a strengthened vision to go rural and regional when I graduate and work with the communities and people there. Once again thank you to the individuals involved in making the weekend possible and I hope it runs again in the near future so others can benefit. My only suggestion would be to hold the weekend one or two weeks earlier so it would be less close to exam time.