The 25th Annual Council for Remote Area Nurses Australia (CRANA) conference was held in Broken Hill in mid September 2007. It was a celebration of past achievements and a glimpse into what is making a difference in remote areas by nurses and health workers.

Kicking off the conference was an address by the president of CRANA, Christopher Cliffe, who showed that CRANA is an evolving and exciting organisation striving for better conditions – not only for its members, but for the communities in which they work. Much has happened in the Northern Territory leading up to this conference and whilst CRANA appreciates the concern for children in communities and the push to ensure good health outcomes for them, they are also acutely aware that the aftermath of such an intervention may also be detrimental. They are therefore hoping to influence spending of the next $20+mil on ensuring there are the resources and staff to follow-up and treat health issues identified and improving social determinants for ongoing improved outcomes. CRANA is therefore keeping a close eye on the activities and continuing to be a strong voice in what seems to have become a silenced public affair.

Presentations were a mix of research, community projects and experiences – but their common voices resounded of being under staffed and under resourced. Nevertheless, it was inspiring to hear them share the positive outcomes that continue to shine through from the work they are doing.

Several research projects took place during the conference looking at implementing prescribing rights for remote area nurses [RAN], RAN associated stress, informed consent for indigenous Australians and the benefits of attending a conference like this.
CRANA is a driving force of ongoing education and up-skilling for its members. This was reinforced on Saturday night at the gala dinner with the presentation and graduation for those completing the various levels of the Remote Health Practice Program from Grad Cert to Masters and acknowledging Nurse Practitioners. As a student it was exciting to see that nursing in remote areas can take you a long way in both location and education.

Remote area nursing is a far cry from the safety of city hospital resources; but the opportunity to work toward goals encompassing a community is an exciting prospect for a problem solver like myself. And whilst I am not sure I am cut out for a permanent remote placement – there is a wealth of opportunity to base myself as a remote area relief nurse working throughout Australia and its surrounding territories, lending a hand to those already out there. And if a remote or isolated post is not something you want to do permanently – maybe you can join me in this relief role.

Lisa Willis
SHARP

Ann, Helen, Shannon, Lillian, Lisa, Janna, Kathleen [missing-Matt]