Program eases nurses into the remote setting

We recently interviewed ED Nurses Nicole and Rachel, who both work in Rural & Remote (R&R) with Healthcare Australia (HCA) to find out about their transition from emergency to remote nursing with HCA’s New to Remote Pathway (NTRP) program.

Rural and remote roles can be physically and emotionally demanding, the NTRP helps nurses ease into their new remote placements. Nicole and Rachel tell us about their travel adventures and advice to others looking to work in a rural and remote setting.

**HCA: How did the New to Remote Pathway (NTRP) help you transition to work remotely in Australia?**

**Nicole:** I had pretty much done all the pre-requisite courses and competencies when I started the NTRP which made it a lot easier. HCA have relationships with clinics that are willing to take on and support new to remote nurses. Hollie and Danni (HCA Consultants) really listen to me and have never pushed me to do something that I wasn’t comfortable with. They helped me develop my career and always hold my safety as paramount.

**Rachel:** The NTRP set me up for courses that I was required to do, these included Pharmacotherapeutics and Immunisation Certificate. I felt well-equipped when I did my first placement with HCA. At first, they sent me to places I felt comfortable with and then progressed me into more challenging roles.

**HCA: What has been your most challenging remote role so far?**

**Nicole:** The contract in Yaralain. It was rewarding to be able to support a small community of approximately 200. I really felt like I got to know many people in the community. However, it’s a two-nurse post so I was first on-call for half of the week after long days at work. The HCA Team supported me through this.

**Rachel:** When I worked in Lajamanu, it was quite overwhelming, and the work was quite complex, with sexual health screening and treatment. I required more knowledge of sexual health and diseases, infant and maternal welfare.
HCA: Where has been your favourite part in Australia to work remotely?

Nicole: My current location Millingimbi and Kalkarindji have been two of my favourites. Millingimbi has a big team for a remote area, with a lot of Yolgnu staff. I am usually on-call twice a week, and we have a Yolgnu security officer who looks after us when we work late, which is extremely comforting. Gattjirr Cultural Festival has been on whilst I was here which was wonderful. I joined one of the choirs. Being a tropical island it’s lovely being so close to the ocean.

Rachel: I loved the dessert country in Kalkarindji because of its history of the Walk-Off in the 60s and 70s. It also has a 15-km Walk-Off track, lots of hills and a beautiful river which is nice when it’s very, hot! I’m currently at Aurukun up in the Cape where I’m always hunting down delicious mangoes... but trying to limit myself to two per day!

HCA: What’s the most eye-opening thing you have experienced or seen since working remotely?

Nicole: The overcrowding and the burden of chronic disease in Indigenous communities. I was aware of it before I went remote, but I wasn’t fully prepared for the extent of it.

Rachel: Seeing the range of chronic diseases and acute diseases. It’s nice having a supportive team who look out for each other during challenging times.

HCA: Do you have any advice for ED Nurses looking to enter the NTRP program?

Nicole: Start by talking to people who have hands on experience and get the competencies you require (each state is different). I started organising myself as soon as I graduated. The CRANA courses are great and it’s a good opportunity to meet and speak with other RANs.

It’s important to always stand up for what you feel is safe practice for your patients and for you. I don’t do first on-call for first few nights, so I can safely and smoothly transition. The HCA R&R Team will always support you through it.

Rachel: It’s important to read up on sexual health, as well as infant and maternal health as you will most likely use these skills and try to be as flexible as possible.

Another important tip is to try and buy the right food and pre-plan your meals. The local fruit and veggies are reasonably priced, however treats are quite expensive, so try to bring some from home. A lot of people become temporary vegetarians as meat is also quite expensive.

Good time to detox!

Contact us for more information on the NTRP program:

Email rural.remote@healthcareaustralia.com.au


Call 1300 885 728