

2022 Regional Scholarship Recipient: Zoe Allnutt

WA Centre for Rural Health, Geraldton



About Me

I applied for a Bachelor of Health Promotion at The University of Notre Dame as health has always been an interest but also an area where I could use my passion of wanting to help people. At this point, I wasn't sure in what direction I would go in until I completed a unit called Aboriginal People. I completed an assessment of our reconciliation process. I met an Aboriginal man in Mandurah who was doing unique Aboriginal history and cultural tours, where I learned a little about his personal story which opened my eyes to many social injustices he had experienced. It was from this unit I knew I wanted to go into Indigenous Health. I went on to complete a practicum placement that involved foster children who are living in remote locations of Australia and bringing their family groups together on a one-week camp in Perth. This camp was gruelling and mentally taxing; however, it also drove my passion further to work remotely and to make a difference to the health inequalities and the impact of social determinants seen in remote communities of Australia.

In my last year of university, I wanted to complete a practicum in a remote setting at this point Type II Diabetes and nutrition were also a huge interest. My last practicum took place in Kununurra with Boab Health, where the accommodation price was through the roof for any university student to stay there. I didn't want to miss out on this opportunity at hand. I decided to sleep in my swag for my 4-week placement in a caravan park in the scorching weather with loud partying going on till 4am or 5am, every morning. I am so glad I did! The experience was invaluable. These experiences combined led me to apply for the AHPA scholarship with a project proposal recently piloted in Geraldton called *Healthy Body, Healthy Mind*.

About my Scholarship Project

I will be working collaboratively with the Western Australia Centre for Rural Health over the next 6 months on the *Healthy Body, Healthy Mind* project. The program will target Aboriginal girls aged 10 – 16 years old and the second target group is Aboriginal women in the community. The program aims are to improve teenagers' foods awareness and the impact food can have on the mind and body. Secondly, to inform teenagers to make informed decisions for their body and mind. It will increase awareness around stress management, sleep hygiene, the link between exercise and food, and the impacts on the body and mind in a safe and culturally appropriate environment for all participants. The program will run over eight weeks and cover four main themes: Theme 1: Aboriginal history and culture pre-and-post colonisation. Theme 2: Dealing with stress; Food, nutrition, and preparation; Hygiene. Theme 3: Relationship building; building self-confidence and self-reliance. Theme 4: Pathway planning; capacity building. Adolescence is an important time for establishing healthy food eating and cooking habits and an opportunity to educate and intervene at a time when many Aboriginal girls gain excess weight. Nutrition intervention is critical and has an important influence on dietary behaviours.