

MY TWO-WEEK EXPERIENCE IN BAIRNSDALE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.  
Gracie Souter, 5<sup>th</sup> year RMIP Student, Blenheim.

In July 2014 I had the amazing opportunity to spend two weeks as a medical in Bairnsdale on an exchange with one of their medical students thanks to the Pat Farry Rural Health Education Trust.

Bairnsdale is a small town of around 13,000 people four hours train ride east of Melbourne. It is a very functional regional service town surrounded by some stunning areas of lakes and coastline. The hospital in Bairnsdale is around the same size as Wairau hospital in Blenheim where I have been working this year so it had a very similar feel.



There are two main GP groups in Bairnsdale with GP's who look after their patients at the hospital and who also work in theatre doing anaesthetics and some obstetrics and gynaecology. This is a fantastic set-up that they have as the patients have great continuity of care and the doctors get to do both general practice and specialist work. There are also a number of visiting surgeons who come to Bairnsdale.



The medical school attached to Bairnsdale is Monash University from Melbourne and one of the first things I noted was the incredible funding they obviously have in Australia. They had a massive "School of Rural Medicine" with a student room, a number of tutorial rooms, a video conference board room with a giant mahogany table and leather chairs, and a clinical skills centre with many more simulation mannequins than our major teaching centres, all for the 8 students placed in

Bairnsdale and the surrounding area.

With the infrastructure and support staff I had a great timetable organized for me over my two weeks giving me exposure to ED, theatre, GP clinics and two days at an Indigenous Health Clinic. My clinical placements were great as all of the doctors were incredibly friendly and willing to teach.

It was reassuring that I was on-par with my Australian colleagues as I felt very confident practicing my clinical skills overseas, and the doctors didn't think I was completely useless which was good!



Despite having more resources than our rural programme in New Zealand our programme has one major draw card over the Australian system. This is the fact that people actually want to take part in our RMIP programme and it is 100% voluntary. Only two of the 8 students placed in Bairnsdale had chosen to do rural and some of them were still quite bitter about being placed there which put a real dampener of the whole year.



For one they hadn't really been out and explore the area and so when I came along and encouraged them to come and explore with me they were amazed to find themselves living in an area surrounded by so many beautiful natural attractions. We explored around the lakes, saw Koala bears and watched the sunset from the 'Silt Jetties' an extension of riverbanks into the middle of a lake.

The other medical students were really lovely and very welcoming which made my stay all the better and now I have an excuse to go to the AMSA convention next year to catch up with them all again.

Overall the experience was a fantastic opportunity to observe other medical systems, practice clinical medicine overseas, make new friends and explore an area of the world I never knew existed!

I am very grateful for this opportunity and would like to thank RMIP and the Pat Farry Trust very much for getting me over there.

