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Subject Website Submission for Youth Inquiry

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Story:

I started my Batechlor of Podiatry course in 2001 having just moved from Craigieburn to Geelong (after living in Craigieburn for the past 9 years). Now whilst Craigieburn was not then regarded as rural, as a teenager growing up there it certainly was isolated enough that all my friends and I could not wait to move away from there - ideally closer into Melbourne.

Therefore I approached the move to Geelong (with my family and in the opposite direction) with a great deal of trepidation. I'm pleased to say that it did not take long for this opinion to be completely reversed (I now LOVE my city) - but I did still have quite a fair amount of reluctance to undertake a rural student placement away from Geelong (as my Uni classified Geelong as 'rural!').

What eventuated was that I was placed at Beechworth hospital for 1 week in my third year, much to my disgust. However once again I had my opinion totally changed. I found it to be not only the most friendly, open and welcoming placement, but also the most professionally educational and informative that I'd ever been to.

This then lead me to choosing to do my 6 week block placement in Castlemaine the following year. Despite there being opportunities in Geelong for me, having to arrange my own accomodation and finishing at 17:00 on a Friday afternoon then driving directly home for my part-time job starting at 19:00 til midnight!

Since I graduated in 2004 I've been working at Colac Area Health, simply because I've found the regional placements to not only be just as challenging (and rewarding) as the metro placements but also that the fellow workers (on the whole) are much more friendly and open. The additional benefits such as working in outreach programs are also fantastic - as I've been to places that I would never have otherwise visited!

It's worth remembering that despite my trepidation before my regional student placements, I still walked through the front door on the first day with an open mind and a willingness to give it time before I started forming my opinion. I think that it is getting people past this inital step (and thus outside their comfort zone) that is one of the major problems regional placements face.

If professionals were prepared to move past that point and give these placements a go then I feel they would find that they might learn and grow from the experience. Not only as a professional but also as a person (as I feel that I have done).

The downside to all these upsides is that it's all much easier said than done. As much as I enjoy my position at C.A.H. I have recently been looking

around Geelong at job vacancies - simply because I'm finding the travelling to be not so much onerous as it is expensive. The cost of fuel and the additional servicing of my vehicle is quite expensive.

This brings me to my point that some sort of incentive needs to be introduced in order to push professionals out of their comfort zone and encourage them to remain for a prolonged period of time. Now while I don't profess to be an amazing and generous person for choosing to work in a rural setting without these, I would have to admit that if some type of retention incentive was in place I would be much less tempted into looking back in Geelong for a new job.

To this end, the some of the other workers who also travel from Geelong to Colac daily, approached the board with a proposal that we be allowed to use the organisations lease cars in a carpool system. As our travel times would be outside of work hours and the cars are not in use at these times. Thereby saving those workers the cost of fuel and car maintenance, pooling resources, and providing a strong incentive for us workers to stay on working at C.A.H. As they too agree that some type of incentive needs to be implemented to keep up with the demand that a growing organisation (such as C.A.H.) currently faces.

This proposal was rejected and since then not only have I looked back in Geelong for work but another staff member (and Geelong resident) did in fact leave to take up a position in Geelong.

I hope this has been in some way informative, if not long winded! Please feel free to contact me if you require any further assistance or opinions

Regards

Nick

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