

MEDIA RELEASE

21 April 2016

Tomorrow's Doctors training in the Valley

18 second year medical students have found out about life in the Valley as they spent time with local doctors in different towns.

The Huon Valley Council and the University of Tasmania teamed up to place the young medicos as part of the Rural Communities program, where they can sit in with doctors as they see their patients in a General Practice setting.

The focus of the week was '**People, Place and Practice**' and the students are visited the Geeveston Medical Centre, Huon Valley Health Centre, Dover Medical Centre and Cygnet Family Practice.

The aim of the week was to place the students in 'real' situations and help them understand the health system and how rural life impacts on access and provision of health care.

UTAS medical student Fiona Beer said it was a really hands-on week.

"While we were at the GP clinics, some students helped give vaccinations, we saw how to take a punch biopsy for skin cancers, there was really a lot of hands on work that we've not been able to experience while we've just been in Uni.

"We've spent 9 to 5, almost 5 days a week in a lecture theatre learning theoretically, but when you get the chance to meet the people in a local rural community and hear their issues it's very different. It also gives us the chance to practice talking to people. Some of us don't have the gift of the gab, but these settings make the lessons real.



Contact: Communications & Media Unit, Huon Valley Council
Ph: (03) 6264 0314
Email: communications@huonvalley.tas.gov.au
Web: www.huonvalley.tas.gov.au
Follow us on Twitter – www.twitter.com/HuonValley | Like us on Facebook – www.facebook.com/HuonValley

We saw GP's, Nurses, Midwives, Maternal Child Health Workers, Social workers and Community Nurses. It was a fantastic week," Ms Beer said.

While the students enjoyed visiting the doctors' clinics and local industry, they also recognised a couple of the issues facing those living in rural communities.

UTAS student Elle Maulder said the week highlighted the problem of rural communities keeping doctors.

"There does seem to be a problem with rural GP's transitioning out after six or twelve months. This can affect how well the doctor-patient relationship develops and can impact on the health of the patient. There needs to be a level of trust, and if doctors are moving on after a short time, the patients have to go through that trust building exercise again. After 3 or for doctors in a couple of years, that can be quite frustrating," Ms Maulder said.

Ms Beer agreed and added distance as a potential problem for Valley residents.

"There's also the issue of distance. We visited farms in the Huon Valley and knowing that the closest hospital is the Royal in Hobart, but that there aren't that many ambulances, so if you do need urgent care you are a fair way away, so the distance to available health care was also highlighted to us during the week," Ms Beer said.

Julie Gordon, Medical Services Coordinator with Huon Valley Council said it's a rewarding partnership for both the students and the communities.

"The Council is determined that the smaller Huon Valley communities should not be penalised in terms of health service delivery simply because their residents choose to live outside a major urban centre.

"The medical students visiting the Valley will be the doctors of tomorrow. Engaging with rural communities and doctors can help students gain a greater understanding of rural health issues. They will also see what it means to be part of the local community,



Contact: Communications & Media Unit, Huon Valley Council
Ph: (03) 6264 0314
Email: communications@huonvalley.tas.gov.au
Web: www.huonvalley.tas.gov.au
Follow us on Twitter – www.twitter.com/HuonValley | Like us on Facebook – www.facebook.com/HuonValley

and hopefully when they choose their specialty later on, some of them may choose to be a GP in a rural setting,” Ms Gordon said.

**For more information:
Julie Gordon
Huon Valley Council Medical Services Coordinator
Phone 03 6264 0323**

(L-R) Aboriginal elder Shirley Evans, Dr Angela Retchford, Dr Eve Merfield and Dr Alexandra Smith with the visiting medical students (with Ratu the medical pooch).



Contact: Communications & Media Unit, Huon Valley Council
Ph: (03) 6264 0314
Email: communications@huonvalley.tas.gov.au
Web: www.huonvalley.tas.gov.au
Follow us on Twitter – www.twitter.com/HuonValley | Like us on Facebook – www.facebook.com/HuonValley