Fourth Year Psychology Students’ Field Experience Pilot

BACKGROUND
Practical placements are not a component of accredited undergraduate psychology courses. This then limits the students understanding of the range of roles possible when considering future practice options.

AIMS OF STUDY
The pilot project aimed to (a) expose students to rural and remote contexts (b) a broad range of professional practice experiences and (c) to assess if students could address competencies prescribed by the board in a limited capacity.

METHODS
Fourth year Students from JCU Cairns and Townsville were selected to participate. Two Masters of Clinical Psychology students provided mentoring and two registered supervisors provided overall direction and supervision of students’ activities. Students completed Pre and post interviews and questionnaires, log books, reflections on learning, and developed an e-Portfolio of experiences. Follow-up interviews at 12 months were conducted.

RESULTS
Students completed 780 hours of practice-related observation, participation and support. Evaluations showed increase in knowledge and understanding of Community Psychology professional practice and deeper understanding of rural and remote contexts of practice. Students also acquired a deeper understanding of working collaboratively with Aboriginal Australians.

CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS
The pilot project has provided evidence that exposure in the final stages of the Psychology degree has impacted career choices for students following a rural and remote field experience.