

Off the Beaten Track – Volunteers for Isolated Student Education

Tracy Provost

Ever heard of [AHVISE](#) – Aussie Helpers’ Volunteers for Isolated Student Education? This is an organisation that connects willing volunteers who have a teaching background with isolated rural and remote families in all parts of Australia.

So far we have completed two placements, very different but equally rewarding and anyone could help out. There are families all over our country where the students study through distance education or school of the air who can do with our support.

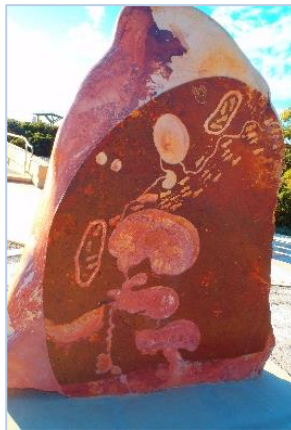
When you accept a placement you commit to six weeks helping the family. On a day-to-day basis Monday to Friday you assist the students with their school work and on-air lessons. In both of our experiences we have also assisted the students catching up past due work. You live on the isolated property, have meals with the family but also have your own space. The weekends are your own.

Placement 1 – The NSW Riverina

One of our placements was on an isolated property in the western Riverina. We had two students – Year 2 and Year 5. Both needed support maintaining focus and completing work. Dad worked the property. Mum had managed school work in between shearing, farming, community commitments, and managing the household.

Three days after we arrived the Year 7 daughter, away at boarding school, broke her leg. That led to another whole layer of support for our two charges. Mum was away for several days. The farm work and school work had to continue. Once the older daughter was released from hospital she came home for her initial recovery period so we had another student to support. We got to experience life on the farm, contributing to farm activities as well as the schoolroom. We timed it well and also spent a week north of Broken Hill at camp with our charges. This was fascinating. Our expertise and assistance with the 20 or so students who came together for this experience, was valued.

On weekends we had the chance to explore the western Riverina – Mungo National Park, Mildura and Renmark wine country, and farmer’s markets – and because of our trip north we visited Broken Hill, Menindee Lakes and Silverton. It is the best of both – experiencing life in an isolated community and being a tourist with lots of local knowledge.



Placement 2 – The Northern Territory

Our other placement was in the Northern Territory. We were based near Ooloo Crossing and Tjuwaliyn Hot Springs, half way between Katherine and Darwin but also west. In this family the primary-aged students attended the local primary school – 25 minutes away – and the secondary students became our focus. Both were well behind on their work when we arrived but keen to catch up.

We enjoyed the involvement with Darwin DE, the robust conversations supporting the students with their Year 10 and Year 11 studies and the opportunity to assist the primary kids with homework. Again Dad ran the family business and farm. Mum managed the household, did some of the business work, did the twice daily school run and supported the older students with their schoolwork. Sometimes this meant help with meals and housework. There was time after the work was done to explore the local area. Again weekends were our own. Kilometres mean nothing to these people.

From this area we were able to explore Kakadu, Katherine, Litchfield and Darwin. The access we had to this country could not have occurred without the local connection. It was an amazing experience.

Consider AHVISE – a fantastic local experience, helping others and having a very special holiday too.



Useful references

www.ahvise.org.au

Contributor details

Tracy Provest (Ph. 0490 029 003 or email tracyp@internode.on.net) 10/7/17



Tracy was Principal of Ulladulla High School from 2003-2013. Since retiring from the Department she has been involved in a variety of activities including developing a wellbeing student diary, NSW SES leadership and travel off the beaten track. Tracy is a Life Member of the NSWSPC and continues her interest in learning.