

Des Murray scholarship

Robyn Williams: And now I would like to invite Gordon Gregory to introduce the Des Murray Scholarship and Scholar. Would you both care to come up?

Gordon Gregory: Thank you, Robyn. In the office of the National Rural Health Alliance where I work, we have a lovely picture on the wall by the drinks fountain thing of Des Murray. Des was, for some time, the most high-ranking officer in the Department of Health who was specifically concerned with rural health. So he really blazed a trail, did Des Murray. He then worked for the Rural Health Alliance, as many of you will know. Des's life, where rural and remote health are concerned, was as significant, as important, as his end was tragic.

The Rural Health Alliance for which I work therefore are very pleased, every second year in conjunction with the National Rural Health Conference, to seek out a younger person from a more remote area and to pay all of the costs associated with their attendance at the conference, in order to make both a modest contribution to their professional life and also to remember Des Murray.

So it's my very great pleasure this year, this biennial year, to introduce to you from Corrigin, Caroline Rogers.

Caroline Rogers: Thank you. My name is Caroline Rogers. I am from Corrigin in Western Australia and I am very grateful to have been given this opportunity to attend the 10th National Rural Health Conference. Thank you to my Director of Nursing, Pam Keenan, for nominating and supporting me, and thank you to the National Rural Health Alliance for the scholarship; I truly appreciate it.

In June this year it will be 10 years since Des Murray passed away. People like Des, who believe in others, are so vital to rural communities, and this scholarship is a reminder of him and the great contribution he made to rural and remote Australia.

I was born in Perth in 1980 and grew up in Corrigin in Western Australia's wheat belt region. I work at the Corrigin hospital as a support worker and patient services assistant. I am a mother of two beautiful children, Nathan, who is three, and Bella who is 22 months.

When I finished Year 12, I trained as a flight attendant and travel agent, because that's what I thought I really wanted to do. But, after a series of major events and career changes, which included being a roustabout and a waitress and a bar maid, I started working at the Corrigin hospital in 2001. I had never really considered becoming a nurse until a patient by the name of Sue Abbey encouraged me to do so. Like Des, Sue was a gentle and compassionate person who enjoyed helping others. Sue not only believed that I would make a great nurse but encouraged me to enrol in nursing and, as a result, left me a trust fund to pay for my degree. Sue was my inspiration and I am eternally grateful to her and her husband, David. Sue was a wonderful lady who gave me an incredible opportunity, but sadly, Sue died in 2003 from a brain tumour at the age of 53, before she could see any of my results.

The reason I want to work in rural Australia is due to the fact that I love it out here. The weather is just the way I like it. It's not too hot and it's not too cold. The people are warm and the communities are generous, and it is a great lifestyle to have when raising kids. I grew up in a small country town and I am glad that my children will have that chance as well.

I plan to get my private pilot's licence because I love flying. Simon Holloway, the editor of Aviator Magazine, once wrote, "Once the aviation bug has bitten, flying is not a luxury; it then becomes an essential part of life. It's a difficult task but we somehow must explain it to partners, loved ones and over-

zealous accountants that we simply must fly every now and again." This quote sums up the experience of flying beautifully. Flying honestly makes me feel that way and that is why I want to learn to fly.

I'm not exactly sure what my future rural plans are, but I can guarantee it will include a small country town, flying and nursing. Living in a rural community is ingrained in who I am and my beliefs and values have been directly influenced by country living. In my opinion, the reasons to stay rural will always outweigh any reason to move to the city.

I am currently looking into what it would take for me to work with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, and hopefully there is a future there for me, provided I finish my studies before I get too old. There's four units to go. Thank you.

Robyn Williams: Congratulations. Well done, Caroline.