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#### **Students' reflections on a rural dental clinical placement**

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In 2009 the School of Dentistry and Oral Health embarked on a clinical placement in the rural, remote town of Brewarrina, NSW. This presentation will describe the students' feedback on this placement, by analysing responses to an online feedback survey in 2010 and 2011. In 2010 91% of the students provided feedback on the online survey and most were overwhelmingly positive, with more than 80% of students responded positively to the survey statements. These included feedback related to the contribution made by the environment and dental services to the dental welfare of the public, day-to-day organisation of the clinical environment, the importance of teamwork and learning to work independently. Most felt the placement provided them with a valuable learning experience. Less than a third of students however felt they were now more likely to choose a career in the public sector; and about the same were now more likely to work in a rural and remote setting. The Brewarrina rural clinical placement appears to be very beneficial for the overall clinical experience of the dental students at Griffith University. However issues related to patient flow, fully functional dental surgeries and turn-around time on repairs, and inconsistencies in staffing are challenges confronting all partners in this project. The 2009 dental graduates, who experienced the Brewarrina placement, were asked about their employment status a few months after graduation. About 60% of the new graduates responded to the survey, 80% were in the private sector, and most in the capital cities. This was mainly due to wanting to be close to family and home, and the professional support and social life in a city / large town. The true beneficial impact of the rural clinical experience might therefore only be realised when these graduates are confident to venture into clinical practice settings in rural locations.