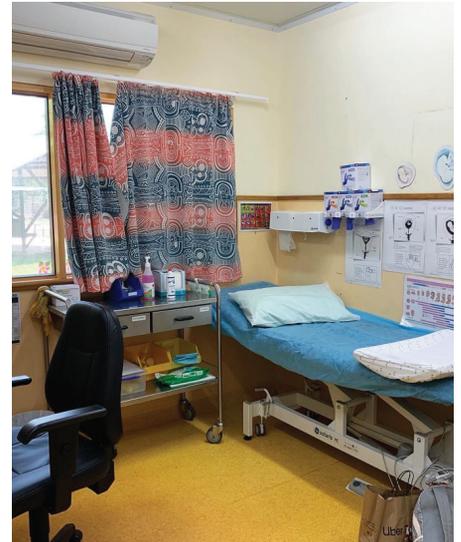


# MIDWIFERY STUDY TOUR: TO BE INSPIRED BY REMOTE AND RURAL MIDWIVES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

by Ruth King, Midwife and Senior Project Officer, Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, ACT



Artist in residence at the Marrawuddi in Jabiru, Ruth King at Ubirr Rock, Community Clinic room.

The tour to the NT in October last year lived up to every expectation and surpassed many. We explored midwifery from the Mindil beach birthing practices of the Larrakia people, through to urban health care at Royal Darwin Hospital which is also the referral centre for the top end and WA. Outside of urban life we were introduced to the complexities of maternity care and services in remote communities such as Jabiru in Kakadu. Katherine was a mix of urban and remote with hospital services and a dedicated community practice with specific outreach services for outlying communities. The tour was completed with a visit to the Tiwi Islands where we were made welcome with a 'welcoming ceremony' before learning more about the challenges of providing health care when access is by boat or plane only.

I had previously been to Darwin and Alice Springs, as a tourist, but on none of those previous trips had I the opportunity to spend some dedicated time travelling around. The 'cultural and destination' highlights of the tour will have been different for everyone. Personally, I loved it all, but if I have to choose some of my favourites, then as a start it would be the evening walk around to Ubirr Rock where we learnt about the history of 'Garranga'rreli', the Rainbow Serpent, before finding a place to watch the sunset. The Litchfield National Park and Florence and Wangi falls were beautiful and refreshing and the magnetic termite mounds were a natural wonder. Finally, the sunset cruise in Nitmiluk Gorge was an opportunity to learn more about traditional custodians – the Jawoyn people - from their historic rock artwork – whilst taking in the breathtaking view. The tour has provided a taste of

what the NT has to offer, and now that I know that there is so much more to explore, I can't wait to go back.

From a career perspective, the interest that started with a midwifery student placement in Alice Springs back when I was in 3rd year has been reignited. Having heard from so many different midwives, in a range of positions and settings (urban hospitals and midwifery group practice through to midwives in remote health units or remote clinics) it is clear that there are many opportunities to work as a midwife and also pathways to increase scope of practice to support the highly diverse health needs of women in the more remote communities.

At the end of each day, when we would stop for breaks and often on the bus journey between services or destinations, the topic of conversation was about what we had seen, how it compared to how we practiced and what we might do if we were able to follow our dreams (work or travel). We were all inspired by the midwives and other health professionals we met who spoke passionately about their work in the NT. The midwives were all committed to ensuring that they worked positively alongside the women in community. There may still be work required to make health access equitable, but in the NT they have strong women, midwives and community groups finding ways to work together to make it a reality – and midwifery is at the heart of this. After all, life begins with birth (and a midwife).

Join the next NT midwifery study tour from 15-22 May 2022. Full details at [www.jonbainestours.com.au](http://www.jonbainestours.com.au)