

International Nurses Day Profile Sue Dawkins

Swapping City for Rural Role Delivers Good Results for Sue

The decision to trade her nursing role in the city for a primary care role within a small rural community has delivered many benefits for Nurse practitioner, Sue Dawkins.

Sue, whose scope of practice is “Primary Care over the Lifespan”, is now based in the small town of Murchison in the Tasman region of the South Island. The township has a population of just over 500 with another 500 in the surrounding district, which supports a rural farming community and tourist and tramping industry.

Sue’s main responsibilities are to promote health, prevent disease and to diagnose, assess and manage people’s health needs.

“I provide a wide range of assessment and treatment interventions including differential diagnoses, ordering, conducting and interpreting diagnostic and laboratory tests, administering therapies for the management of potential or actual health needs

“Murchison is one and a half hours drive from the nearest hospital and so with no diagnostic facilities in-house, the need to get a good history and a good examination is imperative!”

“I work independently but enjoy great support from the GPs who work on the days I’m off and also from Nelson Hospital consultants.”

Sue is also involved in teaching of other nursing staff, student nurses and doctors in training, and also does on-call work which also involves PRIME (Primary Response in Medical Emergency) call.

When she’s not doing all of this, Sue lives on a working 800 hectare farm and can often be found busy with farm- life; mustering cattle and sheep, and performing other farming duties alongside her partner with her farm dog that she’s managed to train herself.

Sue says she really enjoys the professional and private work/life balance she has today

Balance is important for the ongoing health and wellbeing of the nursing workforce as a whole,” she says.

“With an aging population of very experienced nurses I see that it’s important that we all try and better accommodate our work requirements so that they we can balance our working needs with our needs for physical and mental wellbeing.

Her life now is a far cry from the beginnings of her career, working as a registered nurse in the busy Princess Mary Hospital (Now Starship Hospital, Auckland) during the 1980s. Sue stayed three years in this role before moving from the hospital into a practice setting, working in both large and small urban General Practices in Auckland. Moving into a large integrated Primary Care facility sparked Sue’s interest in learning and professional development.

“I took a lead nurse role in the amalgamation of several GP practices into one large purpose built primary care facility, and this led to additional study. I discovered that I really enjoyed studying! This set me on a new path and within five years I had completed my master’s degree.”

However after two years in the role and some unexpected work changes Sue felt ready for a challenge when she saw the job in Murchison advertised. Seeing new opportunities to further professional development, she went for it.

“In this new primary care role I was able to develop my own clinical skills much more fully than I had previously, which has led to me developing my nurse practitioner role.”

“Throughout the changes to my life, my passion for *playing a role in optimising people’s health and wellbeing* is still as strong today as it ever was.”

Whether they’re helping city or rural folk, nurses make a wonderful contribution to our community. Today on May 12 it is International Nurses Day. Take a moment to think about the significant contribution Sue and others like her make to our and our loved ones’ lives, and to thank them.

If you are interested in joining the profession, up skilling or finding resources contact the South Island Alliance Regional Training Hub [here](#).

About the South Island Alliance regional training hub (SIRTH):

The South Island Alliance, made up of the five DHBs, supports the contribution nurses make and promotes and co-ordinates professional development and attracting people to the workforce. It does so via the South Island Regional Training Hub (SIRTH), one of four innovative health networks in NZ working with Health Workforce NZ.

The networks developed by SIRTH will enable sharing of innovations and emerging ideas throughout the region, towards building a strong health workforce and higher quality care for patients.