



**HELPING HANDS:** Ballarat's Kate Harwood experiences the highs and lows of life in India during her recent visit. Kate said she would never forget the pain and suffering she witnessed.

# The reality of India for Kate

By **Dellaram Jamali**

**T**O WITNESS a seven-year-old boy dying of HIV-AIDS due to insufficient health care is a rarity in Australia.

But when 21-year-old Kate Harwood volunteered in India recently, this was a reality.

"I will never forget the pain, agony and suffering," she said.

"If only I could have provided him with a curative treatment."

Having missed Christmas with her family as well as the opportunity to celebrate her 21st birthday at home was of no concern to Kate.

At the end of last year, the former Loreto College student set off to Northern India and volunteered her time in the health care sector.

"There were a few countries I



Kate Harwood

could choose from but I didn't mind where I went," Kate said.

Studying nursing at the Australian Catholic University, she is currently in her final year.

The knowledge and experience she had gained so far in her degree acted as a valuable asset

during her time in both India and Nepal.

"I was able to provide assistance, support and guidance within the health care sector," Kate said.

"It gave me a yearning to learn more and try to assist in every way possible.

"It was an adventure of a lifetime."

After completing her VCE and at only 18, Kate decided to take 12 months off — as many students do.

The difference with her gap year was that she chose to use it volunteering as a teacher in a remote Island in Vanuatu.

"There was no running water, no electricity and it was under chief rule," Kate said.

"That's where I started my volunteer experience and coming back I had this nurturing perspective.

"I really wanted to continue it, not so much teaching but caring for people."

Having already applied for nursing, she began her degree until an opportunity came up with Mary Ward International Australia, a developmental organisation which works in collaboration with the Loreto Sisters.

Kate spent her time assessing the delivery of healthcare in remote areas.

Her work involved implementing certain guidelines set to improve the residents' health status and the availability of health resources.

As she visited the villages, she would conduct basic check-ups and analyse dietary requirements.

"It wasn't as much hands-on as much as observing and understanding the culture and

how we could help them achieve a better health status.

"What a wonderful, self-discovering, eye-opening journey it was."

As Kate prepares to complete her degree, her passion for service remains at the forefront of her future plans.

She hopes that in the next year or so, she can consolidate her knowledge and expertise in the field before offering her services where they are needed most.

Whether it's moving to the Northern Territory or somewhere overseas, Kate thanks her faith, and her experience in India and Nepal for having inspired her to work towards the betterment of humanity.

"Before I went to India I just thought of Bollywood and the Taj Mahal but it was nothing compared to what we see in TV.

"It was the most amazing experience."

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