

APY Lands – Q&A

Meet Cameron, our Project Officer APY Lands, who has called Mimili home for almost two years. Working closely with the local community, Cameron supports projects that make a positive difference across the APY Lands and brings valuable firsthand experience of living and working in this unique region.

Q&A

Q: What do you enjoy about working in the APY Lands?

I enjoy being out of the city whilst connecting and working with members of the community in a different lifestyle and setting.

Q: What does a typical day look like?

A typical day rarely exists on the APY Lands. A day could start with cleaning and preparing the accommodation for arrival of guests, maintenance of yard and accommodation centre, helping down at the wellbeing/ youth centre.

Throughout the day I would be responding to community members seeking help, advice or just having a yarn.

Q: What does DHS do on the APY Lands?

DHS provides on ground support to community through engaging in community events, programs and working within community.

Q: What skills or experience are most valuable for this role?

Being able to problem solve and understanding Anangu/Aboriginal ways and respect.

Q: What support is available when working remotely?

There is a lot of problem solving involved. My DHS team leaders have been very supportive whilst not being on the ground here in Mimili.

Q: Is previous experience working in remote communities required?

No, as I came here with no experience whatsoever and have found living/working on the APY lands very rewarding and satisfying. I have made many new friends and meaningful connections with community members and service providers across the lands that I never thought I would experience in my lifetime.

Melissa has been working as the Program Coordinator in Amata for almost one year. Her experience in the role provides great insight into the opportunities, challenges and rewards that come with living and working in a remote community on the APY Lands.

Q: What drew you to apply for a role in the APY Lands?

A: I started working on the APY Lands 10 years ago in a different role and have always enjoyed working with various communities across the Lands helping people access the support they need. My current role gives me the opportunity to make a real difference while learning from Anangu and building respectful relationships.

Q: What do you enjoy about working in the APY Lands?

A: I enjoy the opportunity to build genuine relationships with community members and work alongside local staff. It's rewarding to see the positive impact that respectful, community-focused work can have. I have always felt welcome and included and have a real sense of being part of the community. I have also made some good friends.

Q: What does a typical day look like?

A: No two days are the same. You learn quickly to adapt to whatever situation you are in. A typical day involves working with community members, and service providers. It may include supporting and setting up programs, attending meetings, assisting with accommodation requests and participating in community events such as facilitating BBQ's for Music Festival, NAIDOC celebrations and hosting service provider meetings.

Q: What does DHS do on the APY Lands?

A: DHS works with Anangu communities to improve wellbeing by supporting community services, accommodation facilities, family wellbeing programs and partnerships with local organisations. Staff work collaboratively with communities to improve access to services while respecting local culture and community priorities.

Q: What challenges have you faced?

A: Working in remote South Australia can present challenges such as distance from family, friends, Kmart and Bunnings! Alice Springs is the closest town around 500km from Amata. I have learnt to be more self sufficient and resilient.

Q: What kind of programs and activities are offered?

A: Programs focus on community wellbeing, family support, service coordination, community development, accommodation services and connecting people with the services they need. For example, Adelaide Uni medical students are coming to run a youth program in the school holidays, ADRA from Gawler came to Amata with a truck load of clothes and household donations, aged care cook ups, movie afternoons, just to name a few.

Q: How do staff work with the community?

A: Staff work in partnership with community members, Elders and local organisations. They listen first, respect cultural protocols, and build long-term relationships based on trust and collaboration.

Q: What accommodation facilities does DHS manage?

A: DHS manages service provider accommodation for visiting staff from all organisations in Amata and Mimili. In Amata, I oversee bookings, meet visitors to assist with checking in and out of accommodation, maintenance requests and ensure facilities provide a safe, secure and welcoming space and are well maintained.

Q: What makes working on the APY Lands unique?

A: The opportunity to work alongside Anangu communities while respecting and learning from each other. Every day provides opportunities to learn, build relationships and contribute to meaningful community outcomes. There is no traffic, traffic lights or high-rise buildings, just wide open spaces with the best sunrises and sunsets and the occasional horse, donkey, camel and lizard!

Q: What skills or experience are most valuable for this role?

A: Strong communication, adaptability, organisation, cultural awareness and relationship-building skills are essential. Being able to work independently while collaborating with others is also important.

Q: What support is available when working remotely?

A: Staff receive support from managers, colleagues, professional development opportunities, regular communication, established procedures and wellbeing services. Local staff also provide valuable guidance and support.

Q: How do you engage respectfully with Anangu communities?

A: I engage by listening, respecting cultural protocols, taking time to build trust and recognising those community members. I remain open to learning, asking questions and working alongside Anangu.

Q: Is previous experience working in remote communities required?

A: Previous experience is helpful but not essential. A willingness to learn, respect for culture, being resilient and adaptable and strong communication skills are important.

Q: What impact does this role have on the community?

A: The role helps improve access to services, strengthens partnerships and supports programs that promote health, wellbeing and community participation, contributing to positive long-term outcomes.

Q: What is the team environment like?

A: The team environment is supportive, collaborative and focused on achieving the best outcomes for the community. Our team support one another and work together to solve problems either by phone, email or Teams.