

## Meet Equal Health Volunteer - Errolyn

I've always wanted to do volunteer work overseas, and when I heard about Equal Health it seemed like the perfect opportunity for me to realise a life ambition.



My first camp with Equal Health was in February 2007 to West Bengal, India. After a day in Kolkata that introduced me to the chaos, poverty and joy of India (not to mention the experience of being on roads with no rules!), we headed north by train to Katwa. In Katwa I was based at Anandaniketan, a residential home for orphans, and children and adults with disabilities, mental health issues or homelessness. Our greeting at the train station and then back at Anandaniketan was overwhelming. The residents and staff had obviously been preparing and looking forward to our arrival for some time. Their warmth and generosity inspired me to help as much as I could in the short time that we were there.



As a physiotherapist in Australia I had some experience in specialised seating for people with disabilities, and two of the residents in particular were in dire need of some additional support in their wheelchairs. Both residents usually lay on a concrete floor and had trouble joining in with any of the activities at the home. Along with Chelsea, a volunteer occupational therapist, we made wood and foam inserts covered in vinyl to go inside two residents' wheelchairs. When in the insert and wheelchair they could be taken to where the other residents were playing sport and participating in other recreational activities, and they could sit up to eat their meals.

The days at Anandaniketan were very long and even with a lot of effort I didn't achieve anywhere near what I had set out to do – I had to remember that processes are very different in India and everything moves at a much slower pace than in Australia!!

Still, that is not always a bad thing, and I came away from the camp with a permanently changed perspective on life and people.

I can definitely recommend the volunteering experience for anyone who can approach it with an open mind, strong work ethic and, most importantly, a sense of fun!

**Physiotherapist Volunteer - Errolyn**

*A life changing appointment*