



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Student Profiles Development Studies Graduate Rachel Donnelly

Graduate profile: Rachel Donnelly

Graduating from the Bachelor of Development Studies at UON in 2012, Rachel has had the opportunity to shape her career in the area of Indigenous Affairs for the Australian Federal Government. Rachel currently works in the Northern Territory as a Senior Project Officer for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

After completing the degree, Rachel was fortunate enough to get a graduate position with the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). This position gave her the opportunity to complete two rotations in diverse areas of the Department. Her first rotation was in the Strategic Policy Branch looking at broad social policy; her second rotation was in the Tackling Alcohol Abuse section, working in the area of alcohol abuse in remote Indigenous communities. During this time there was a change in government leading to a restructure, so Rachel's role changed and she moved into the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. This led to other positions in this Department, working predominately in Indigenous affairs in the Northern Territory.

"I work in the Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt region. My current role is as a liaison between the local regional network staff and my colleagues in National Office. I listen to what's happening on the ground and use my overarching view of the entire region to identify trends. I then feed this information back to Canberra where my National Office colleagues can use this evidence to push for policy change or additional funding".

"For example, there was recently a spate of suicides in two of our communities. I developed the incident reports and used this as evidence to get mental health first aid on the agenda back in Canberra. The Minister has signed off some funding for this purpose and now we are back on the ground having conversations with providers and communities about how we can deliver this mental health training in a culturally-appropriate and effective way. It's pretty great when we can see change like this happening; the information we gather on the ground has the ability to change the policy discussion right at the very top".



Rachel works for the federal government in the Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt region of the Northern Territory in the area of Indigenous Affairs



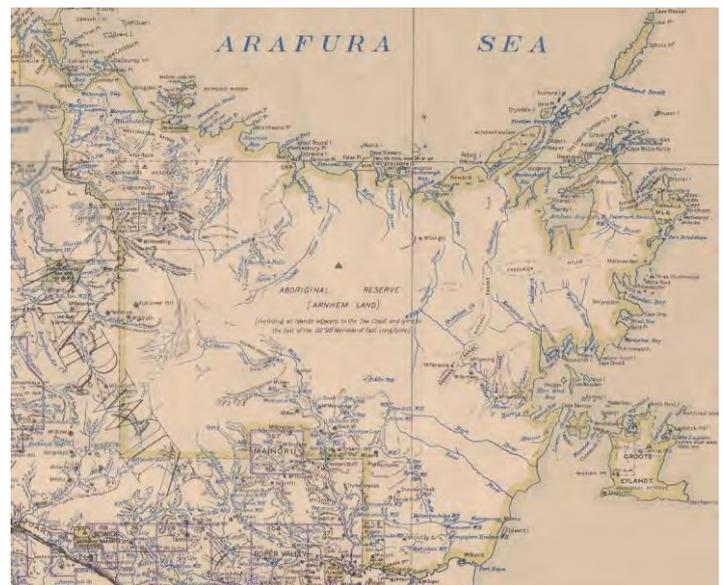
“The development studies degree taught me how to approach thinking around a topic, not just having one perspective. It allows you to see different sides of an argument; you can see merit in different views on the one topic. This taught me a lot about strategic thinking. This has been important in my career as I am always dealing with complex issues. In my job I need to consider the economic, environmental, and social effects of an issue. It’s not simple, it’s not black and white; but Development Studies really encourages you to think about what happens in the grey area”.



Rachel didn’t have specific career goals in mind when she started her degree. While she admits it might have been better to have had an understanding about what she’d like to do and pick subjects that are suitable; given the broad, well-rounded nature of degree she was able to combine her human geography subjects with more technical subjects (like GIS and Environmental Law) which have aided her career. Rachel also recommends the course GEOG3330 Work Integrated Learning in Development Studies and Human Geography. Rachel found this placement course as a great starting point for her career and an added bonus for her resume.

Rachel recommends the Development Studies degree at UON to all future students. “A lot of my other friends from UON have used the degree as a stepping stone, combining it with other studies. One friend combined it with a Masters of Public Health and works in community development. Another colleague combined it with a Diploma of Teaching and became a Geography and Ethics teacher; and one combined it with further studies in Environmental Planning and now works for Local Government in land-use planning.

“That’s just one amazing thing about the scope of the degree; it can be applied in so many different circumstances. You can use this amazing base to do pretty much whatever you want”.



**Arnhem Land and
Groote Eylandt Region
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For more information visit: www.newcastle.edu.au/degrees/bachelor-of-development-studies