



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Student Profiles

Development Studies

Graduate

Lauren Pollock

Graduate Profile: Lauren Pollock

Lauren's career aspirations changed drastically whilst studying her Bachelor of Development Studies. Initially Lauren sought to work in international development. Midway through her studies, Lauren had a change of heart and found herself committed to working in Aboriginal Community Development. As Lauren says, in Development Studies, *"you have a chance to change and grow through your degree, it doesn't limit you."*

After graduating, Lauren worked part-time with children in sport from different economic and cultural backgrounds while applying for jobs in Aboriginal communities. After submitting many applications without the result she wanted, Lauren was told, *"you just need a little more practical experience"*. She took this advice in her stride and started volunteering with an organisation working with refugees, Northern Settlement Services. She reflects, *"this was a really good way for me stay motivated and connected to the type of work I wanted to do."*

Lauren was offered a job with a Warlpiri-based NGO in a tiny remote community in the Northern Territory. This was Lauren's dream job, working on the ground in

community development. It was a good fit for her, especially after completing her Honours year project on strengths-based approaches with Indigenous people.



Figure 1: Lauren in the Northern Territory

Lauren continued working for the same NGO for two-and-a-half years, starting as a Youth Development Worker living in the community. She was soon promoted to Senior Youth Development Worker where she oversaw two remote communities and youth programs that were 250km apart.

“Developing relationships and trust is key to this kind of work on Country. Being welcomed into a community is something I will always appreciate and never forget. I learned to stop and listen to what the community wanted me to do, which involved making informed decisions and suggestions based on what they said - instead of thinking I could do so much.”

After two years and missing home, Lauren made the difficult decision to hand in her notice. She continued her work as Outreach Team Leader for five months, before coming home to Newcastle at the end of 2016.

Now Lauren is working as a Research Assistant at the University of Newcastle’s Priority Research Centre for Brain and Mental Health. Here, she is working to help project manage a pilot study which involves working with Aboriginal Health Control Services.

“My studies taught me the importance of consultation and engagement, and it showed me that working in the field of development is not just a job – its life. Dr Paul Hodge, my Honours supervisor, really helped me figure out what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it, as well as clarifying what I did and didn’t want from a job. Doing Honours has had the biggest impact on my career – living remotely in the desert – I couldn’t have done that without having confidence in myself to practice respectful listening and work with people from a different culture in a positive and empowering way.”



Figure 2: Lauren nursing a joey.

Lauren has also completed a Certificate 4 at TAFE in Community Services (Alcohol & Other Drugs). In the future, she would like to work in community mental health, supporting people that are experiencing alcohol and drug dependency.

For other students thinking about studying Development Studies, Lauren says *“I think what’s really good about this degree, is that it teaches you skills, how you want to do your job, and what’s important – what you do and don’t want from a job. Lots of people pick Development Studies because it’s a different way of looking at things and the world. To be encouraged to think independently but to also be supported by academics, is a great thing.”*

Lauren’s next big adventure might be travelling overseas to South America and volunteering there – finally getting a taste of international development!

CONTACT

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For more information visit: www.newcastle.edu.au/degrees/bachelor-of-development-studies