



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE  
AUSTRALIA

# Student Profiles

## Development Studies

### Graduate

### Olivia Mansell

#### Graduate Profile: Olivia Mansell

After completing a Bachelor of Development Studies in 2010, Olivia Mansell has worked in property, commercial and family asset management in Sydney.

Olivia is employed as an Asset Manager for Property NSW, where she is responsible for organising assets (including buildings owned and leased by the state government) for family and community services across the state. Olivia determines locations that need services and finds suitable places for these services to be located. This involves a lot of analysis and securing appropriate approvals. Olivia notes, *“it’s a lot of responsibility ensuring that space and public money are utilised well.”*

Olivia considers her studies in Development Studies as instrumental to her success in the field. During her degree, she completed most of the Geography and Economics courses as part of her majors and directed courses. Economics has really helped when networking with others in her field. According to Olivia, people change their perception of you as a professional when they understand that you can comprehend the financial side of decisions as well the social and physical aspects.

*“Studying Development Studies has been really important to what I do. It means that I can have a relationship with the people I’m working with in family and community services. When staff are explaining someone’s needs to me, I have more empathy and understanding of these needs having done Development Studies.”*

Once she completed her studies in Newcastle, Olivia returned to live in Sydney. Her first job after her undergraduate degree was with Marrickville Council as a Community Facilities Coordinator.

*“It had a Development Studies feel, in that I was managing space for community groups, looking to improve subsidies and arguing to the Council why certain people should be allocated space. We were advocating for those groups and supporting them – it was exciting!”*



Figure 1 Olivia (middle) while working for Marrickville Council with the Major Projects Team at the top of Petersham Town Hall Clock Tower.

Olivia realised during her first job that she enjoyed working in social and economic policy and wanted to further her skill set. She completed a Master of Policy and Applied Social Research at Macquarie University in 2014, which complemented her Development Studies degree very well.



Figure 2 Olivia and her partner Stuart who supported her through her Masters study. Celebrating at her Graduation day at Macquarie University.

She was later seconded to another role which focused on the need for recreation and public facilities, and how this changes over time. This involved a lot of foresight, considering how access to resources would change as the population grows, and as different transport options were developed.

Olivia encourages graduates and final year students that are looking for jobs to *“just apply for everything. It’s a numbers game. The job search can be disheartening but the more applications you complete, the more likely you’ll be successful and find a job that might take you somewhere amazing.”*

*“Development Studies was the best thing I could have done. You look at things differently afterwards, and because the degree is broad and extensive, you can focus it towards your interests and relate it to your career. The best part was the lightbulb moments – when you’re just sitting in a lecture theatre and you learn something totally new that you had no idea about. For me, this degree didn’t only help my career, but also my understanding of the world.”*

For students thinking about studying Development Studies, Olivia recommends that *“you need to focus on enjoying the experience, learning and getting the best results you can. Getting a degree is not an overnight thing, you have to focus on one thing at a time and believe it will all work out. In the end, it’s the best time!”*



Figure 3 Olivia (middle) with fellow Bachelor of Development Studies graduates

Excitingly Olivia recently scored her dream job in NSW Transport as an Asset Analyst. Olivia will be working in the Asset Management and Divestment Team sourcing and analysing asset management data from different sources to monitor financial and ongoing investments, while involved in lots of interesting and diverse team projects.

## CONTACT

**Associate Professor Kathy Mee**

**Program Convenor**

**T + 61 2 4921 6451**

**For more information visit: [www.newcastle.edu.au/dearees/bachelor-of-development-studies](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/dearees/bachelor-of-development-studies)**