

DEVELOPMENT STUDIES GRADUATE

LISA BUTSON



**CURRENT ROLE: SENIOR TABLE OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE
CANBERRA**

PAST ROLE: ELECTORATE OFFICER

**DEGREE: BACHELOR OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE**

Lisa, who is a self-confessed "Politics Nerd", has followed her passion and since graduating she has worked in several roles in Parliament House.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO SINCE WE LAST SPOKE?

Lisa started her career as an Electorate Officer and worked for two members of the House of Representatives. This role gave Lisa first-hand knowledge of how public policy affected the lives of people. Then after graduating, Lisa moved to Canberra for a role in Parliament House as an Inquiries Officer. She described her role as being a triage point, any questions relating to the Senate were sent to Lisa who was responsible for finding and providing the answers. This role gave Lisa the opportunity to learn about key aspects of what the Federal Parliament does in policy making and parliamentary procedure.

Recently Lisa has been promoted to Senior Table Office. In this role Lisa is responsible for maintaining the Notice Paper, a list that contains everything that could be brought up before the Senate. This list ranges from bills, committee reports and notice of motions. Lisa is responsible for ensuring all the information on the list is up to date and available for everyone to access.



Image: Lisa Butson outside of Parliament House.

Wanting to gain more knowledge and skills about public policy, Lisa enrolled in a [Graduate Certificate of Public Policy](#) with the Australian National University. As part of her post-graduate studies, Lisa was accepted into the ANU Congressional

Research Fellowship Program (CRFP). In this program, Lisa had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C where she worked for a U.S Senator. She worked on a range of foreign policy issues, including national security, the Middle East peace process, foreign aid budgets and international education in the US. Lisa even sat in on the impeachment trial of Donald Trump!



Image: Lisa speaking at an event part of the Congressional Research Fellowship in Washington, D.C at the Australian Embassy.

The trip was an eye-opening experience for Lisa and highlighted the differences between a parliamentary (Australian) versus a presidential (US) system and how this impacts public policy. Lisa's role in Australia involves providing impartial advice about Senate policy and procedures to senators. However, in the US, the office Lisa works in does not exist in the same independent way. Instead these roles are completed by the Republican and Democratic parties.

HOW RELEVANT HAS YOUR DEGREE BEEN SINCE YOU GRADUATED?

Lisa followed her interest in political economy and majored in *Globalisation and Economic Development* which provided her with an understanding of political and economic theory and practice. For Lisa learning to understand relationships between opposing sides of a political issue is a valuable tool to be able to progress and proceed with effective policies.

The [New Colombo Plan](#) is a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) scholarship which offers undergraduate students the opportunity to live, study and work in the Indo-Pacific. Lisa was awarded an incredibly competitive New Colombo Plan scholarship which allowed her to travel to the Philippines. As the highest ranked student in Australia, Lisa was recognised as the New Colombo Plan 2017 Philippines Fellow. In the Philippines Lisa studied at the De La Salle University and also completed two internships, one with The Asia Foundation and the other with The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).



Image: Lisa in the Philippines conducting fieldwork with her classmates from De La Salle University Manila for the New Colombo Plan Scholarship.

Although the selection process for the scholarship is highly competitive, Lisa says that the experience was a highlight of her undergraduate degree and she encourages any interested students to apply.



Image: Lisa at the ASEAN Special Summit 2018, as part of the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program.

During her degree Lisa was also involved with the [iLEAD Plus Program](#) which is aimed at developing international leadership skills. The program incorporates workshops, speaker events, volunteering and scholarship opportunities to travel overseas. Lisa earned one of these scholarships and was selected to attend the University Scholars Leadership Symposium in Hong Kong.

“It’s a really good way to get involved and build relationships across the university and start networking.”



Image: Lisa attending the 6th University Scholars Leadership Symposium 2015, Hong Kong.

ADVICE: FOLLOW YOUR INTERESTS

Lisa suggests thinking about what ‘level’ of development you are interested in pursuing. Consider thinking about whether you want to work one-on-one with individuals or communities, or if you are more interested in and would rather work more broadly by implementing strategies and policies. This can be a good way to focus your studies.

Your undergraduate degree is your opportunity to learn what your interests are through your studies and your other experiences, like volunteering and work integrated learning. Choosing courses outside of your major or that might appear ‘scary’ and challenging can also be incredibly valuable to preparing you for a range of future careers.

“Development Studies is so broad and that is a blessing in disguise.”

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Lisa can see herself working overseas in the future. At the moment, she is happy in Canberra and is focused on making the most of her opportunities to develop her skills further.

For more information about the [Bachelor of Development Studies](#) you can contact: [Program Convenor, Assoc Prof Kathy Mee](#)
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