

# Study offers opportunities taking Georgia to new and exciting places

By Debbie Keen



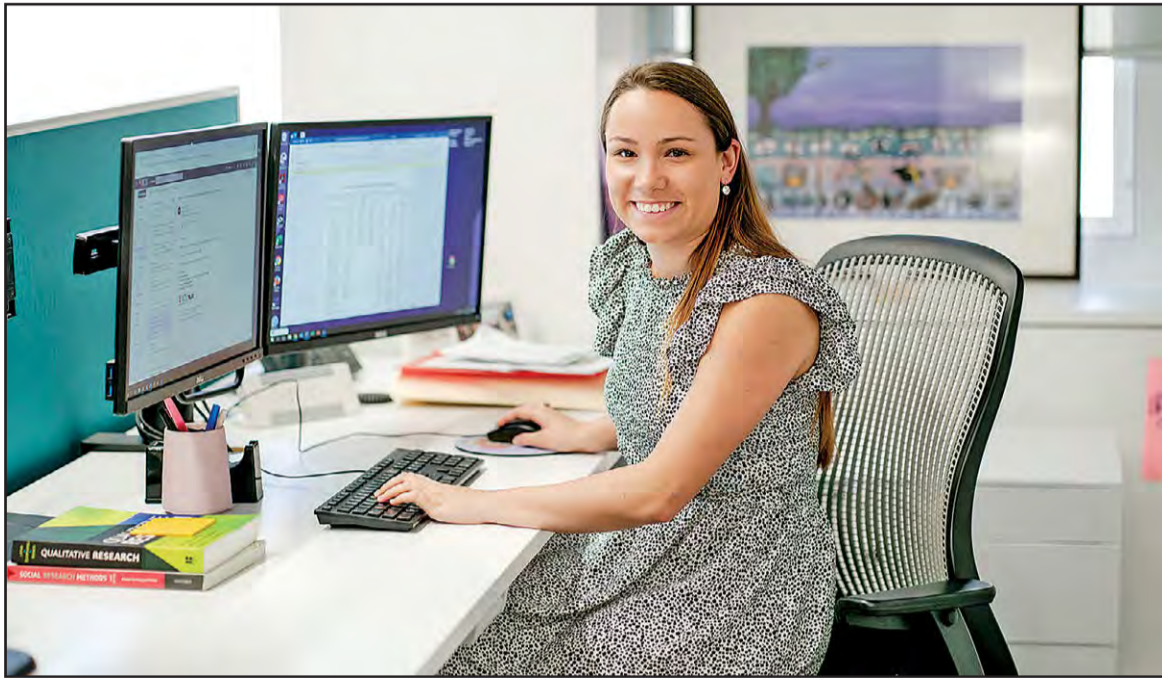
A passion to better improve the education and health systems to listen and give a voice to the youth of First Nations, especially in research, has inspired Georgia Durmush.

A PhD student at Australian Catholic University (ACU), Sydney, Georgia wants to make sure that community are well catered for in higher education.

Proudly a Wailwan and Gomeri woman from the Gomeri Nation in NSW central west, Georgia has been studying the ways Indigenous youth view their wellbeing, the influences that shape their experience.

Georgia says that it is time to let go of the idea that Australia is making up ground for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and for the young Indigenous population to have a say. Georgia's philosophy echoes that of Dr Tess Ryan (Biripai), an ACU academic involved in creating new opportunities for Indigenous students in research, taking a 'nothing about us without us' approach.

Georgia loves learning and is grateful that her studies have given her the chance to yarn about things that matter to her and her



Proud Wailwan and Gomeri woman Georgia Durmush is a PhD student at Australian Catholic University.

community. She has been an active voice on NAIDOC, community and empowering First Nations in her local Georges River Council, emphasising the need for a narrative on social justice rather than merely a showcase of culture.

As an undergraduate, Georgia took part in a cultural exchange with ACU, travelling to Arizona to

meet with Navajo peoples. Alongside the experience of engaging with Navajo cultural ceremony, community and academics, Georgia says that the relationship forged with the ACU academics involved in the trip was invaluable. In addition the trip presented a chance to explore issues of justice for indigenous

Americans, fuelling a further interest in serving First Peoples through her studies.

A sense of justice runs deeply in Georgia's family. Her grandmother believed that education was crucial, and Georgia's mum has worked for some time as a court support officer. Georgia is not the first in her family to go to university and

believes that this is the legacy of her grandmother's values.

"I never met my nan," Georgia says, "but she inspired my family to be the best they could be, to value education." Georgia and her sister both attended Gawura at St Andrew's Cathedral School, something that Georgia credits as a "life-changing" experience.

Alongside family, Georgia says that other connections to community have provided a huge amount of support. Growing up, she remembers Pat Anderson AO, now a community supervisor on her PhD.

"Back then, I didn't have too much sense of how important she was to my community, really. She was just Pat," she said. As she grew and learned, Georgia came to value Pat's efforts in addressing issues affecting First Nations peoples.

Being able to partner with Pat to study something so close to her heart is a big deal.

When asked if she has a message for youth, Georgia encourages young First Peoples to aim for the stars. She believes that the best can be achieved by seeing an opportunity and taking it.

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