

From bluecoat to grad gown

Catching criminals and chasing good grades is all in a day's work for the University of Southern Queensland's newest graduate, Anna Neumann.

A police officer for nearly 30 years, the mum-of-four recently completed an anthropology degree and graduated with top marks.

With the colours of the Aboriginal flag draped around her neck, Senior Sergeant Neumann – a proud Ngiyampaa woman from western New South Wales – celebrated the end of her undergraduate degree alongside hundreds of her peers, including 38 First Nations students.

"It means a lot to me to be wearing this," Snr Sgt Neumann said.

"When I think back two generations to my grandfather, and how much changed in two generations – this is for him."

With record crowds watching on, there were tears, smiles and laughter for today's cohort who persevered throughout the Covid-19 pandemic to complete their studies.

"There hasn't been a single moment of this degree that I

haven't loved," she said.

"But it hasn't been easy."

The 49-year-old juggled police work, family commitments and a full-time study load to get here.

"If you're studying something you love, it's a lot easier," Snr Sgt Neumann said.

"Education is key to having a better existence, and I'd encourage everyone, particularly Indigenous people who are so underrepresented in tertiary study, to learn something that they love."

Sharing hugs and tears, Anna's daughter Ella, who recently graduated from the University of Southern Queensland with a Bachelor of Nursing, cheered from the sidelines.

"It was really special to go through our undergraduate degrees together," Snr Sgt Neumann said.

"And it was definitely motivational for both us to keep going."

"I feel so blessed to have come to a university that teaches Anthropology with the Aboriginal community, and for the community."

Now, she is undertaking a year-long Honours course.

First Nations police officer receives top honours



Police officer and mum-of-four Anna Neumann graduated at Toowoomba's Empire Theatre alongside 38 other First Nations students from the University of Southern Queensland.



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