

# Tracking success

*Student stories from Big Picture schools in WA*



**Big Picture**  
LEARNING AUSTRALIA

At Big Picture Learning schools and academies in Western Australian high schools, students structure their learning around personal interests, which they pursue both inside school and outside on internships with mentors in the community. Many are harnessing previously untapped potential and defying their own and others' expectations of their capacities.

A range of students from very different backgrounds and learning styles with unusual and diverse interests find that they are attracted to the Big Picture design for learning because it affords them opportunities that are not available to them in mainstream schooling.

They are excelling in all kinds of domains – including the scientific, medical, creative, physical, social, practical, and sociological – and successfully transitioning to further training, university and/or employment.

Regular learning on internships and courses

outside school stimulates ideas for future careers. Internships build students' networks within the field. They also experience industry-standard technology, tools and equipment. Students gain skills and qualifications while still at school. This results in young people who are a step ahead upon graduation, and confident in their choice of the next steps in life.

The International Big Picture Learning Credential has allowed Big Picture graduates to more fully demonstrate their knowledge, skills, qualities, and experiences acquired throughout their schooling years and to allow entry to one or more of the 17 universities around Australia that accept the IBPLC.

Big Picture Learning network schools in Western Australian are noticing strong interest from all students from many different backgrounds – as well as those with special needs – who are looking for an approach to learning that is about finding purpose and personal best.

# Emma Salmeri

Prior to joining the Big Picture Learning (BPL) Academy at Halls Head College as a Year 10 student in 2013, Emma describes her high school years as “A struggle... I definitely did become very lost throughout... and struggled to find my sense of place.” In her eyes Big Picture was her “last attempt at trying to find something out of my schooling.”

Emma attributes the shift in her frame of mind to having had the opportunity to find her passions and interest. She believes that BPL assisted her to identify her strengths rather than weaknesses whilst providing a consistent place where she could confidently do things she never thought possible. Having one advisory teacher that knew her well and assisted her on her educational journey for three years made her feel “supported mentally and emotionally and allowed me to become the best version of myself... I wouldn’t be where I am today without Big Picture and my advisory teacher. I can finally say I am proud of myself and what I have achieved.”

With a keen interest in all things AFL, sport and health, Emma developed networks by seeking and engaging with local businesses to secure internships in the fields of Events Management with the Peel Thunder Football Club and Personal Training at a local gym. She finished Year 12 with a Certificate III in Gym Instruction and finished her Cert IV in Personal Training shortly afterwards. The following year Emma used all of her learning and experiences from three years of BPL to gain entry to Murdoch University where she became a qualified Health & Physical Education teacher. Since graduating in 2015, Emma has spent time teaching in her old school, and, as many BPL students do, decided to explore some of her lesser known interests such as travelling on fishing trips whenever she could and spending two years working in the Horse Racing Industry where she is a part owner in six race horses.

Currently Emma works for the ORS Group as a Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner for children within the allied health disabilities sector. This is a lovely blend of her interest in personal training and teaching young people.

**She continues to confidently and deliberately follow her interests and has designs to let them take her on some epic adventures in the near future.**



***Interests: AFL, Personal Training, Health, Basketball, Fishing, Teaching, Horse Racing***

---

***2015 Graduate Halls Head College***

---

***First Student to use BPL Graduation Portfolio to gain entry into University: Murdoch Bachelor of Education – Health and Physical Education Graduated in 2020***

---





# Dylan Storer

As a child of 7, Dylan became fascinated by radio and began volunteering at the local radio station, Wangki Radio in the Fitzroy Valley. By 11 he was producing a current affairs program and interviewing CEOs of mining companies and prominent community members.

At high school, Dylan felt that the subjects on offer were very limited due to the nature of being in a small, remote school, so he switched to Distance Education. At first he enjoyed this, but after a while he began to lose motivation as he was largely working alone and none of it connected with his passion for radio and reporting on issues affecting his community.

When he joined back into school life with his year group BPL Advisory, Dylan found himself with the freedom to pursue all his interests around journalism and radio broadcasting both inside and outside school. He was passionate about covering issues of importance to the local indigenous community and on exploring topical issues such as gas-fracking in the region. By day at school he would research and prepare for his interviews and after school he would record and edit his stories. His radio program became very popular in the community and was syndicated across Australia.

While with Big Picture, Dylan undertook an internship at the Kimberley ABC Radio and honed his journalism and production skills. He also had a mentor in journalism from the University of Wollongong in NSW.

Dylan appeared on a student panel on the ABC TV program Q&A and impressed the national audience with the maturity of his views and communication skills. Meanwhile he was travelling the country and the world as a member of the UN Youth movement.

Dylan graduated from schooling in Year 11 in 2019 after completing a significant radio documentary about proposed development of the Fitzroy River. He gained entry to a Communications Degree at the University of Wollongong on the strength of his BPL Graduation Portfolio. Between the COVID lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, Dylan transferred back west to complete his degree at Curtin University. In the summer of 2022-23 when the Fitzroy River flooded, Dylan was on the spot and filed stories for the ABC, with only his mobile phone and a ladder to escape the rising waters!

**As he completes his journalism degree in 2023, Dylan remains passionate about the craft of radio storytelling and “painting pictures in people’s imaginations.”**



***Interests: radio broadcasting, storytelling, indigenous issues, politics, youth rights, current affairs, journalism.***

---

***2019 Graduate of Fitzroy Valley District High School***

---

***Completing a Communications degree at Curtin University.***

---



# Anika Ritchie

Anika always knew that she was going to work with animals, though it wasn't a straight path to achieving her goal. After going on a student exchange to Denmark in the first half of Year 11, she gained important life experience and confidence, and on her return to Western Australia, joined the Big Picture Academy at the remote Fitzroy Valley District High School, where her mother was a Deputy Principal.

There, in Years 11 and 12, she was able to freely explore her passion for animals. After an internship at a veterinary clinic, she realised that working with sick and distressed animals was not for her. However, she found more satisfying work at a Dog Day Care facility in Perth, where she interned during her school holidays and was later employed.

At school she completed her Certificate III in Animal Studies. With the help of her Advisory teacher she started planning to gain entry to university on the strength of her Big Picture Graduation Portfolio.

She undertook original research and completed a Senior Thesis Project about: **The impact of dog health on human wellbeing**. Living in a largely indigenous community where there were many dogs (who had different roles including security, hunting and spiritual protection), she noticed how the lack of access to veterinary and de-sexing services resulted in over-population and health issues. She investigated zoonotic and non-zoonotic diseases in dogs (mange, worms) and how these conditions could affect the human population .

In 2021 Anika graduated from Murdoch University with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Health and did a stint in Australian Border Force where she hoped to transfer to the Dog Squad.

**In 2023, Anika attained her dream job with Guide Dogs WA, where she is a Cadet Trainer of four young dogs and walking up to 10 kilometres a day! Her degree and her dog-handling experience were key factors in obtaining the position.**



---

***Bachelor of Science – Animal Health, Murdoch University***

---

***Cadet Trainer for Guide Dogs WA***

---

***Certificate III Animal Studies***

---

***2018 Graduate of Fitzroy Valley High School***

---

***Interests: dog handling and animal care***

---



# Dequaydon Geary-Gilbert

Dequaydon (DQ) describes himself as a “proud Martu” from Northern Western Australia. His school journey has seen him engage in the Big Picture design for school and learning at Roebourne District High School.

DQ explored his interests in music, beatboxing and DJ’ing through an internship at the local radio station Ngaarda Media. Working alongside a radio journalist, DQ learnt his way around the studio which included how to operate the sound board, produce scripts and playlists along with working collaboratively with staff at the radio station and with his Advisory Teacher back at school. DQ’s passion for the industry saw him offered the opportunity to host his own radio hour which he called the “DQ Show.” He continued to build his capacity for telling and capturing stories by interviewing Radio Show Hosts and touring the ABC Pilbara Studios in Karratha and through participation in the weekly Roebourne District High School radio show supported by staff and funded by the IF Foundation.

Throughout his senior years at school, DQ became interested in Norse mythology and in particular, creation stories. This fascination for story, coupled with a trip to visit family in a nearby town, led him to start thinking hard about life beyond school. It became apparent to him that he wanted to be more connected with his own culture, language and story. He now plans to relocate closer to family to pursue his desire to work as a ranger.

**Dequaydon successfully completed Year 12 and received the International Big Picture Learning Credential which showcases his diverse skills, knowledge and capacities.**



***Interests: Beat Boxing, DJ work, Music, Movies – Horror and Action, Norse Mythology, Creation Stories, Cooking, Family and Culture***

---

***2023 School Leaver Roebourne District High School***

---



# Ashlyn Sharp

Throughout her life, Ashlyn has always had pets and enjoys the many aspects of caring for animals. Being in a Big Picture school allowed her to explore different aspects of the animal care industry through doing regular internships.

She worked with Greyhounds as Pets, PETStock Vet (where she was later employed), Billy's Day Care for Dogs, and Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. She learnt many skills including: blood work, bandaging, surgery and basic care needs, and cleaning enclosures as well as understanding the demeanours and characteristics of breeds.

For her Senior Project she researched and produced an educational campaign about dental hygiene for pets, that her employer uses to raise awareness about the prevention and treatment of gingivitis and periodontitis.

She obtained her Certificate II in Animal Studies and is now completing her Certificate III in Animal Care Services, where she has learnt about zoonotic diseases along with some medical theory.

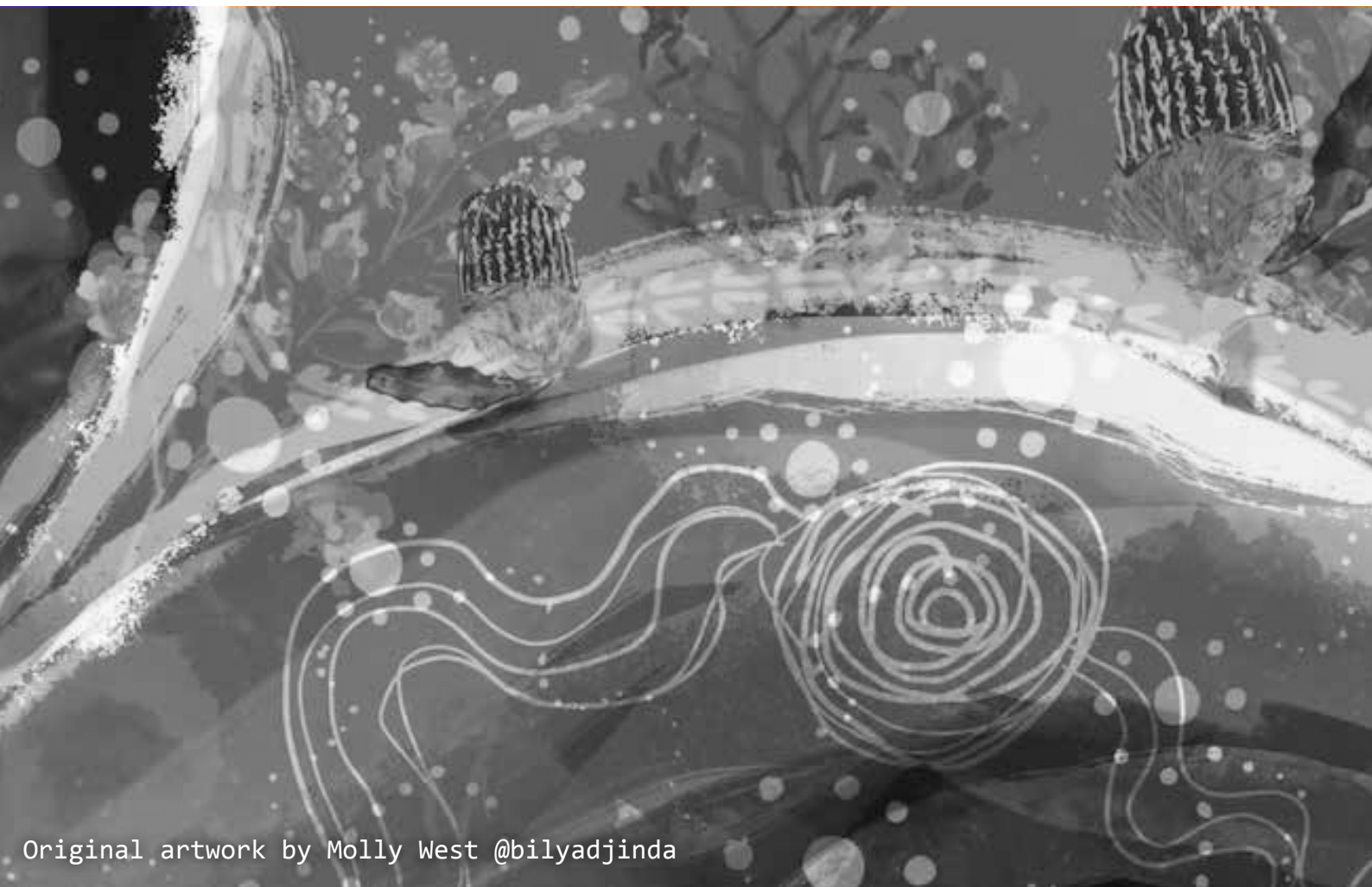
**In 2024 Ashlyn plans to study for her Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing at TAFE, and to then work in either a zoo or an animal rehabilitation centre. Her ultimate goal is to complete a Bachelor of Veterinary Science at university so as to "make the younger me proud".**



**Year 12 Student at Yule Brook College**

*Interests: animal care, cooking, creative writing, childcare*

*Goals: to attain Cert IV Veterinary Nursing, to later apply for Veterinary Science at University*





# Jandre Viviers

When the opportunity arose to join the Big Picture Academy at Esperance Anglican Community School for his senior years, Jandr  jumped at the chance. He loved the idea of exploring his interests deeply inside and outside of school.

Jandr  completed several projects shaped around his passions for the outdoors, including learning about the field of apiary and establishing his own business producing, marketing, and selling honey.

He also spent time refurbishing small boat engines, explored his interests in ‘shoe culture’, basketball, and created a podcast channel called “Dre’s Dribble” to share people’s stories.

Throughout 2022/23 Jandr  engaged in an Internship with Esperance Southern Ports where he learned the ins and outs of vessel maintenance as he worked alongside the marine operations team.

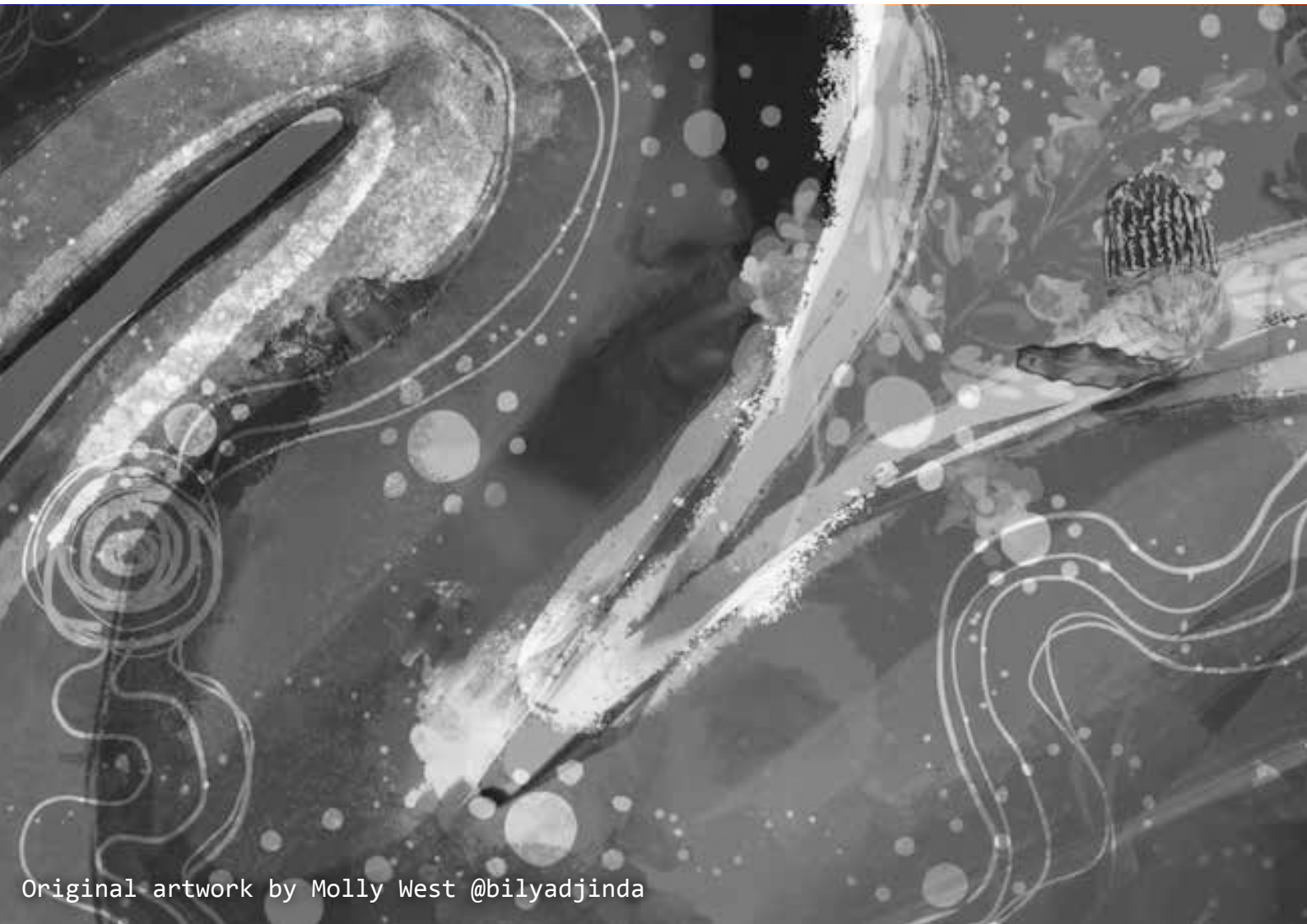
**As a result of his dedication to honing his overall watercraft, Jandr  was offered a traineeship in conjunction with a Certificate II in Maritime Operations which he has gladly accepted.**



***First Year Full Time Trainee  
Coxswain with Esperance  
Southern Ports.***

***Interests: Apiary, Shoe Culture,  
Basketball, Fishing and Boats***

***2023 School Leaver Esperance  
Anglican Community School,***



# Molly West

Molly is young indigenous woman from Nyigina country who has grown up in Noongar country. She is a talented and prolific artist and musician, and is passionate about working with Aboriginal youth on a variety of programs to get indigenous young people involved in hospitality, arts, and career initiatives.

As a high-flying student in mainstream in Year 10, who had already selected all her ATAR subjects, Molly suddenly realised that she was not prepared to give up her many interests and extracurricular activities during her senior years of high school.

Instead, she joined the Big Picture Academy at Northam Senior High School, where she could pursue many interests both inside and outside school, including developing her successful art business @Bilya Djinda (which involves digital art prints, designs for marketing campaigns, jewellery making and painting), being a Youth Ambassador, speaking at various summits and conferences, and playing clarinet and bass in a band that recently performed at the Sydney Opera House.

Her art pieces are designed to tell stories, and each piece that she sells carries a story to help the new owner to connect with indigenous culture. She is also commissioned to produce artworks and logos for use in marketing and special events.

**Down the track, she plans to enrol in an Education degree at university in order to continue her quest to educate and support young people. Upon graduation, Molly intends to continue developing her art business, working on youth programs, and in her words, "Saying yes to opportunities".**



---

## Art Business

**Interests: digital art, music, public speaking, indigenous activism, education**

---

**2023 Graduate of Northam Senior High School**

---





# Riley Burns

Riley has just completed Year 11 in the Big Picture Academy at Halls Head College.

Riley's school journey began at a language and development school when he was four years old due to his dyspraxia (which can affect speech and motor skills). At this stage he was essentially non-verbal within the classroom and spent much of his time observing his peers and anxiously awaiting home time.

Throughout primary school Riley grew in confidence and by the time he reached high school had developed a love of AFL, cricket, sports broadcasting and volunteer work. Upon joining the BPL Academy in Year 8 he went about deeply exploring his interests and passions through projects that included collaborating with a peer to develop and record an AFL podcast called "A Couple of Drop Kicks," planning a trip to Melbourne to watch the AFL, learning how to score cricket games and being given the task of operating the scoreboard at his local cricket club for A-grade home games.

The Big Picture Design for learning, with its focus on student interest and on interning with mentors in the community, has enabled Riley to engage in his love of sporting organisations through volunteer roles at the Halls Head Cricket Cub (where he helped with scoring, event organisation and ground set-up) and at the Mandurah Magic Basketball club where he worked to help set up for NBL1 games throughout the season.

His dedication to these clubs recently saw him win the City of Mandurah Junior Volunteer of the Year Award for 2023.

As a result of his time at the cricket club, Riley applied for and won the position of Grounds Manager working one evening a week at his local cricket club for the Peel Premier T20 Cricket League.

In 2023 Riley engaged in a large community service project inspired by the loss of a family friend to breast cancer. He organised and ran a golf day called "Roo's Round for Heidi" including gaining sponsorships and collecting donations to the value of \$4313 which he donated to the McGrath Foundation. He intends this to become a well-known annual event in Mandurah.

Riley is thriving in the BP Academy and is looking forward to continuing his learning journey next year using the IBPLC to capture and recognise all of his capabilities and skills inside and outside of the school gates.



**Year 12 student 2024**

**Interests: AFL, Cricket, Sports Broadcasting, Podcasting, Volunteer work.**



## Anna-Lee

In her junior years at high school Anna-Lee had some difficulties with her learning and was easily distracted. She did not regularly attend and was considered at risk of not finishing high school.

However, when she joined the Big Picture Academy at Kelmscott Senior High School, things began to change for her. She enjoyed the environment of a Big Picture Advisory where she had her own space, a voice in what and how she wanted to learn, supportive relationships with peers, and a lot of one-to-one attention and feedback from her advisory teacher.

As part of the personalised approach to learning she explored many different topics including policing, mechanics, the army, and the history of catapults. Then one day the idea of working with young children appealed to her.

After obtaining an internship in the babies room for 2 days a week at the very childcare centre that she attended as a child, Anna-Lee felt that she had found her calling. She enjoyed being amongst a caring and hardworking team of adults and even volunteered at the centre in her school holidays.

At school, her attention turned to investigating sensory play and its benefits for children. She also worked hard to improve her punctuation, spelling and writing through regular journal entries about her research and hands-on experiences in early childhood education.

**She was offered a work-based traineeship by the centre where she interned. On the day after graduating from Year 12, Anna-Lee began work at Mundarda Childcare Centre, and in 2023 she has been completing her Certificate III and is about to become a qualified childcare worker.**



***Employee at Mundarda Child Care Centre***

***Certificate III Early Childhood Education***

***Interests: working with children, mechanics, policing***

***2022 Graduate of Kelmscott Senior High School***

