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Front Cover Photo: Blak Douglas, Bachelor of Arts - Design, 1995

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RECONNECTIO MAKE A CHANGE

MESSAGE FROM VICE-CHANCELLOR PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVER

In 2015 Western Sydney University unveiled a major brand overhaul. More than just a change of name and logo, it reflected the confidence of an evolving institution.

The rebranding signalled the University's commitment to looking outwards as well as reiterating its commitment to the region. It was a symbolic change that embedded the University at the heart of Western Sydney. The University's first high-rise campus in the Parramatta CBD, to be unveiled in 2017, further reinforces this commitment to the region.

A diverse region, Western Sydney is Australia's third largest and fastest growing economy and is home to a large multicultural population with an expanding international reach. Over the next 25 years Western Sydney will account for 60 per cent of Sydney's population growth and 25 per cent of Australia's making this an optimal time for the University to re-evaluate its role in the region.

As a dynamic place of learning, Western Sydney University continues to challenge traditional notions of what a university 'should' be by pushing the boundaries of the ways in which knowledge is exchanged. The Parramatta CBD campus will be our prototype for spaces that challenge ideas, encourage collaboration and accelerate learning.

We are pioneering a model of learning that treats our strategic partners as co-creators in education. As we work with business and industry leaders to develop course content, our graduates are equipped to meet the needs of employers and the jobs of the future, and to address the challenges of a global workplace. In this way, we prepare our students to go places and do great things in their community, their workplace and the world.

We are proud of our role in helping to unlock the potential of the next generation of global citizens, leaders and change-makers. Our graduates are business and community leaders, world-renowned researchers, sporting stars and well-known personalities in the arts and entertainment industries. Our alumni stories are tales of impact.

Some like Siobhan Hayden (p11), the first female CEO of the Mortgage and Finance Association of Australia, challenge the status quo. Others like award-winning educator Ken Silburn (p13) are reigniting a passion for science in schools to better equip the citizens of tomorrow. In Botswana, international graduate Misani Monthe (p24) is establishing occupational therapy in his homeland. With Western Sydney home to Australia's biggest urban population of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, we celebrate the international reach of Blak Douglas' (p5) unique style of Aboriginal art.

As alumni, our graduates are a part of a strong network of global citizens who remain connected to and engaged with the University.

I hope you enjoy this edition of GradLife and I encourage you to keep in touch, share your story, ideas and initiatives.

Lan

Professor Barney Glover Vice-Chancellor and President





SHAKING IT UP: A FRESH TAKE ON ABORIGINAL ART

Bold, talented and often controversial, 2015 Archibald Prize finalist Blak Douglas started his artistic journey at Western

If the thought of Aboriginal art brings dot paintings and ochre to mind, Blak Douglas will challenge your perception.

Since graduating from a Bachelor of Arts in Design at Western Sydney University in 1995, the Aboriginal artist has applied his graphic design education to develop a distinct popart style. Challenging the conventions of Aboriginal art is just the beginning for Blak Douglas who, in his 17 years as a professional artist, has often used his craft to convey controversial social justice messages, centering on the treatment of Aboriginal people. "It's often a commentary on Australia's devout celebration of a one-sided patriotism," he says.

ART IN THE BLOOD

Born Adam Hill, in Blacktown, to an Australian mother and Aboriginal father, Blak Douglas comes from a family of artists. Many of his post-school years were spent shadowing his uncles, commercial artists known as The Brown Brothers. Another uncle, Don Evans, created many of the dioramas in the Australian War Memorial. "I was nurtured by my uncles – they gave me tips and saw my promise," Blak Douglas says.

"I was encouraged to study design rather than fine arts – art was considered bohemian, but it was chic to study design at the time. It was a good choice. I was fortunate enough to be under the guidance of one of Australia's leading illustrators, the late Tony Oliver, and the photographic element in the course gave me a good sense of composition."

SHADING HIS OWN STVI F

In place of the earthy symbols common in 'desert style' Aboriginal art, Blak Douglas uses mainstream iconography as metaphors.

His painting Empire Strikes Blak is a prime example, where a giant Union Jack bowling ball shuttles towards a set of black pins.

Flat-bottomed clouds are a recurring symbol throughout Blak Douglas' work, representing what he describes as the "false ceiling" of government.

CHALLENGING ESTABLISHMENT

At times, Blak Douglas' statements have led him to heated discussions with publicity-shy curators. "Most institutions in Australia can't afford to have unsavoury comment against their name," he says.

With paintings on display in Taipei Museum and the Aboriginal Art Museum of Utrecht in The Netherlands, and sought-after by collectors abroad, Blak Douglas believes his messages are given a warmer welcome when they're literally and figuratively not so close to home. But his work is also held by the National Gallery of Australia, National Museum of Australia, National Maritime Museum and NSW Parliament, and a long list of plaudits cements Blak Douglas' status as a well-respected home-grown artist. Most recently and significantly, he was named a finalist in the 2015 Archibald Prize for his portrait of Aboriginal cultural figure, Uncle Max Eulo.

Just having his painting accepted was a win. "My aim was to get a Aboriginal face into an exhibition otherwise dominated by nonindigenous subjects," he says. "The subject matter was outside the general criteria of being someone known in politics, art, sport or music. Uncle Max doesn't fit in except for the



fact that he's at most official openings doing the smoking ceremony. Being accepted was a great privilege and honour."

A lifelong ambition for Blak Douglas is being the first indigenous artist to take out the top prize. "It will be like Cathy Freeman winning the 400 metres in the Olympics," he says.

Rewarding moments also take simpler forms for Blak Douglas, who now works out of a gallery in Redfern. His favourite was being tapped on the shoulder by teenager in the street who had studied him for the HSC. "The Archibald Prize, galleries, none of that really matters compared to youth studying your work and getting it," Blak Douglas says. "I couldn't be happier knowing that."

For more information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alternative Entry Program visit westernsydney.edu.au/ badanamiadmissions

Photo (above): Blak Douglas (right) with Uncle Max Eulo (left) standing in front of the 2015 Archibald Prize artwork.

MODEL STUDENT

Psychology graduate and Miss Universe Australia 2015 winner, Monika Radulovic, always puts brains before beauty.

Proof that beauty and brains are not mutually exclusive, Miss Universe Australia for 2015, Monika Radulovic, is also a Western Sydney University Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) graduate and has a Masters in her sights. The 25 year old chats with GradLife about her plans for the future, her start to life as a Bosnian refugee, and the definition of true beauty.

WHAT LED YOU TO STUDY AT WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY?

"Ever since high school, I've had psychology as my goal. I saw it as a way to help people, and I've always been interested in the mind, in human behaviour. Growing up, my mum and dad made it clear that education was number one. My dad was an architect in Bosnia and was fortunate to be able to continue that here. My mum had a law degree in Bosnia, but it was not valid in Australia so she worked as a cashier, on her feet 12 hours a day. They wanted me to have an easier life and to do something that I loved. When I graduated in 2013, it was an absolute highlight for them."

DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT

"I loved it. I was really grateful for the opportunity to study what I really wanted. All the teachers were amazing – I learned so much and made some wonderful friendships."

WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES AROUND YOUR FAMILY COMING TO AUSTRALIA?

"I was four when my parents and I fled Bosnia because of the civil war and arrived in Denmark as refugees. We lived there for a year and a half in a small hotel room. We were given a permanent residency visa for Australia, and my brother was born a month after we arrived."

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN MISS UNIVERSE?

"If you'd asked me in high school if I'd ever do modelling or be in Miss Universe, I would have laughed. It was never on the radar. A modelling agency approached me when I finished school, but my priority was to get a university degree. When I graduated, I decided to give myself a year off from further study to dedicate to modelling and see how it went. I really enjoyed the industry, every day was a new studio, a new team, and I met some great people. That one year turned into three years, but I began to feel restless, I felt I had more to give. I saw Miss Universe Australia as a platform to spread my message and share my opinion. I had nothing to lose so I gave it a go and, last June I won."

HOW DID IT FEEL TO REPRESENT AUSTRALIA IN THE MISS UNIVERSE PAGEANT LAST DECEMBER?

"Just thinking about it gives me goosebumps. Australia opened its arms to us and gave us opportunities we never would have had if we'd stayed in Bosnia. I'm eternally grateful and it was such an honour to represent this country on an international stage. It made me feel very blessed."

WHAT COMES NEXT FOR YOU?

"I will head back (to Western Sydney University) one day. The break has given me time to think about what area of psychology I want to specialise in, and I've kept my mind active and my passion alive watching TED talks with some amazing psychologists. I'll come back dedicated and inspired to learn again. I'm also engaged and plan to get married in a few years, probably 2018."

BEAUTY REMAINS A BIG FOCUS IN MISS UNIVERSE COMPETITIONS. WHAT DOES TRUE BEAUTY MEAN TO YOU?

"It's about who you are as a person, the way you treat yourself and others. There are so many toxic, fake ideals being pushed through social media, but I want to bring the message that it's important to be yourself. If I can get that across to even one girl, I'll be very happy."

For more information about postgraduate study at Western Sydney University, visit westernsydney.edu.au/postgraduate



UNI MATES COOK UP A LAW FIRM OVER DINNER

When a couple of mates from Western Sydney University caught up for a meal, they didn't expect it would change the course of their careers.

Bill Petrovski and Robert Ishak, both law graduates, had spent the first few years of their careers working in law firms when Bill casually mentioned the idea of starting a law firm together over their main course. "I thought it was a throw-away line, I said maybe, and a couple of days later Bill called me and asked if I was serious," Robert says. "Initially I wasn't, but within half an hour of that conversation, we both handed in our resignations"

The pair met for another dinner at the Bavarian Bier Café in the Rocks, drafted a business plan on a napkin, and their practice, William Roberts Lawyers (a play on their first names) was born.

RAPID GROWTH

The firm recently celebrated a decade in business, a period which has seen it expand to employ 40 lawyers and 20 support staff across offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Singapore. "I still remember Bill and I playing putt putt golf in the office during the first week after we had done everything we could on our one and only matter - that quiet time only lasted two days," Robert says.

After 18 months of starting out, another classmate, Carlos Jaramillo, joined as a third principal, and at one point, half the lawyers they employed were Western Sydney University graduates.

Specialising in commercial dispute resolution in the Insurance, Financial Institutions and Building and Constructions sectors, William Roberts Lawyers was named 2015 Employer of Choice at the Australian Business Awards. It was also among a roll call of top-tier firms as a finalist for Dispute Resolution Team of the Year in the 2014 and 2015 Lawyers Weekly Australian Law Awards, and was a 2015 Insurance Specialist Firm of the Year finalist in the Australasian Law Awards.



"We focus on what we do best," Robert says. "Our primary clients are in-house counsel. When we started, we had a blank canvas and thought about what we, as internal lawyers, would want from an external law firm."

Having started the firm while they were all in their 20s, Robert attributes their success, in part, to a fresh, innovative approach.

"We call it fire in the belly - we're still young, still hungry," he says. "We leverage technology to level the playing-field so as to enable us to compete with top-tier law firms."

STAYING CONNECTED

The practical nature of the Western Sydney University education that he, Bill and Carlos received is another of the firm's strengths. Robert says, "It made us fearless - it instilled in us the attitude that if you work hard, you can achieve."

Robert returned to the University as a casual lecturer for a few years after he graduated, and he continues to keep in touch with his former teachers.

His firm has also stayed true to its roots, hosting events for Western Sydney University and offering the annual William Roberts Law Award for the top student in the dispute

Despite their business relationship, Robert, Bill and Carlos are determined that their friendship remains paramount. "It's our friendship that binds us first, not business," Robert says. "Having come from the same university, we not only understand each other as friends, but also academically. We spend more of our waking hours with each other than with our families at home. We have a lot of fun here. No workplace can be a utopia, but this is the closest anyone will get."

Find out more about offering an internship to a Western Sydney University student at westernsydney.edu.au/internships

Photo: William Roberts Lawyers: Bill Petrovski, Bachelor of Laws, 2003, Robert Ishak, Master of Laws, 2010,





FEMALE CEO AN INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZER

The Mortgage and Finance Association of Australia's (MFAA) CEO is a Western Sydney University graduate.

Siobhan Hayden's CV reads like the story of several lifetimes. Since graduating from Western Sydney University with a Bachelor of Commerce in Human Resources and Industrial Relations in 2002, she has gone from working in nightclub security, martial arts coaching and restaurant service to her latest position as the first female CEO of the Mortgage and Finance Association of Australia. In the interim, she has worked in human resources at Liverpool Council and Armaquard, joined iconic beer brand Guinness in Dublin and climbed the ranks at Woolworths - all this within a working life spanning just over two decades. The outspoken mover-and-shaker speaks to GradLife about her brilliant career.

AS A FEMALE CEO IN A MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRY, WOULD YOU SAY YOU'RE A TRAILBLAZER?

"I don't view it through the lens of gender. As a female, I think nothing of it. As a person who has nurtured my career and education to have this opportunity to take on a sizeable CEO role in a great industry, I feel excited and very humbled. That has nothing to do with the fact that I wear a dress. That said, I'm happy to be considered a role model."

DESCRIBE THE HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES OF YOUR ROLE

"I'm like a pig in mud. Representing over 12,000 brokers blends the two big things for me - customer service and small business. It's like solving puzzles - the constant recalibration of RBA cash rates, making decisions, ensuring people are engaged and businesses are successful. A challenge is ensuring continued success. A taxi driver can sit in their taxi, ignore Uber and expect good results, or keep abreast of what's happening and evolve. Our own proposition is strong now, but if we sit on it, we could be facing an Uber-like experience in five or 10 years."

WHAT LED YOU TO STUDY AT WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY?

My first course out of school was hospitality management. I worked extensively in restaurants, but was always working when my family and friends were out celebrating. At the age of 21 I knew I didn't want to end up doing that forever. I left and was teaching martial arts to children when one of the parents put me forward to work with them in the HR department of Liverpool Council. I told them that even though I didn't have any experience, I had three months' probation and if it didn't work out, they could tap me on the shoulder and I'd leave. I enrolled at the uni studying five nights a week. It showed my commitment and that tap on the shoulder didn't come."

CAN YOU SHARE SOME RECOLLECTIONS FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY DAYS?

"The flexibility of doing the course at night was great. My peers are people I still catch up with. Many are still working in HR and I'll call them every now and then to call on their experience."

HOW DID YOU LAND A LEADING ROLE IN THE FINANCE SECTOR?

"In my last job I worked in a software business for the mortgage broking industry and saw hundreds of brokers, looking at how to maximise their businesses and understanding the pressures they faced. I went from there into my current role knowing the headspace of our customers and the key stakeholders in the industry."

DOES YOUR DIVERSE CAREER BACKGROUND HELP?

"My passion for customer service has never diminished since working in hospitality. The brokers are now my customers. I have a black belt in martial arts and I used to do door work in clubs and private security on the side. It taught me invaluable lessons about people and negotiations – even if someone is intoxicated, you have to respect them or it flares up. In the same way, when people get out of line in a business meeting, I know to respond with empathy, tolerance and respect."

Find out more about Western Sydney University Online, visit westernsydney.edu.au/possibilities

WILLIAM BOAG, BACHELOR OF COMMUNITY WELFARE, 2002

"I topped the course, received the Dean's Medal, and walked away with a lot of confidence in my abilities."

TACKLING PARKINSON'S DISEASE ONE STEP AT A TIME

Hollywood celebrity Michael J Fox described his 10 years after being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease as the best years of his life, not in spite of his illness, but because of it.

William Boag, a Bachelor of Community Welfare 2002 graduate, heartily agrees. Since being diagnosed with the degenerative neurological condition in 2012, the 68 year old has become an adventurer, grown fitter and healthier overall, and even taken up writing and poetry.

When others may have struggled with listlessness due to loss of 'dopamine' in their brain cells, Will and his wife saw his diagnosis as the impetus to plan an 800km trek from the Pyrenees Mountains in France, across to Santiago de Compostela in Spain's northwest, which they completed last year. The trek, part of a network of ancient pilgrimage routes known as the Camino de Santiago or Way of St James, was a philanthropic and personal journey with a touch of the spiritual for Will, rather than a religious one. Having garnered sponsors, and wearing a slogan for his cause on his back, he used the walk to

raise money for Parkinson's disease research organisation Shake it Up Australia, and to promote awareness.

Aside from some difficulty maintaining his balance for short periods along the way, and a few lost toenails thanks to the wrong-sized shoes, Will says it was a beautiful experience marked by fields of red poppies, crumbling ghost towns and interesting people from different cultures. "People would see the sign on my back and stop to talk wanting to share their own experiences with Parkinson's," Will says. "I've never been a creative person, but was inspired to write poems each day about the people I'd met and daily experiences."

Will and his wife walked another 800kms from Le Puy in France to Pamplona in Spain and are planning another 800km trek in the coming months, this time from the Italian Alps down to Rome. In the meantime, he busies himself giving motivational talks to Parkinson's support groups and has released an E-book about his adventure called *You're the Guy with Parkinson's: Poems, Prose and Ponderings on the Camino.* The link to this book is on his Blog: Will to Walk (willtowalk.com.au). "Life with Parkinson's Disease directs just about everything I do," he says. "I'm learning a lot

and sharing what I learn."

Using his own experiences as a way of helping others was a natural move for Will, a former construction supervisor, sheep station overseer and teacher, who switched to a more humanitarian path in the 80s, working as a Financial Counsellor, Drug and Alcohol Counsellor and Manager of Sydney Lifeline Counselling Services, before working full time in Disability Care while studying full time at Western Sydney University to formalise his new career path. He now works part-time running Marriage Education classes for CatholicCare Sydney. "I wanted to be more useful and had qualities that I thought could be directed more towards that end," he says. Having scraped through his original economics degree, his performance as a mature-aged student assured him that he had finally found his path. "I topped the course, received the Dean's Medal, and walked away with a lot of confidence in my abilities. I didn't know I was capable of that and now anything is possible."



SCIENCE EDUCATION

When Master of Education graduate Dr Ken Silburn started teaching science 15 years ago, methods had barely changed in five decades.

Dusty textbooks and dry theory were the order of the day, and use of technology in the classroom was limited to the likes of Bunsen burners. Students clearly weren't impressed and only eight picked science as a subject for their senior years. Thanks to Dr Silburn's efforts as science head teacher, two thirds of the school's year 11 pupils now study science, bucking the Australia-wide downturn in science participation.

A 2015 Prime Minister's Award recipient for Excellence in Science Teaching, Dr Silburn says re-igniting enthusiasm for science came down to bringing teaching methods into the 21st century. "There's so much information available – if a student has a question, we'll explore it with the internet, not an old textbook," he says. Dr Silburn, who completed his postgraduate study in 1994, also takes students on annual trips to the US as part

of a Space Academy program, and to South Korea's Samsung Discovery Centre. His weekends are often taken up with excursions to museums, universities and ANSTO.

President of LAZSTA, the Metropolitan South West Science Teachers Association, Dr Silburn has maintained close ties with lecturers from Western Sydney University, who donate their time to provide extra after-hours training for school science teachers and lecturers. "Doing my Masters has improved my professional opportunities and the University has been incredibly supportive," he says.

With skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), in serious deficit in Australia, Dr Silburn's mission to promote science goes beyond his personal passion for the field.

"Science is linked to the big hurdles ahead for our kids," he says. "They're facing the growing challenges of global warming and the opportunity to rid polio and measles from the world through vaccinations. Australia has made massive scientific discoveries in the past, from WiFi to open-heart surgery and

cochlear implants, but we need to continue educating science-literate students to ensure we keep up."

If the high-fives going around after Dr Silburn's classes are any indication, his students are at least in with a good shot. "We have a big handprint near the door that says, "if you learnt something in this lesson, give me five" – at the end of the day, we see that students are learning and enjoying what they're doing in the classroom, which is the most important thing."

Recently Dr Silburn was elected to be one of 28 industry leaders and the only Australian on the Advisory Board for the Mars One Project. The project has been established with a mission of establishing human settlement on Mars.

For more information about the Space Academy Program, visit spacecamp.com.au

Photo: Dr Ken Silburn, Master of Education, 1994



your DESTINATION since GRADUATION

As a Western Sydney Graduate, you are a part of a strong alumni community with global reach and impact.

You have seen your fellow alumni Deng, Melissa and Jay share their stories with the world, and we know that this is only the beginning. You worked hard in your studies, and now in your career, and we want to celebrate your successes!

Every alumni story is an interesting and inspirational one, and we want to hear yours. So, where has your journey taken you?

Are you working? Travelling the globe? A superstar on the rise? An industry leader? The next CEO? On the brink of an amazing discovery? Making a difference?



PUT YOURSELF ON THE MAP

Share your story and update your business details with us to help connect the dots in the alumni community, building and reconnecting with your local professional network at westernsydney.edu.au/mydestination

EDUCATING HIGH-TECH TOTS

Have you ever noticed a toddler pick up a smartphone and immediately use it with confidence? It's a sight that can be both awe-inspiring and slightly frightening for adults who struggle to keep up with new gadgets, but Dr Joanne Orlando, senior lecturer at Western Sydney University's School of Education, has an explanation.

There's a natural relationship between how children learn about the world and how today's devices are designed to be used, explains Dr Orlando. "Children learn like scientists – they explore, collect data and test things, which is exactly what you need to do when using something like an iPad," she says. "A device is a digital playground."

Dr Orlando's research interest in children and technology saw her complete a PhD on the topic and she has spent the five years since studying children using technology in their homes, childcare centres and preschools.

With the spread of technology come many advantages for children's education. While it literally opens up a world of learning, it's also fraught with challenges. "Never before have children had the opportunity to achieve the kind of learning they can do on an iPad at home," Dr Orlando says. "With Google voice commands, for example, a two year-old who isn't able to write can find things on the internet."

Controlling what children are exposed to online is one of the key difficulties. "Children being able to use technology independently means they're often left alone with devices as they would be with toys," Dr Orlando explains. "They can easily stumble across violent images and other adult content without parents necessarily knowing and being there to explain them. Gaps emerge here, and there are questions around what this means for a child's understanding of these images."

Dr Orlando shares the results of her observations with students of primary and early childhood education at Western Sydney University, and believes the great educational challenges and opportunities that technology presents make it a vital focus area for our future educators. "It's a complete gamechanger," she says. "About 70 per cent of children are now using technology by the time they're one and many will own their own device by then. From about four, a child is constantly applying their technology skills to a number of different devices. Educators need to understand what's happening at home, so they can bring it into their teaching and make it relevant to students' lives."

TIPS FOR PARENTS ON MANAGING CHILDREN AND TECHNOLOGY

- → Know what children are doing online and talk about it. "If they've come across something inappropriate, this is when it can be addressed," Dr Orlando says. "What children do online should be something the family talks about, not something that's private or hidden. It's part of understanding what's going on in your child's world."
- → Get involved. "It shouldn't always be the child alone in the lounge with their iPad," Dr Orlando says. "You can use it together to look at pictures, listen to songs and teach them to talk and say names. Be aware of how often you hand your child a device to keep them quiet."
- → Take note of your behaviour. "If you as parent are constantly answering your phone or texting in the middle of a conversation with your child, you're sending strong messages around who has priority," Dr Orlando says.
- → Control it, don't ban it. Most children use technology confidently by the time they start school, and risk being left behind if they're not exposed to it. Dr Orlando suggests focusing on the content on the screen, rather than the screen itself: 'TV is passive children just sit there, so they could be better off playing a creative art game on the iPad. Look at what they're doing are they creating, problem-solving and investigating?"

Read about game changing research at Western Sydney University, visit westernsydney.edu.au/research



ALUMNI DONORS PAY IT FORWARD

Studying at Western Sydney University was life-changing for these three alumni and has inspired them to support the next generation of students.

ADAM LY'S STORY:

Fleeing Vietnam by boat in the late 70s was Adam Ly's first step to a better life. The next was getting a degree at Western Sydney University.

The youngest of six children, Adam graduated with a Bachelor of Economics/Law in 2003, adding to his siblings' line-up of professions which include two doctors, a pharmacist, business analyst and an auditor. Driven by his parents' strong work ethic and determination to succeed in Australia, Adam worked in law firms throughout his degree, and went on to establish his own practice two years after graduating. In the 11 years since, LY Lawyers has gone from a "shack on George Street in Liverpool" to one of the leading criminal law firms in Sydney, with offices in Liverpool, Parramatta and the city.

LY Lawyers supports an annual cash prize for the top criminal law student at Western Sydney University. Its relationship with the University also extends to recruiting a student to a clerkship role each year, and being involved in career days. Three of the firm's six lawyers are Western Sydney University graduates, and according to Ly, the down-to-earth nature of the University shines through in these staff members. "They're cut from a different cloth to the city graduates and in many ways are far more advanced," he says. "They have that human touch."

Adam's enthusiasm for supporting the University stems from the positive experiences he had as a student. "I had a close relationship with all my lecturers and they were so understanding when I was juggling my studies and work," he says. "As my career progressed, I always kept an eye on the University and knew that I wanted to give back."

NELSON MCLAUGHLIN'S STORY:

Getting to university was a long road for Nelson McLaughlin, and now, as a regular donor to various Western Sydney University scholarship programs, he's hoping to make it an easier journey for others.

The medical science graduate from Mt Druitt started his career after school playing elitelevel soccer across Europe. When injuries and game politics mounted, he returned to Australia and spent eight years working as a security guard before enrolling at Western Sydney University's Campbelltown campus.

"Going from work to study was tough, but I wanted to have better opportunities in life," says Nelson. "The great thing about the University is that whatever background you come from, there's so much support and encouragement. It equips you with the tools you need to succeed."

Now 33, Nelson intends to do a Bachelor of Medicine and eventually become a psychiatrist or a surgeon. "It will probably take me eight or 10 more years, but I'll get there," he says.

He donates wherever he can to support scholarships for refugee students and others in financial hardship, and encourages others to do the same. "A lot of people want to improve their lives, but don't have the opportunity or resources," he says.

DOMENIC CORIGLIANO'S STORY:

When directors of finance brokerage, Wells Partners/Mortgage Link Group sought to promote the next generation of brokers, connecting with Western Sydney University was a natural choice. The Parramattabased business was keen to encourage Western Sydney talent, and for director Domenic Corigliano, who graduated from Western Sydney University with a Bachelor of Commerce in Economics and Finance in 2000, it was also about giving back. "I was the recipient of a number of scholarships and prizes while I was there and it gave me an incentive to strive harder," he says.

Although half of all new home loans are now introduced via brokers, Domenic says attracting talent to the industry remains a challenge. "Our thinking is to start at the grassroots and encourage students to see broking as a viable career option, not just banking," he says.

Wells Partners/Mortgage Link Group's donation, given in celebration of their Broker of the Year Award, will go towards academic prizes for standout business and finance students, and the company will also offer students three months of valuable work experience.

To find out more about supporting Western Sydney University, visit westernsydney.edu.au/give

Photo: opposite page: Thanh Adam Ly Bachelor of Economics/Bachelor of Laws, 2003, current page: Nelson McLaughlin Bachelor of Applied Science (Sport and Exercise Science), 2013, Domenico Corigliano Bachelor of Commerce (Economics and Finance), 2000



DR ALI HELLANY, ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR FOR WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY'S SOLAR CAR TEAM

"Before the race, I told students that they had already achieved the most important thing – the learning experiences that would prepare them for work in real life."



DRIVING INNOVATION



Western Sydney University's World Solar Car Challenge team beat the odds to take out a top 10 spot.

Bachelor of Engineering student Aj Verma is adamant that his team's car was the best looking machine on the road in the latest World Solar Car Challenge.

Appearances aside, the futuristic red dynamo's performance on the 3,000km route from Darwin to Adelaide last October makes it an absolute stunner.

Reaching speeds of up to 115km/h, the car set off charged with just \$1.50 worth of electricity – cruising at highway speed using equivalent to what a microwave might use to heat dinner. The rest of the power for the six-day journey came from the sun. Functioning on 50 times less power than the average car, the vehicle's carbon-nomex composite frame supported a roof of solar panels, weighing in at a total 180kg.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Punching above its weight, the car came 10th among 43 competitors, ahead of entries from

some of the world's most established and best resourced institutions including MIT and Cambridge.

"In terms of build quality and finish, ours was far beyond the others, even though some of them cost 20 or 30 times more," says Aj, the project manager.

The winning entry, for example, was a \$15 million vehicle from Delft University of Technology in The Netherlands. This car's solar cells alone cost five times more than Western Sydney University's entire build.

According to academic supervisor Dr Ali Hellany, the limited budget forced students to push their innovation and technical knowledge to the limit. "It simulates what happens in real life – the pressures of industry are all about achieving maximum efficiency and top performance for the lowest cost," he says.

"Before the race, I told students that they had already achieved the most important thing – the learning experiences that would prepare them for work in real life. The excellent result against big-name universities with multimillion-dollar budgets and hundreds of years of history and research was just a bonus."

TEAM EFFORT

Two years in the making, the car came to life thanks to a multidisciplinary team of volunteers, including students from industrial design, mechatronics, electrical and mechanical engineering. Media and business students helped with budgeting and securing financial support from industry and local community sponsors including Penrith City Council.

All up, between last year's entry and Western Sydney University's World Solar Car Challenge debut in 2013, more than 200 students have participated, and about half have already graduated and secured employment. Among them is Bachelor of Engineering graduate Jay Manley. After serving as the project manager for 2013, Manley scored a dream job as an engineering project manager with electric car manufacturer Tesla Motors in Silicon Valley.

EYE ON THE FUTURE

Aj, who is on track to graduate next year, agrees that being involved in the competition provides invaluable experiences and contacts. "It gives you great exposure – I've made interesting contacts in Germany in the automotive and composites fields and when they see you're passionate and keen to succeed, they're very willing to provide mentoring and advice," he says.

In the meantime, Aj, Dr Hellany and the team are already designing a car for the 2017 competition and are vying for a top five spot.

"With good design, we were able to drop 120kg off the weight of the car from 2013 to 2015 and even reduced costs by about 25 per cent," Aj says. "We've learnt from our mistakes and there's no reason why we can't improve on that again and really push the limits of what's possible."

To find out more about The Solar Car Project visit solarcar.scem.westernsydney.edu.au

Photo: Bachelor of Engineering student, Aj Verma, with Dr Ali Hellany Doctor of Philosophy - Mechatronic, Computer and Electrical Engineering, 2002

PAMELA'S LIFE IS A WORK IN PROGRESS

Mature aged graduate, Pamela Robinson, believes learning and personal development should be never-ending.

"Wearing my mortarboard and gown was the highlight of my nursing career – I felt complete," says Pamela Robinson, who, at the age of 53, was among the first cohort to complete the Graduate Diploma of Midwifery at Western Sydney University.

That's no small statement for the Mt Druitt resident, now 76, whose nursing career spans more than three decades and has taken her from hospital wards to homeless shelters, a methadone clinic and isolated outback communities.

DETERMINATION WINS

Aside from enabling her to work in one of the few areas of nursing she hadn't yet experienced, graduating from university in 1995 was a significant personal accomplishment for Pamela.

A troubled childhood meant she hardly went to school and was limited in her basic communication skills. "I spent most of my time hiding in drains because I wasn't happy at home or at school, I became uncontrollable at the age of 10, and when my mother had me brought before the courts, I ended up in the Salvation Army Girls' Home," she says.

After a brief marriage at the age of 16, Pamela started her career doing odd jobs, working as a waitress, a nanny and a short stint in the Army, before starting as an assistant nurse at Balmain Hospital.

"The Sister in charge told me I was wasting my time and should do my nursing training," Pamela says. "That same afternoon I was told they had a vacancy for me in the course." Without any school qualifications, she had to sit an entrance exam and took six attempts to pass.

A CAREER OF CARING

Pamela went on to work in a children's hospital emergency department and burns unit, held positions at Bowral and Westmead hospitals, worked as a community nurse in Wilcannia, 900km west of Sydney, and in the Aboriginal community of Toomelah, on the northern NSW border.

"When I came back to Sydney, I looked in Mt Druitt's local rag and saw an ad for student midwives in the very first course in Midwifery at Hawkesbury," Pamela says. "I decided to give it a go. I passed with a distinction and it had a profound impact on me. It made me very proud of who I had become. I'd had a wonderful, satisfying professional life as a

nurse, but studying midwifery took me to another level and rounded off my career."

After graduating, Pamela started as a midwife at Blacktown Hospital and then applied her learning in a methadone clinic, working with mothers and their drug dependent newborns. She spent the last five years of her career working with homeless men at the Salvation Army's Foster House Men's Accommodation in Surry Hills.

CONTINUING TO SERVE

Since retiring four years ago, Pamela has become an active volunteer, helping teach refugees English through Anglicare and local churches. "Working with these people and building relationships with them is just wonderful," she says. More recently, she has started giving pastoral care to patients at Blacktown Hospital, where many of her mentors from her university days still work. "I went to see them in the maternity ward and it was hugs all around – even after all these years, the colleagueship is still there," she says.

Pamela has no intention of slowing down and plans to continue her volunteer work as long as her health allows. "I still have a lot to give," she says. "I'm a major work in progress and that will continue until the day I die."

Pamela was also presented with a Western Sydney University Award at a recent graduation ceremony, formally recognising her outstanding contributions to the Greater Western Sydney region and beyond for her leadership and voluntary contribution to the community.

If you would like to come back on campus as a volunteer to share your story with current students, visit westernsydney.edu.au/alumnivolunteers

Photo: Pamela Robinson, Graduate Diploma of Midwifery, Hawkesbury, 1995



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST'S AFRICAN ODYSSEY

Misani's mission is to build a future for occupational therapy in Botswana.

Western Sydney University is a long way from Botswana, but has played a significant role in the development of the southern African nation's occupational therapy practice.

Bachelor of Applied Science (Occupational Therapy) graduate, Misani Monthe is the conduit. After completing his studies in 2008 through a scholarship from the Botswana Government, Misani returned home and helped establish a new occupational therapy (OT) department at the Scottish Livingston Hospital in Molepolole.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

The primary goal of OT is enabling people with physical, mental or cognitive disorders to participate in the activities of everyday life, including work, but getting this message through to Botswana's employers was a challenge. "Not many people understood what we were about," Misani says. "They didn't see the importance of accommodating clients who may have sustained injuries or illnesses that challenged their productivity in the

workplace." Sourcing equipment was another. "I'd come from Australia, where pretty much all types of equipment were available, to a facility where there was no equipment. I had to improvise."

Through these trials, Misani regularly sought guidance from his former Western Sydney University lecturers. "They have been very helpful," he says. "Our interactions are not so much on patient care but on the development and future of OT in Botswana. I am so grateful for their support."

HARD WORK PAYS OFF

Establishing a vegetable garden for the hospital's psychiatric clients is among Misani's most memorable achievements. "The aim was not only to keep the clients busy, but ultimately to teach them life skills," he explains. "Inclusion and community integration is an important part of rehabilitation."

Taking part in setting up the department is another proud accomplishment, and one Misani attributes largely to his studies in Australia. "Our department went from nothing to a well-performing department in the hospital audits," he says. "I'm proud of my

efforts in promoting health and safety as they improved general staff awareness on issues pertaining to safety in the workplace."

BUILDING A LEGACY

Misani moved on to Debswana Orapa Mine Hospital in 2014, where he remains today, engaged more directly in patient management and return to work programs. While the location and focus of his daily work has shifted, his passion for helping people remains a central driver. "The little improvements and achievements I see in clients are such an inspiration – from seeing them smile and return to activities of daily living or the joy in parents whose child had just achieved at least one milestone," he says.

More broadly, Misani, who has served a term as president of the Botswana Occupational Therapy Association, strives to see OT achieve greater recognition in his country. "I sincerely hope someday OT in Botswana will be well-known and I, among others, can look back and rest assured that we have left a legacy."

To find out more about International study opportunities visit westernsydney.edu.au/international



MISANI MONTHE, BACHELOR OF APPLIED SCIENCE (OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY), 2009

"(My lecturers) have been very helpful.
Our interactions are not so much on patient care but on the development and future of OT in Botswana. I am so grateful for their continuing support."

Photo: Misani Monthe, Bachelor of Applied Science (Occupational Therapy), 2009

MOMENTUM BUILDS FOR GRADLIFE EVENTS SERIES

Get set to connect with your fellow alumni as the GradLife events series ramps up.

While Western Sydney University's alumni events for specific disciplines and graduate cohorts have always been popular, the new series, launched last year, unites graduates from diverse study backgrounds, encouraging them to broaden their networks.

"When you meet new people, you never know where those connections will take you," says Western Sydney University alumni manager Ramya Acharya.

"There's a great feeling of pride among our graduates, with many the first in their family to go to university. Coming back and connecting with us and other alumni is an opportunity for graduates to see how the University has transformed over the years and how these changes continue to add value to their degree."

The events series kicked off with a gettogether for Greater Western Sydney alumni at the Palate Hotel in Rydalmere. About 50 attendees at the July mixer were treated to a Q&A session with up-and-coming alumni entrepreneurs Sophia Demetriades Toftdahl and Quang Huynh. A 2006 Bachelor of Communication graduate, Demetriades Toftdahl went on to launch Dream Internships, a company that trains and links job-ready graduates to employers. Huynh, who completed a Bachelor of Business in 2009, is founder and CEO of LoanTube.com.au - a video blog offering content on home loans and property.

"They're both phenomenally inspiring and talked about how they came to where they are, how their Western Sydney University education and networks helped them, and how to beat the fear and take risks in a career," Ramya says.

Another event, Young Alumni Drinks for graduates aged 35 and under, united emerging professionals from the fields of business and law. The group enjoyed a casual after-hours networking session in November at the city's Assembly Bar.

Several GradLife events are being planned for later this year, with participants to be invited according to common interests or roles, such as female business leaders, or complementary industries. In addition, this year will see a focus on strengthening the online alumni community through webinars and online topical discussions. Western Sydney University alumni are also encouraged to get involved in University events as volunteers and to share their experiences with current and prospective students. "It's always great to see new faces at our events," Ramya says. "Our alumni play a critical role as ambassadors for our University and many have wonderful stories to share.'

To find out how you can get involved in Western Sydney University events, including the GradLife series, visit westernsydney.edu.au/alumnievents



LEGAL EAGLE'S CAREER SET FOR TAKEOFF

Taylor Macdonald's enthusiasm for law hasn't wavered since she received a second-hand legal dictionary in primary school.

"It was my bedtime reading which was a bit crazy for someone in year 5, but it made me decide that I wanted to be a lawyer," says Taylor, who has just completed a Bachelor of Business and Commerce/Bachelor of Laws at Western Sydney University.

The Blacktown local is already on her way to a successful career in her chosen field of commercial law, with a graduate position at the Sydney office of international firm King & Wood Mallesons. She has also secured a competitive High Court Associateship which will see her assist Justice Virginia Bell during a year-long placement.

Taylor, who was named 2015 Lawyers Weekly Law Student of the Year, credits her success to the practical nature of her degree. "For our Criminal Law assignment we presented a bail application, in Property we presented a moot – I can't imagine being successful in employment without these hands-on experiences," she says.

During her studies, Taylor participated in a cadetship with Parramatta-based Coleman Greig Lawyers, was a student representative on the University's Board of Trustees, was awarded the Dean's Scholarship and was part of the University's Aspire Future Leaders program. The latter involved skills workshops and led her to attend the G20 Youth Forum in Russia and the International Humanitarian Symposium in Pali

"My overall goal is to be a highly-respected commercial lawyer, but my plan is to just take opportunities as they arise and see where they lead me," she says.

Photo: Taylor Macdonald, Bachelor of Business and Commerce (Advanced Business Leadership) (Law)/ Bachelor of Laws, 2016

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS SNAPSHOT

Western Sydney University's global reach is expanding and so too is its program of international events. Here are some of the 2015 highlights.

TORONTO, CANADA

School of Medicine Dean, Professor Annemarie Hennessy, connected with Canadian alumni at a gathering on 28 October. Over drinks at Toronto's Thirty Bar & Lounge, she shared information about the University's new brand, its moves to build its position in the region and upcoming initiatives.

NEW YORK, USA

Chef Gordon Ramsay's elegant upscale eatery, Maze, was the meeting spot for New York alumni on 31 October. Hosted by School of Medicine Dean, Professor Annemarie Hennessy, the dinner was the first event of its kind for US-based Western Sydney University graduates.

BEIJING, CHINA

Beijing-based alumni and Western Sydney University Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) Linda Taylor networked over dinner at the Australia China Alumni Awards on 21 November. One of the graduates, finance professional Jin Kong, was named a finalist in the CPA Australia-sponsored Banking and Finance category.

Encompassing business professionals across diverse fields, the group had the opportunity to share experiences with graduates from other Australian universities

HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

Western Sydney University is rapidly expanding its links with Vietnam, and one of the key channels is a partnership with the University of Economics (UEH) in Ho Chi Minh City. An alumni dinner on 4 December saw a large group of UEH graduates, former international students and Australian expat graduates get together for the fourth consecutive year. Several senior executives from Western Sydney University joined the alumni including Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Barney Glover, Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Vice-President (Research & Development) Professor Scott Holmes and Office of Advancement & Alumni Executive Director Joe Collins

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Competition was high in the awards component of the Malaysian Australian Alumni Council gala dinner on 4 December. On a table of 10 Malaysian graduates from Western Sydney University were two award nominees: Alexandra Chong, general manager of the Columbia Asia Hospital - Cheras and Thivanka Rangala, CFO of telecommunications infrastructure services provider, Edotco Group.

HONG KONG

A long-standing partnership with Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) has seen Western Sydney University produce more than 6,000 nursing and midwifery graduates. A ceremony on 7 December saw about 100 more graduates join this group and enter Hong Kong's thriving alumni chapter. Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Barney Glover and Dean of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Professor Rhonda Griffiths, attended the ceremony and a cocktail reception at Regal Kowloon Hotel.

Make sure you don't miss out on future events. Update your details now at westernsydney.edu.au/stayconnected

Photo: Alumni and guests at the Hong Kong Alumni Cocktail Reception in December.



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UPCOMING EVENTS 2016

MAY/JUNE

GradLife Social HAC Luncheon Estate Planning Sessions China Alumni Dinner – Guangzhou Thailand Alumni Reception

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

Law Occasional Address Spring Graduation Melbourne Alumni Drinks MBA Alumni Drinks

Look online at westernsydney.edu.au/alumnievents or contact the Alumni team at alumni@westernsydney.edu.au for more information.

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