



Cara Grosser: An OEC Success Story

When Cara Grosser of Tooraweenah was a young school student, a representative of OEC spoke to her class about writing resumes and job interviews. Cara didn't realise it at the time, but that information and her later interactions with OEC Employment would eventually help her pursue a career in nursing.

Now a 28-year-old second year Bachelor of Nursing student at Charles Sturt University in Dubbo, Cara is one of the 2011 recipients of an OEC scholarship. Made possible through OEC's Gift Fund, the scholarship will help the single mother complete her studies. She will now be able to buy her own text books instead of borrowing from the library or other students. The scholarship also means that Cara will be able to afford the travel and accommodation costs associated with her next practical placement in Orange.

"A lot of people think that nursing students get paid to go on prac, but we don't," Cara said. "It is a lot of money out of your pocket, but you have to get the experience somewhere."

Cara's Education

Since completing Year 12 in 2000, Cara has completed a Certificate 3 in Children's Services, Certificate 3 in Teacher's Aide Special, her RSA and RCG qualifications, as well as first aid, mentoring for youth and employment services qualifications. All her studies were at a TAFE or community college. "I was brought up thinking - or just had the mentality - that university was too hard, too expensive, too far away, took too long and was not for me," she said.

"As I was never (and still am not) sure what I want to be when I 'grow up', I thought three or four years out of my life at uni would be too long, especially if I didn't like the job at the end. But as I have grown older, I realise that three or four years studying is not long when you are going to spend the rest of your life working. And why shouldn't it be in a career that will be satisfying, rewarding and pay well?"

Cara has always liked helping people and had worked with children for nine years. So she thought she might enjoy either teaching or nursing.

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*OEC scholarship winner,
Cara Grosser*



Cara discusses her studies with a registered nurse during a prac session at Gilgandra Hospital

“When my younger sister decided she would like to become a nurse, she asked would I like to join her at uni, and here I am. I have lots of nurses in my family, so maybe it runs in the blood?”

While the sisters considered enrolling at TAFE, they realised that with one more year’s study they could be registered nurses and consider specialist roles. Cara is keen to travel around Australia when her son is older and recognises the higher qualification could be a real asset.

OEC Gilgandra’s Role

Cara was first introduced to OEC after she had her son in 2003. Although working part-time, she started seriously looking for a full-time job to meet a Centrelink requirement. As she had experience working with children in a pre-school, OEC helped her write her resume and she started to look for work as a Teacher’s Aide. She found the staff at Gilgandra were very helpful and supportive and encouraged her that she had the skills needed to get back into the workforce. When she decided to enrol to study at university, OEC did not stop caring. “The ladies at the Gilgandra OEC office were extremely supportive and interested in my progress from enrolment, acceptance and starting university studies,” Cara said. “They asked me to call in and tell them how I was going with things mid-way through first semester. They were genuinely interested and supportive in seeing me pursue my chosen career.”

The Demands of Student Life

As the mother an eight-year-old boy, Cara couldn’t manage her studies without the loving support of her parents and friends, particularly when she has to leave home early to drive to university and stay away from home on practical placements for weeks at a time. “It is a big ask, especially of my parents, and it can be very tiring. But it will all be worth it in the end,” she said. “Time management is a real challenge, especially as we spend 12 hours a week just driving to and from uni. But prac is the hardest due to the cost of accommodation, fuel, food, childcare and being away from my family. This scholarship will make a difference where those things are concerned.”

Cara’s Advice to Others

“My advice to others considering studying is to be open minded, take in as much knowledge as possible and then choose what works best for you,” Cara said. “Belief in your own ability and a genuine interest in your chosen field also make studying a whole lot easier. Just remember that you are never too old to start following your dreams!”



Cara practises her nursing skills on her son, Simon