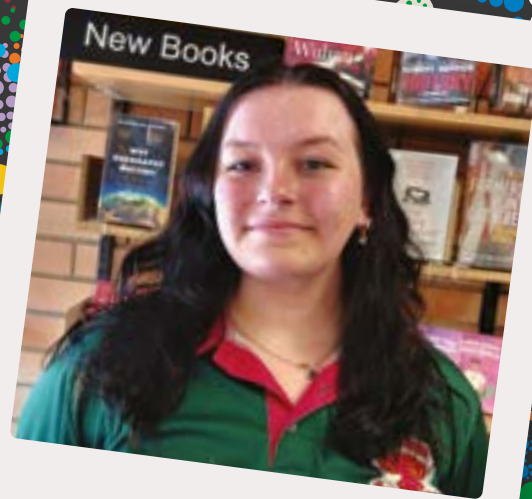


My Future,  
My Culture,  
My Way.

NSW Department of Education



# Case Study – Tia Burchell

## Who am I?

Hi, I'm Tia Burchell. I'm a proud Bundjalung woman and I'm a current Year 12 student at South Grafton High school.

My family have always wanted me and my sister to go to university because they didn't get the chance to. It's been helpful having them tell me that when I put in the hard work to finish school and go to university, I'll get to do so many amazing things in life. I've always looked forward to that in the future. Once I finish the HSC, I'm hoping to go to university to study environmental science.

## I've always been interested in nature

I used to do gardening with my mum as a little kid and learnt a lot about how to take care different plants. Nowadays I help out mum with designing our garden.

When it came to choosing subjects in Year 10, biology was an easy choice. Most of my friends were choosing biology and I heard from older kids about what you get to learn in biology which was interesting.

Once I started doing biology and looking more into it, I liked how I could relate it to plants as well. I also had a really good teacher who got me engaged in biology and my grades skyrocketed in that class.

Soon, I discovered environmental science and realised it was something I wanted to study in university.

I want to do work in something environmental science related – it's such a broad a degree with a lot of opportunities. At the moment, I would like to work in a wildlife park as a ranger.

## I liked learning about a variety of things in High School

I've found high school to be really fun as from Year 7 to 10 I got to try everything and get a sense of what I wanted to focus on. Once I got to the later years, I could choose subjects that I really enjoyed.

The subjects I've chosen in the HSC other than English and maths are biology, community and family studies and visual arts. They're all different from each other, but I love different aspects of them.

I've always loved art – I painted a lot as a kid and sometimes make cartoons for friends. Doing visual arts at school has let me learn a lot about art history too and about different artists. I really like surrealism, and really like the artist, Tim Storrier. I like the detail in his work especially because it's so large-scale.

I got to combine my interests in nature and painting in my final work for visual arts, where painted 8 different paintings of a bunch of different plants and flowers from my childhood.



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New South Wales  
Aboriginal Education  
Consultative Group Inc.

Aboriginal artwork created by Felicity Adams who is a proud descendant of the Kamilaroi people, currently living and learning on Dharug Country.

## **I've also been able to pursue my interest in business through HSC**

I work in the school library one day a week for my Certificate II in Business. Originally, I wanted to do business studies as a subject but didn't end up being able to do it. An opportunity popped up for a business traineeship which my parents really pushed me to do – they run a container recycling business and wanted me to get basic business knowledge in case I do want to help with the business. They told me I should just do it – the worst you'll get is rejection. And I ended up getting the traineeship.

It's been helpful because if stuff does fall through, then I can always come work with them and help them franchise.

## **Being organised has been a big part of how I've gotten through HSC**

When I first started high school, I definitely didn't care as much. It was a big new school and I was just trying to focus on absorbing information from all the subjects we were doing.

When it came around to selecting senior subjects in Year 10, I realised I was getting towards the end of high school and I needed to start being serious. I would see senior students studying in the library that made me realise that was going to be me soon.

So, I started planning my time better and developed better organisational skills. I wasn't leaving assignments till the last minute as much. It helps keep me calm when everything's organised and tidy, which was something I had kind of had to learn to do better myself.

## **My support network has also helped me through high school**

Whenever we get our report cards every semester, sometimes my parents would take us out for a nice dinner at a place we wanted to go. This gratification from my parents made me want to keep doing well.

Having friends to study with at school means we can learn together and bounce ideas off each other. I have friends in each class so we get to come together and work on things.

My trainee supervisor at the library has also been really supportive. I get to catch up with her once a week and talk about things that are stressing me.

She's a teacher at school, and she gives me tips on how to keep on top of everything and gives me reminders to take a break.

## **High school has been a place for me to build a stronger connection to my culture**

Recently one of my friends had her major Aboriginal studies project, and she chose to organise a night showcasing different Aboriginal performances. I got to MC the night which was super cool. She originally had another MC who fell through, but she thought I'd be perfect for it.

I don't really like public speaking. Even presenting to the class in school makes me nervous. But after that I did come to like it. I'm not as nervous when I do that stuff now. I now sometimes do Welcome to Countries at assemblies and also MC'd at the NAIDOC Week assembly.

I also really liked watching all the acts. There was a little mob of kids from an Aboriginal preschool who did a really cute dance in traditional costumes. There was also a whole smoking ceremony as well which was cool to see.

I take away new things from every single one of these events, because I get to meet new people or just learn new songs and dances, which helps me connect to my culture.

## **My advice for anyone unsure about HSC**

My advice for anyone who's unsure about doing the HSC is don't rush into it. Pick subjects that you've liked doing in your senior years and focus on them. And then when you get to the end of it, it's pretty much up to you!

If you're struggling with HSC, stop and take a break. Step back, go do something you enjoy doing so you don't have to think about it. Then you can come back to studying when you've got a fresh mind.

I've learnt in high school to put myself out there with any opportunities that come by because the worst answer you'll get is a no. It's always good to just get out there because if you stay within your little comfort zone, then not much will happen. Push yourself. Get out there.