

THE AUSTRALIAN

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The Future

What now for the next 50 years? Student Lowanna Moran, 21, reflects on some of the important issues facing the next generation of influential Australians, starting with education.



Photograph by Nick Cubbin

MY name is Lowanna Moran. I descend from a long lineage of Aboriginal women from from the Murrwarri, Euyli and Gamilaroi clans. My traditional origins link directly to a small town called Angledool near the NSW-Queensland border and to Walgett, where my people occupied the lands for thousands of years.

In the late 19th century a mission was established at Brewarrina and Aboriginal people from across northern NSW, including my ancestors, were forced to move there. At the mission, practising your traditional culture or using your traditional language was forbidden.

My grandmother grew up on the mission, where she was raised by her grandmother, living under a European mission manager. She attended school in Brewarrina and learnt basic reading and writing, graduating in year 10. Due to society's constraints she had limited opportunity in her life.

My mother was also raised on the mission. She obtained a year 11 qualification and later went to TAFE and university. She has several TAFE qualifications in fashion and a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in adult education from the University of Technology, Sydney. My mother was part of a generation that fought hard for equal opportunity for indigenous people in various sectors, including education. One thing she always taught me was that to progress in life you need an education.

I was raised in Sydney and I am studying a Bachelor of Arts and Education at the

University of NSW. Graduating from university is one of my life goals. To obtain entry into a tertiary institution such as UNSW, I knew from a very young age that I needed to be driven and motivated in my studies at school.

Gaining an Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarship to St Catherine's School, Waverley, allowed me to increase my opportunities. Boarding school was a completely educational environment. Things were very structured, I had access to tutors and I was able to develop my talents and interests.

I remember in particular one university lecture on theory surrounding class. The teacher explained the theory by writing the letters A to E, with E being the lowest social class. The main point was that people in the E class would never progress to a higher class.

I couldn't help but think that I defy that theory. I came from E, but because of my education I won't stay there. In the western world, education is how you progress.

I believe every indigenous student has the right to an equal education at primary, secondary and tertiary level – rights indigenous people have been denied over the past 50 years. In future I would like to see indigenous students gain equal access to a strong education system where they live. I would like to see the curriculum develop to suit the needs of students in every social class. I would also like to see stronger alliances between mainstream education and indigenous concepts and theories and learning styles.

Recent changes require components of indigenous culture to be taught as part of the regular curriculum and I believe teachers should be trained so they are fully equipped to teach them. In the future Aboriginal studies should become a core component of the curriculum until Year 9.

Australia is a multicultural society and teaching Aboriginal subjects opens the doorway to the other cultures, which creates a more culturally sensitive environment. This has an effect beyond the classroom that will change the dynamics of our society.

In the next 50 years, I would like to see the disadvantage faced by indigenous Australians lessen. I would like to see our culture live on, be maintained and reinforced.

There has been a lot of discussion about what Aboriginal people should do. I think it's not about what we should do – we've been adapting for the last 200 years. I would like to see Australia mature as a society during the next 50 years. We must accept past wrongs and make a positive change towards indigenous peoples, so that we can live in a more just and harmonious society, built on acceptance and appreciation of our first people and culture.

I believe that education is the key that will unlock many doors in the next 50 years of Australian history.

Lowanna Moran received an Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarship at St Catherine's School in Waverley, NSW, and at the University of NSW.

SEARCH

The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation is the official charity partner for The Australian's 50th anniversary. To find out more go to aief.com.au