

## **Interview with Harriet Smith 24 November 2016**

### **Graduate of MIS(PACS) 2016.**

Why did you choose to do a masters in Peace and Conflict Studies?

Peace and conflict studies subjects were always my favourite ones in my undergraduate degree so I found the Master in Peace and Conflict had the best range of subjects that fitted my interests. There was a great international focus to the material and there is a wide range of 'out of the box' subjects that you don't find in other degrees. There was also a great diversity element – both in terms of the subject material and the cohort of students enrolled in the program.

**What did you like about the program?**

I enjoyed all of it. The range of people I met, and the caliber of the students in the program were stand out features. I often felt that I learnt as much from the students around me as from the lecturers. Our lecturers were also great and always seemed to connect with you on the same level. They were never condescending. There was equality between lecturers and students and they were very supportive.

**What did you find challenging?**

One of the hardest things for me was deciding how to structure my program. By that I mean whether to develop more of a research focus and do a thesis subject or concentrate on coursework. In the end I opted for a thesis and I'm glad I chose that option.

**What have you gone on to do since finishing your degree?**

I'm currently working as an intern with Lowy Institute in Sydney (International Affairs think tank). I work with their Melanesian Program and currently run their AUS-PNG network and also edit their Pacific links page on the Interpreter website [<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/pacific-links-sharks-trouble-west-papua-free-trade-and-more>]. I also write occasional blog posts from my own research [<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/australias-marriage-equality-debate-reverberates-through-pacific>]. I love this work. It allows me to keep up to date with all the regional developments in the Pacific Islands, an area that is of particular interest to me.

**How have your skills been enhanced? How have you been able to use them since you graduated?**

The program really allowed me to enhance my research and writing skills. Particularly writing a thesis. I had never tackled a task as large as that. It was great to finish and do well on it. I know now how to write and how to find quality research materials.

I also think that engaging in classroom discussion enhanced my skills too. It taught me how to vocalise ideas in a respectful and constructive way. I've gone on to use those skills in the work place and at conferences.

**What would you say to prospective students?**

I tell people all the time how much I loved my Masters program at UQ. It took everything I loved about the field to the next level and allowed me to engage in all of it in much greater depth. I also value the alumni connections I have now. The connections I made with those people are lifelong and they are working all over the world now.