



2017
**VICTORIAN
TRAINING AWARDS**



Education
and Training

Real Training for Real Jobs

LOUISE NICHOLAS

WINNER - 2017 VOCATIONAL STUDENT OF THE YEAR

Louise finds a natural pathway to environmental career via Gordon TAFE

Working in an office, Louise Nicholas spent her free time bird watching, camping on her bush block, and sharing her nature photography on her website, Outside Four Walls.

While her office job paid the bills, Louise felt work lacked meaning and she was capable of much more.

"I finally realised that the things I loved doing as a hobby were what I should focus on as a career," she says.

A redundancy got her thinking about her true passions and she headed to the Gordon Institute of TAFE, completing a Diploma of Conservation and Land Management in 2016.

She recalls her first year of study as a big learning curve as she hadn't studied full-time since leaving high school. In her first year she achieved high distinctions and was awarded the George Alexander Foundation scholarship for academic excellence.

Her biggest fear was returning to an office job, which made her more determined to fulfil her dream of working in the environmental industry. To gain practical skills she secured a Bush Crew position at Flora Victoria alongside her TAFE studies and volunteered with her local environmental group Friends of Kororoit Creek.



Now as Leading Hand of a Natural Resource Management Crew at Melbourne Water, Louise is reaping the rewards of chasing her dream. She embraces opportunities as they arise, such as participating in Melbourne Water's International Women's Day video to promote gender diversity.

"I'm an example of life-long learning and that it's never too late to change your career."

Vocational Student of the Year

The Vocational Student of the Year Award recognises an outstanding student's achievement in a course of study leading to a nationally recognised qualification.

Recognise and honour outstanding achievements in training