

Past Student Spotlight

Samantha Holloway (1994)

For those that don't know me, I was a student at St George State High School in the '90's. The 16th of November 2024 marks 30 years since I strolled out of St George State High School, never to look back!

Like many fresh-faced graduates, I had no clue what I wanted to do. I hopped from job to job—receptionist at a tyre service centre, checkout chick, dental receptionist and assistant, TAFE registrations officer, employment officer, receptionist (again)—still clueless. But, hey, I learned to grab opportunities when they popped up.

In the early 2000s Ben and I were heading back to St George after visiting relatives in Gympie, discussing how much we wanted to leave St George. We spotted a John Deere sign, pulled into the business, and asked if they had any Diesel Fitter jobs. Miraculously, they did! We rushed home, packed up, and moved to Gympie. Six months later, Ben got the chance to open a new branch in Maryborough. We knew no one there, but off we went. This move catapulted Ben from diesel mechanic to Supervisor, Branch Manager, and eventually Group Sales Manager overseeing branches from Rockhampton to Scone.

In Maryborough, I landed a receptionist job at a law firm and also got an offer from Telstra as a call centre operator. I chose the receptionist gig and never looked back. Starting as a receptionist, I moved into conveyancing, became a secretary to various solicitors, and then went on maternity leave. By 2007, 13 years after high school, I finally had an inkling of what I wanted to do — study accounting! After chatting with my boss, I pivoted to law instead. 😊

I juggled work and night studies while Ben kept working, the kids went to school and daycare, and we somehow managed to keep it all together.

On 8 July 2013, nearly 20 years after high school, I was admitted to the Supreme Court of Queensland, and shortly after, to the High Court of Australia as a lawyer.

Fast forward to 1 July 2019, Ben and I bought Carswell & Company Solicitors. In May 2023, we launched Change Conveyancing. Now, I continue practicing law, we have a fantastic staff of 8, and Ben is pursuing his law degree after switching careers a couple of years ago.

So, the three things I would encourage those leaving this year to remember are these:



Push through, work hard, and know it will pay off - The past 20 years have been a wild ride of obstacles and opportunities. The early grind of raising a family, buying a house, and building careers is tough but essential. Eventually, the grind transformed into joy—our family grew stronger, our appreciation deepened, our finances stabilised, and we took control of our careers. Giving back to the community that supports us brings immense satisfaction. We're gearing up for our fifth year of Dunga Derby, raising funds for locals on the Fraser Coast who've faced tragedies. We also champion the fight against breast cancer annually and offer pro bono legal work for patients referred by the Cancer Council from the Sunshine Coast to Rockhampton.

Embrace the things that scare you (a bit) - Recently, Ben seized an opportunity to raise funds for a global humanitarian effort, leading us to take on the Kokoda Trek. We signed up impulsively, and then the reality of training hit—brutal but rewarding. From April 16-24, we crossed the Kokoda Trail. It was gruelling yet one of the best experiences ever. Now, we're gearing up to conquer the 10 highest peaks in Australia on November 8-9, 2024, and aim to trek to Mt. Everest Base Camp in 2025.

Find your passion - This year, we've launched 'The Brick Project' to tackle domestic violence. We're assisting the courts, police, and those who can't afford lawyers, or are awaiting Legal Aid approval, to protect victims, and their children, and advise respondents on adhering to orders while maintaining family connections where possible. We're also running programs in high schools to break the cycle of domestic violence, educating young adults about recognising and safely escaping abusive situations. Additionally, we support women and children in shelters after fleeing domestic violence. I'm incredibly proud to serve on the Board of the Shelter. This is my passion—ending domestic violence. I'm in a strong position within the community to provide the necessary assistance and knowledge, and I'm connected with those who enable me to make a significant impact.

I don't have any wise quotes to guide the students to a perfect life. There is no such thing. These are just lessons I have learned along the way. You may not know your destination when you're young, and that's okay. Take your time, trust yourself, and don't be swayed by social media—it's just a highlight reel. Shape your life around your dreams and pursue them fearlessly. Forge your own path and celebrate your own milestones without measuring them against anyone else's. Help others whenever you can, but remember not to do it at the expense of your well-being. This is a tough lesson but a crucial one. Prioritise your mental and physical health and stay true to yourself. Ultimately, it's as simple as this: just be a good human and enjoy the journey!

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