

"I worked really hard during Year 12," says Eric, "and I didn't feel as if I needed to rush into uni."

Eric had heard that people who rushed into uni could end up in a course or career they weren't happy with.

"I thought, 'why not take the opportunity to travel and get some life experiences?'"

He signed up with Latitude (a gap outfit that used to be known as Gap Activity Projects) and chose a placement in Labultamata, North Pentacost, Vanuatu! He was teaching Year 5 and 6 students across their entire curriculum, including English, art, science and music.

"I started a school musical, teaching the kids the songs, and helping them organise the production. We held the musical just before I left Labultamata. It was such a great experience – they were so proud of what they had achieved," says Eric.

Eric, 19, is now at the University of Melbourne. He says the amazing experiences on his gap year have finetuned and solidified his career plans.

He reckons his experiences and time away have only added to his social and education life back in Australia. He learnt not to be afraid of what he can achieve.

# Gap around the world

Eric Woodward finished Year 12 at Trinity College, Melbourne, and took a gap year. Read on...

"Before my gap year, I was thinking locally; now, having that experience, I can see that the world is a massive place and I am thinking more globally."

Eric intends to travel and volunteer and teach for a good few years yet. To help him along his way, he's doing an arts degree, is also studying for a diploma in French, and is looking to take a crack at getting theatre experience.

## Eric's Key Career Steps

- Didn't want to rush into further study.
- Took a targeted gap year.
- LOVED the teaching and experience of helping others.
- Is now studying with focus and a goal.



# TAFE to uni, creatively

Good things come in threes. Check out Ai Diem Le.

My family are all musicians and poets, so making art is as natural as consuming food," says Ai Diem. "We do it daily and we do it with pleasure."

Ai Diem opted to study landscape architecture. "My parents really wanted me to pursue a stable career," she says.

But there was no denying her true passion! I felt a great loss by not pursuing my field of interest. Chasing the dollar does not make a happy soul – it just pays bills. So I might as well follow my heart and be happy."

Ai Diem headed for a TAFE course at Box Hill Institute to get some practical experience, and loved it. She completed an advanced diploma in contemporary music performance/jazz. She followed up with a

qualification through Open Universities, but craved more. She chose Deakin Uni's contemporary arts program.

"I loved the energy they [lecturers] brought to the classes. They were all so inspired – I can still hear them while I am watching a performance."

Despite her heavy involvement in the arts, Ai Diem has also found time to add a healthcare certificate to her qualifications and she works part-time in the field to help pay the bills.

She is now studying for her masters and has been headhunted for work in film, theatre and music. She works for a radio station and is first soprano with the Melbourne Women's Choir.



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