

Pearson on winning national award, and how she's giving back

Award-winning student pharmacist uses platform to uplift kids with 'incredible potential'

Iqra Saeed

JESYCA Pearson has just graduated from Charles Sturt University (CSU) and been named the student pharmacist of the year.

The Wiradjuri woman from Molong was awarded by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, a national representing community pharmacies.

"I'm still quite shocked that a girl from Molong, who went to a central school, can win an award like this," Jesyca said. "It feels a bit random to be honest. I said to my parents 'I'm not the smartest person', I do good, but it's not the best by any means at all."

She talks to the CWD about why she went into the medical industry during a 10-minute break from her job at the Life Pharmacy Orange.

"It's important to understand indigenous health doesn't just mean physical health ... it's encompassing cultural wellbeing, family health, mob health," Jesyca said.

She grew up with a strong emphasis on her traditional background, which was further strengthened by the presence of her Wiradjuri grandparents living nearby.

"Seeing how my Pop has grown up and how culture can influence your health and wellbeing quite massively," she said.

She said some chronic health conditions are "very common" among indigenous people.

"I think back to my family, I've been seeing a lot of health conditions that are more prominent because of their cultural background and not having any representation," Jesyca said. "Dislocation from your land and mob can have quite the impact, especially on the older generations who have practised it for most of their lives."

Jesyca said for many indigenous kids who go to school, it is not "culturally safe" to practice culture. These factors, she said, are the main reasons she wants to change the approach to indigenous health.

In her two-week placement in Broome,

Western Australia, she said conditions are prevalent because of limited access to healthcare.

"Many people out in remote communities and traditional living communities ... also don't have the greatest intentions to actually seek access to healthcare," Jesyca said.

Addressing this gap is "very important" to her.

She has also recently done research on the impact of Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT) shortages on women in rural areas.

Jesyca spoke about her four-year ongoing mission to visit schools and support students who wanted to pursue further education by showing them pathways to financial, cultural and housing assistance.

"My family is very big. My older sister, Carla, was the first person to go to uni, she's a physio now," she said.

For kids who live in more remote communities, she said leaving land and mob for university can be quite challenging.

"I don't really need to make a massive difference. But helping those kids understand how they can make those transitions from home to university is quite nice," Jesyca said.

She received a scholarship with the help of community pharmacists in Molong where she worked since she was 15 years old.

"It's not that easy. For me, I was really lucky I could just drive 20 minutes and go home to my family, and be connected in that way. I know for some people it's not like that."

"Jes has a fantastic work ethic, excels in her studies, and has a real passion for making a difference in Indigenous health. We're all so proud of her and excited to see what she achieves next," Chris Young, pharmacist at Life Pharmacy Orange, said.

"She's been a great support in training new staff and lifting those around her."

Jesyca has since helped establish the CSU First Nations Club and is a proud First Nations representative on the Orange Pharmacy Students Association (OPSA).



Jes Pearson. Picture supplied.



CSU pharmacy students Bridie Gilchrist and Jesyca Pearson. Picture by Iqra Saeed

FEEL THE
SYDNEY SIDE
OF SUMMER



feel new sydney



NSW GOVERNMENT

sydney.com

