



Rural Ambassador has eye on the goal

Will Drogemuller has his sights set on achievement and has worked hard to achieve his SACE qualification so he can gain a university placement in the field of optometry. The Moonta Area School student had a full set of SACE Stage 2 subjects this year, including math methods, chemistry and modern history.

Apart from his SACE studies, Will was busy representing his school as school captain at events such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, as well as participating on the school's governing council.

In Year 11, Will became a Rural Youth Ambassador, having an opportunity to discuss issues in rural education. It was the first time the

federal program was run in South Australia. "Students from all over Australia met four times throughout the year and we talked about rural education and how it could be improved," he says. "We couldn't get to travel to Adelaide much, because of Covid... so we ended up doing a lot of it online."

The Rural Youth Ambassadors were able to meet up in person at the start of 2021 for the first time.

"We were able to meet with the Minister for Education and brought forward all of our ideas. They were onboard with it. We are working on a business model to give them so it's all clear."

While studying for his SACE, Will's experiences have informed some of the

potential solutions needed to improve rural education.

"Ideally, I would have studied physics in Year 11, but that wasn't an option for us because of the limited specialist teachers at my school," he says.

"Last year and this year we went down to Central Yorke School, which is only a 30-minute drive to do chemistry. That works well and we have a good teacher down there."

"But it's kind of funny, as it was one of the ideas that came up during the Rural Ambassadors program, that subject selection is obviously limited in the country because there aren't loads of those specialised teachers."

Will represented South Australia for the program, travelling to Canberra for a

summit. "And when we got to meet our counterparts in Canberra for a national summit, we all had similar ideas to help increase subject options for regional students."

Even with all the challenges with Covid and distance, Will remains positive about how to best manage SACE studies.

"Overall, my experience with SACE is pretty good," he says. "When I was in Year 10, I kept hearing how hard it was."

"But honestly, as long as you keep up with your assignments, then it isn't that bad. The teachers know what they're talking about - students should make sure they listen to them."

"The deadlines are put in place for a reason."

Wissam's experiences help her to rise above the challenges



Pinnacle College student Wissam Alfharan.

Pinnacle College student Wissam Alfharan has forged a strong sense of purpose after a series of challenges, the biggest being the sudden passing of her younger brother earlier this year.

"It's because of my brother that I want to achieve as much as I can," she says. "I want to make my family to be proud of what I have done."

"At the start of SACE Stage 2 when my brother passed away, it was really difficult. He and I used to help each other out for our SACE, understanding what everything was."

"He taught me to appreciate who I have around me and to be good to everyone because that is the only thing they will remember of you."

"No matter what I go through, there is always a glimpse of hope."

"It was hard when we moved from Syria to Lebanon because for a couple of years we couldn't go to school because the government schools didn't accept refugees."

It is clear where she gets her persistence from, as her mother persevered to find the right school for Wissam and her five siblings.

"When we moved to Australia, I went to the Adelaide Secondary School of English. This was the most amazing time because of the diversity of students," she says.

"I moved to Pinnacle College and it was so hard to start with. All the teachers and stu-

dents knew what they were doing, but everything was unfamiliar to me.

"But I don't mind asking questions and asking for support. If I was giving advice to Year 10s, then I would definitely say, make sure you ask for help."

"My PLP was challenging, it was all about myself, goals, achievements and capabilities. This was my first year at Pinnacle and I wasn't sure what was going on."

"But I worked hard - my life is always challenging so I kept going. And I got an A-minus for the PLP, and I was pretty happy with that."

After so many major life changes, Wissam's resilience in re-committing to her SACE studies resulted in excellent grades; all the while continuing to excel in her role as school captain.

Wissam explored other self-development opportunities outside of school, including leadership conferences.

The sense of belonging, developed by connecting with both her school and local community, has allowed Wissam to thrive on her learning journey.

"Not everything will go to plan in your life, so it is important to always have a backup plan. But even if things don't go well, I always want to use my experiences to make my brother proud, and to make my family proud."

"I want to put a smile on their face."