
26 November 2012

Student finds biological grandmother through SACE Research Project

Bordertown High School student Bethany Nicholls has used her South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) studies to not only develop solid research skills – but to also find her biological grandmother.

The SACE Research Project gives students the freedom and flexibility to explore a topic of interest in depth, while documenting their research processes and formally presenting the results of their research.

Bethany used her project to trace her mother's biological mother. Through the voyage of discovery, Bethany researched how and who to contact regarding her mother's adoption in the early 1960s.

Along the way she discovered the past prejudicial treatment of single mothers, and the courage of community advocates and single mothers in bringing about social change and a single mother's pension scheme.

During the process Bethany had to navigate her way through many legal hoops and hurdles, and consider legal, privacy and ethical issues.

“For every step forward, there was a step backward,” said Bethany. “A lot of the time I didn't think I would end up with a result.

“I have gained so much through my Research Project, not only discovering and beginning to build a relationship with my maternal grandmother who lives in Queensland, but also learning about the adoption process in the 1950s and 1960s and the social issues of the time.

“I'm amazed at what I've been able to achieve, particularly given the little information I had to start with.

“I've learnt how to plan research, how to conduct a proper interview; and how to analyse information. And I've learnt to never give up.”

Bethany's Research Project teacher Tina Cozens said Bethany's project was outstanding because of her thorough and meticulous research and the great respect and sensitivity she showed to everyone involved.

Next year Bethany is contemplating tertiary studies in either Law, teaching, or visual arts.