

I am a Geographer ...

Tegan Brown

Project Officer – Forest Regulation Unit, Forest, Fire and Regions Group, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

I attended Berwick Secondary College and studied Geography until Year 10. I completed a Bachelor of Science at the University of Melbourne, where I took many elective subjects taught within or in conjunction with the School of Geography. I completed a Master of Forest and Ecosystem Science (also University of Melbourne) in 2017. At this stage, Geography is not a core subject of study but is assumed critical knowledge.

Throughout undergrad, I'd learned how to observe landscape and environmental change, the interaction of the atmosphere, people and biosphere and how to use spatial information and remote sensing to collect information and integrate it.

Critical to my Honours research was a base understanding of the physical Geography of my research area (Casterton – Edenhope in south-west Victoria). I created maps using GIS to illustrate the spatial extent of my research, the underlying geology, forest extent and type and current land use of the area.

I am in the early stages of a PhD in Forest Hydrology where I'll be investigating the co-evolution of landscapes, vegetation and climate, and increasing our understanding of the role of water in this process. I also work in the Forest Regulation Unit with DELWP, where we facilitate sustainable management of Victoria's forest resource.

In my PhD I use Geography skills every day. This includes mapping, research on spatial and temporal change, and the impact of different environmental phenomena upon each other – co-evolution. Increasingly, I'm asking geographical questions: Why are those trees there? Why do some trees grow tall? Why does it rain here and not there? Being able to draw upon a depth of geographic knowledge is critical to my research and helps me to interpret landscapes through a multidisciplinary lens – which I think is a core teaching of Geography. When I'm working at DELWP, I rely on the socio-cultural aspect of Geography skills to solve problems.

I also work in emergency management for Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) as an operational firefighter and mapping officer. While in the field, being able to understand and interpret the landscape (we call it "situational awareness") is critical for safety and to be in the best position to combat a bushfire. When I'm a mapping officer, I use spatial information and remote sensing information to produce maps for field crews, local communities and for planning teams.

I work with many other geographers at DELWP. The prospects for young geographers in my field are exponential. I think that the world is an increasingly complex place and new graduates in geographical sciences will bring a technology-driven, problem-solving approach to their work. Climate change is having a profound effect on the world and the multi-disciplinary nature of Geography studies is well-suited to finding solutions to these kinds and other problems.

