



I commenced my University education by completing a Bachelor of Science (Psychology) at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). After graduating from this degree in 2005 I commenced work as a Child Protection Caseworker for Community Services. I initially worked in the Out-of-Home Care team where the priority is to work with kinship and foster families to provide appropriate care to children who have been removed from the care of their parents, and also to maintain the existing ties that children and young people have with their family and their community. In 2007 I commenced work in the Child Protection Response Team where the key feature of this role is the assessment and investigation of reports of cases of child abuse and neglect, as well as intervention when children and young people are in need of care and protection. In 2009 I was successful in attaining one of the limited positions in the specialised co-located Joint Investigation Response Team (JIRT). JIRT units comprise of three equal partners in providing services to children: NSW Health, NSW Police and Community Services. The JIRT role involves jointly investigating sexual abuse, serious physical abuse, and neglect where criminal conduct and risk of harm issues may co-exist, and ensuring the provision of appropriate therapeutic and/or forensic intervention.

I was eager to further my education with Post Graduate studies and, after researching the Post Graduate studies on offer at Universities across NSW, I believed that the Masters in Forensic Mental Health offered a unique educational experience that was tailored to suit my interests in the field of offending behaviour. In 2009 I commenced the Masters in Forensic Mental Health (MFMH) at UNSW and have found it to be an enjoyably challenging experience. My knowledge in the areas relevant to forensic mental health and offending behaviour has improved significantly. I have been able to apply this knowledge to my current work, particularly to improve my assessments and analysis of issues relevant to sexual and violent offending. My confidence in formulating sound assessments in relation to issues of mental health, offending behaviour and risk of harm has improved greatly. This has increased the quality of work I am able to produce in my day to day work at JIRT, where risk of harm assessments are a key responsibility of my role. Through my studies in the Masters of Forensic Mental Health I have also been able to improve the collective knowledge and professional practice of the caseworkers and police in my team by conveying information relevant to our work, particularly in relation to Violence, Deviant & Criminal Sexual Behaviours, and Families, Children and Adolescents in Forensic Psychiatry. My experience in the Masters of Forensic Mental Health program has motivated me to continue to pursue further Post Graduate qualifications, attain registration as a Psychologist, and pursue a career within the field of forensic mental health. Pursuing this specialised qualification has been both professionally and personally rewarding and I would encourage anyone with an interest in this field to do the same.