My name is Gemma and during VCE I completed VET Animal Studies at Box Hill Institute.

I’ve a passion for animals, I always have, and when it came time in Year 10 to choose subjects it was an obvious choice for me because I wanted to go into that industry anyway. So, this year I’m now studying a Bachelor of Science (Wildlife and Conservation Biology) at La Trobe University, which I’m really enjoying and it’s a logical pathway from the VET Animal Studies as well.

Some of the animals that we worked with during Animal Studies, mostly companion animals like dogs, cats, rabbits, mice. It was really interesting to learn about the first aid for animals and how to treat basic injuries for animals. Also, taking the pulse of an animal and its vital signs we learnt in Units 3 & 4 and it was great to be able to handle animals and to test for these things, which I really loved doing.

In the first aid unit we did some case studies about different situations that, as well as household pets, more wildlife animals could be in, like kangaroos, wombats, this sort of stuff. I really enjoyed deducing what had happened to the animal and to be able to care for it appropriately in terms of personal safety and also the comfort of the animal itself.

It was interesting to simulate natural behaviours for animals to enrich them and to make their captive lives more interesting and we looked at the ethics and the natural behaviour of animals as compared to when they’re in captivity and the behaviours if they’re stressed or in discomfort. And it’s interesting to compare that to animals in wildlife, how differently they behave and respond.

I did a work placement at a vet clinic, which I really enjoyed. I got to see a lot of desexing, as well as just general check-ups, I was sitting in on clinics and it was good to see what I’d learnt in Animal Studies being reflected in the clinic and I could do some of that caring myself to the animals who were just waiting to be desexed. It’s definitely helped me in the part-time job that I have now. I also volunteer for the penguins on St Kilda pier, doing guiding there and research, sort of showing people around the penguins, and also the research involves catching, weighing, sexing and microchipping the penguins. So the skills that I learnt while doing Animal Studies translate to working with all animals, including wildlife, and will help me when I’m doing conservation work in the future.

So, initially when I came into this Certificate, I thought it would just go to vet nursing and vet sort of jobs but it branches off into all sorts of categories: research, conservation, grooming, all this sort of stuff, which I found fascinating that it was all linked to this Certificate II in Animal Studies. So, in the Animal Studies class it was more focused, for people who really wanted to learn about animals, which I really loved that focus, and to come here every week and to do something I love was really great. This program would suit anyone who really loves animals and would like to get a job involving animals in the future. I really loved the experience, yeah.