



COMMUNITY *Commitment*

The Australia Day awards recognise those with a strong community focus, who continue to achieve and contribute, such as last year's cultural award recipient, Simone Maurer.

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Photography by Lee Constable

Highlights

Australia Day is about celebrating what makes Australia great, what have you seen in the community that makes you proud to be an Australian?

A good example of how Australians can pull together in times of need would definitely be Cyclone Ului in March last year. I did not experience this disaster first hand but I heard many stories of people making selfless acts of kindness to help those who needed it. There are other moments that make me proud to be Australian too. Mackay's support for cultural involvement is one of them. I believe the annual Mackay Eisteddfod is particularly a great achievement on the community's behalf. It has given me 11 years of opportunities to compete, perform and simply have fun.

At the 2010 Australia Day awards you received the city's cultural award, how did that feel?

It was a surprise to win the award but an absolute honour at the same time. I was unaware anyone had nominated me so it was nice to be recognised. I would like to thank Kathy George, music head of department at Mackay North State High School, for nominating me.

Tell me about your community involvement?

I have always been involved with the community orchestra for concerts as well as performed voluntarily at retirement villages, accompanied instrumentalists and vocalists and played in bands for musical

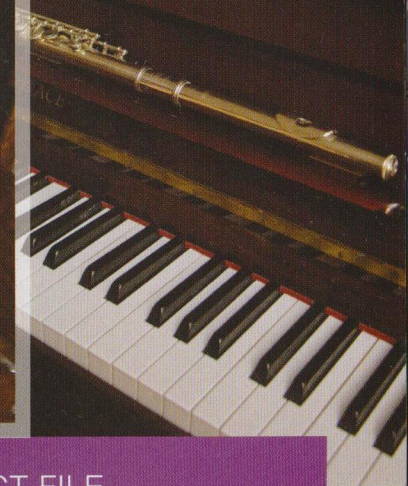
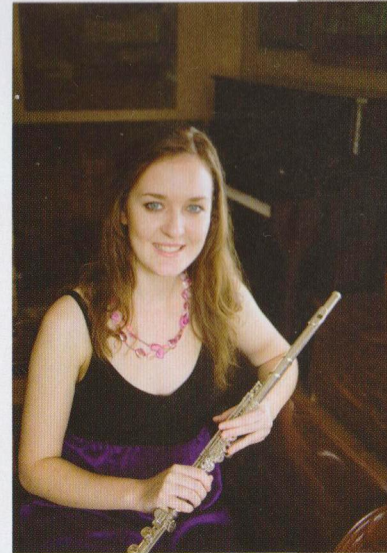
productions. I also held a free piano and flute concert before moving to Brisbane last year to study as a way of thanking the Mackay community for all their help and support.

What spurred you to become involved in the arts? I am very passionate about what I do and I really value cultural events in the community so I have always been happy to help community groups, especially if they are cultural. I also believe people can become involved simply by attending concerts and productions. Mackay has great musical talent and I am a big supporter of that. The most rewarding part about giving back to the community is that other people benefit too.

How important is it for people to be involved in their community? I personally believe it is really important that people are involved with community activities. I have had so many great experiences myself – I have made new friends, had lots of fun and at the same time contributed to the community through my skills. There are many young people in the community showing their support by becoming involved, which is so inspiring.

You have received qualifications from the Australian Music Examinations Board, tell me about these? I have been doing Australian Music

Examination Board (AMEB) exams since 1999. In 2008 I was awarded the Associate of Music Australia (AMusA) diploma for flute and then in 2009 I was awarded my AMusA diploma for piano. I have also completed many of AMEB's music theory exams – my last one was sixth grade in 2009 and I received a distinction.



What do you love most about music? I love the challenges it presents. Learning three instruments while at school – piano, flute and violin – was definitely a challenge but it brought many enjoyable moments. I have finished my first year of a bachelor of music majoring in performance on classical flute at the Griffith Conservatorium of Music in Brisbane. Studying at the Conservatorium has stretched my abilities further but has also deepened my love for music. I particularly enjoy playing French flute music for its beauty and distinct character, which has strengthened my pursuit for a career in classical flute and I hope to one day become a member of an Australian orchestra.

FACT FILE

The 2011 Australia Day awards will be held on January 26 at the Mackay Entertainment Centre.

The two major awards are citizen of the year and young citizen of the year and the five community awards are sportsperson of the year, young sportsperson of the year, volunteer of the year, community event of the year and cultural award.

For more information contact 4961 9496.