



Growth through opportunity Building capability through diversity of experience...

Guide Leader, Western Australia | Miranda Cummings

Apart from her life as a commercial lawyer, Miranda Cummings leads a Guide Unit of growing girls in Western Australia. Supporting the development of a group of girls aged between 14 to 17 years is about encouraging these future Australian leaders to “be more independent, more confident in themselves and more aware of their own abilities and potential”.

Miranda says that her strategy is to “assist her Guides to develop a measure of self-discipline that allows them to become independent and self-reliant. Girls learn to take responsibility for their own actions and for the welfare of the patrol to which they belong. For some girls this comes naturally, while others need more support and more practice.” Each week, Miranda and her fellow Guide Leaders ensure that the activities occurring in the unit provide the Guides with a range of opportunities and experiences.

“My aim as a Leader is to ensure that all Guides have the opportunity to participate in activities that interest them, but also challenge them. I’ve also found it is very important to make time to discuss things with the Guides. Debriefing is valuable for providing the girls with an opportunity to reflect and learn, but they also enjoy having an adult who can just chat with them and share her own experiences.”

Starting as a Brownie at the age of 10 years, Miranda speaks about the benefits of this approach from personal experience.



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“I know first-hand of the effect that Guiding has, and I can see it in my own Guides. I enjoy watching the girls becoming more capable and more independent. Because each Guide grows and develops at her own rate, it is important as a Leader to ensure that each girl is having a good time and is involved in challenges and activities at a level that is suitable for her.”

In addition to volunteering as a Unit Leader, Miranda is also the Olave Program Manager for Girl Guides Australia. This is the Girl Guide program specifically aimed at young women aged between 18 and 30 years. It is Miranda’s understanding of the variety of benefits that Guiding can provide to girls and young women that keeps her motivated in her volunteering roles.

“It is important to me to be able to give other girls and young women the same opportunities that I had as a Guide. Guiding gave me so many different experiences and a wide variety of skills, and I have met many different people here in Australia and across the world through Guiding. I have built a network that is a constant source of connection and support.”

For Miranda, the key for girls is opportunity.

“Opportunities allow people to try new things and they give you a rich and varied set of experiences. They open up new pathways and enable you to learn more about yourself and your capabilities. Guiding provides many fantastic opportunities to try new things and to develop your skills and interests.”

Miranda notes how the experience of Guides differs to other avenues for girls and young women. “Modern schooling does offer a wide range of activities. But Guiding offers opportunities that build independence in a safe environment which schools or families may not provide. Guide Leaders are not parents or teachers, but instead they are adults who are there to guide the girls to develop themselves.”

“For example, the Guides may go camping with school but at the school camp they don’t cook their own meals or have a say in which activities they would like to do because the school group is too big. Similarly, families may not have the time or resources to be able to provide girls with the experiences that Guides can, where the girls are involved with a unit of varying ages and backgrounds.”

Having travelled internationally with Guiding, Miranda knows the range of amazing opportunities that are out there. “It was through Guiding that I had the chance to live in the Swiss Alps for four months with young women from around the world with whom I felt an immediate bond



because we were all Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.” She has taken her Guide Unit to London and Switzerland, and to an international jamboree, to assist them to appreciate first-hand the international aspect of Guiding. “The big thing about Guiding is its international scope, which is something that can be difficult to explain or appreciate unless you have experienced it for yourself. For the younger girls we organise activities which allow them to appreciate different cultures and to help them understand that Guiding is not just for them, but for girls and women in all of Australia, and for 10 million people all around the world.”

Seeing girls grow is what gives Miranda the biggest sense of pride and achievement.

“I see a girl arrive at her first Guide meeting, and she may be shy or she may be bossy, and then she becomes capable of working well in a group; joining in and considering the needs of others. The next thing you know, she is a Patrol Leader and helping out a new Guide at their first meeting. I love watching them develop their confidence and resourcefulness.”

“Good leadership in Guiding is about understanding the context and environment that our girls and young women live in” says State Commissioner of Girl Guides Western Australia, Brenda Hamlett. “Not all our girls can travel internationally, not all our girls have the ability to go on every camp that is offered. Life is complex for young people today and we have to be flexible to accommodate their needs and to provide relevant opportunities for them to learn and grow.” says Brenda.

Miranda says “I am creating opportunities for my Guides and fellow Olaves to learn more about themselves and understand more of the wider community. I hope that these girls and young women go on to put their Promise and Law into practice in their own communities, and use the skills and experiences they have had in Guiding to have a positive influence on the world around them.”

“The more experiences you have in life, the more choice you have about what you do and who you become.”



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