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When 'Dora and the Lost City of Gold' opens in cinemas across Australia this week, one young woman from Brisbane's northern suburbs will be more excited than most.

Tara Lloyd, 19, has Down syndrome and lives at home with her parents and older brother. Last year she won a role as an extra on the Hollywood blockbuster, which was filmed at Gold Coast's Warner Bros. Movie World and released across Australia in September.

For as long as she can remember, Tara has dreamed of forging a career as a performer. Her role in the 'Dora the Explorer' movie is her first break into the film industry, and comes after years of hard work studying drama and performing both in and out of school.

"I got to meet Dora (actor Isabela Moner) on the set and she was really nice," Tara says.

Last year was a big year for Tara in all sorts of ways – joining the NDIS, signing on with Brisbane-based talent group Agency 888 and successfully finishing Year 12 at a mainstream school.

The new 'Dora' movie is the first cinematic spinoff from the popular children's animated series.

"Tara performed as an extra in the school scenes, and there were lots of those," mother Louise says. "She appears in the canteen scene and on the sports field, she did entry and exit on and off the school bus, also the umbrella scene where Tara pretends it's raining.

"But the big number is the high school prom where Tara dresses up as Marilyn Monroe – she worked that really beautifully."

"That was the best bit!" adds Tara.

Without giving too much away, in the movie Dora spends time away from her jungle home trying to fit into a mainstream school, which initially doesn't work out so well.

"From my perspective the movie is quite interesting in that it tackles issues of bullying, difference and inclusion," Louise says.

The school scenes were shot over six days during the September 2018 holiday break at a couple of Gold Coast high schools. The days were long, often 16-17 hours starting at 5.30am, but there were plenty of breaks in between scenes to give the cast and crew a rest.

Louise, who supported her daughter throughout the shoot, says Tara coped "just fine" with the workload.

“She is so passionate about acting and performing and that’s why the agency took her on, they could really see she wanted to make it her career.”

Since finishing school Tara has gone onto study a Certificate III of Screen and Media at TAFE and has also done some short courses offered by the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA Open).

When not doing that, she does voluntary work as a marketing assistant for community circus company Flipside Circus, works out at the gym to build her stamina and joins in centre-based group planning activities on Fridays.

“NDIS funding provides about eight hours a week flexible support for Tara, which she uses to pay for a support worker to help her with learning her lines for the NIDA courses, for her attendance at the Friday group planning sessions and for support to attend the gym,” Louise says.

“When she first left school the NDIS also provided school leaver support three mornings a week to help build her travel and city awareness skills, which worked well as she’s now pretty good at using public transport and navigating her own way around safely.

“One day she will eventually be able to leave home and live independently but we’re a few years away from that yet.”

In the meantime Tara continues to audition for new roles. We can look forward to seeing more of her in the upcoming Foxtel drama ‘The End’ starring Noni Hazlehurst, and a bit further down the track in another movie blockbuster ‘Godzilla vs Kong’.

As for how ‘Dora’ unfolds after the school scenes, well, we’ll just have to leave that for the paying customers!

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