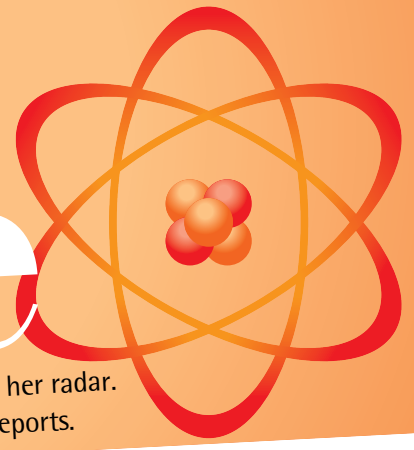


Following passions to science



Laura Rayner is working for a sustainable future through science, plus a doctorate is on her radar. But when she was at school, her radar didn't seem to be plugged in at all. *Smart Start* reports.

Laura reckons she wasn't particularly academic and didn't study very hard when she was at school on Sydney's Northern Beaches.

But that's not to say she didn't contribute to and enjoy school.

"I enjoyed leadership and school, but didn't enjoy study that much, except English," says Laura.

"I thought maybe I wasn't smart enough for uni."

But there was an expectation that she head off to uni. She had some interest in design, so she decided to get some work experience. It didn't take long for her to realise design wasn't for her.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do. But I love kids and had always got along well with kids, so I looked at childcare, which I thought would be a great life-skill."

For about three years, Laura worked in childcare and loved it.

Then she travelled through the Americas and into Europe.

"It was the best thing I've ever done. I had always had a love for nature and environment, but when I was away overseas I came to

terms with things. I realised that protecting nature was important to me. I came to terms with the fact if I was going to work 'nine to five' for the rest of my life, I wanted to choose something where I'm contributing."

Laura headed back home and to the nearby North Sydney (MacKillop) campus of Australian Catholic University to study environmental science.

"We did some incredible work in locations such as Fiji, Myall Lakes and Jervis Bay. The course was very practical and hands-on and those are the skills that many employers are looking for."

"Some courses focus heavily on text books, exams and assessments. We did that, but it was also important to focus on experience. For instance, you must complete three volunteer experience units. These units give hands-on skills and help students to establish where they want to lead their career."

Laura received a first-class honours and is considering doing a PhD.

Whatever she does, she wants to pursue things she is passionate about and make sure she is always contributing to what she sees as making a better world.

"I've met a lot of people through academia who just seem to want the letters after their name. I want to use science to better the environment. I want to get through life working in things that need to be done. I let passion drive me."



Laura's key career steps

- At school, grabs work experience which shows her what career NOT to pursue.
- Works in an area of interest, saves money, and travels.
- Realises when overseas that she loves the environment and wants a career protecting it.
- Comes home, is focused on study, and loves it!