



MERCY COLLEGE ALUMNAE

Where are they now?

Introducing:

Dr Tania Romano (nee Stassis)

Class of 2002 Vice Captain

Hello Tania !

Thank you

for sharing your story!



Do you remember what it was like at College and when you left?



I completed year 12 in 2002, when the world was a very different place. I loved my time at Mercy College, the relationships I had with my teachers and the close friendships I had with my fellow students.

There was no social media, and mobile phones weren't big either, so all communication was face to face enabling us to develop friendships in a different way to how it happens now. I remember specifically how great some of my VCE teachers were, and the way they would go above and beyond to support us with extra help during lunch times and staying back late after school.

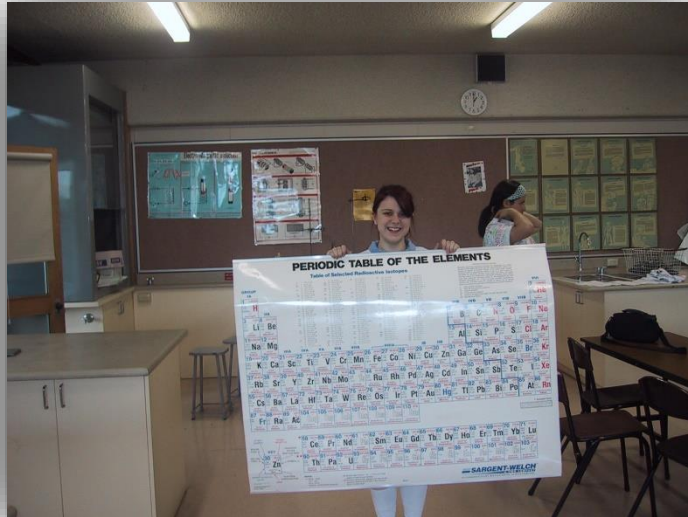


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Where are they now?

Did you set out with a career plan?

I had always had a love for science and maths, with my main interest being in biology when in VCE. I always knew I would do a science degree after VCE and was lucky enough to get my first preference of Science at The University of Melbourne. It was here that I decided to follow a career in science (biomedical research specifically), although at first, I wasn't sure if I would do scientific research or follow a career in clinical medicine.



What were the significant milestones that have impacted your life journey so far?

If I think about this academically, there are a few milestones that come to mind. Finishing year 12 and getting into my first university preference would have been the starting point. From there I continued to develop my interest in science, making an effort to work with my lecturers at university to find opportunities for work experience in various scientific fields.

After this, I knew biomedical research was the way to go for me, and I started a PhD in human physiology in 2007 under the guidance of one of my undergraduate mentors. Once I completed my PhD in January 2011, I was lucky enough to get a associate lecturer role at La Trobe University, where I staying on as an academic for 11 years, becoming a senior lecturer and running my own research laboratory, teaching undergraduate students and mentoring postgraduate students.

On a more personal note, it was during my tenure at La Trobe University where I had my 2 children. Becoming a mother was a significant milestone in my life, and impacted my career in ways I didn't expect. However, learning to navigate parenthood with career is something many women around the world learn to balance, and I am glad I was working in a supportive environment when my children were still small.

Post-covid I thought it was time for a career change, although I wanted to keep working in the field of science somehow. This is what led me to my current role, Head of Medical and Education for SkinCeuticals, a skincare brand owned by the L'Oreal group.



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I was honoured to be asked to visit the College to address the assembly as Alumna guest speaker for IWD 2024.



Where has your career path taken you in terms of connecting with wider organisations, meeting people of varying cultures; locally and internationally?

Working in science and academia is wonderful- by the nature of working in the university system you meet all types of people from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

My eyes were really opened to this once I left the familiar surrounds of Mercy College and I loved every minute. As part of my academic role, I would not only connect with local staff and students daily, but I would also network with international colleagues at conferences and had the opportunity to travel and visit labs around the world, learning new techniques and experiencing new places.

In my current role, I do a lot of travel and work with colleagues around the globe almost daily, allowing me to have an even more diverse career experience.



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Have you maintained any school friendships?

Although I haven't maintained super close friendships from my time at Mercy College, there are a few girls who I do catch up with once every 6 months or so.

It is nice to reflect on the great time we had at the school and see where we are all now, 22 years on.

What's next for you?

I have been in my current role at L'Oreal for 2 years now, and not 100% sure what is next. However, I do know that whatever it is will still be linked to science, health, and education.

If I was to still be at L'Oreal in the next few years, I would hope to have the opportunity to further support and promote the scientific research they do as a company and educate the public about how products work to improve skin health.

Would you like to share a message for current students?



I have learnt there are many pathways to where you want to get in life, especially in a professional or career setting. In high school there is a lot of focus on the ATAR results, and although these do impact what you can do immediately after year 12, the result does not define you. There are various ways into careers and jobs, so don't limit your future goals by focussing on one result- some people don't do well in exams but have the ability to excel in other ways which are not traditionally tested at school academically.

For example, some of the senior people I work with at L'Oreal don't have university degrees and have worked their way up into their roles over the duration of their career. Even if the career you would like to embark on requires specific training, there are always different road maps into courses (for example, you may want to study physiotherapy but don't get accepted after year 12... studying health science first and transferring into physiotherapy is an option)