



MERCY COLLEGE ALUMNAE

Where are they now?

Presenting:

*Dr Monika Jones
(nee Buljan)*

Class of 2004

*Pictured
at her graduation
at Marvel Stadium*



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

Thank you for sharing my story!

I was part of the graduating class of 2004. I started year 7 in 1999, the 'new hall' (McAuley Hall) was just being completed. There was no air conditioning in the classrooms and lockers were in the corridor with about 700 students in the school.

I was so excited to be in high school. I really enjoyed Maths, Music and Science. I also sang in the choir and participated in musicals.

The teachers were very passionate, and staff were very supportive. I am so thankful for their dedication and commitment to our learning and development.

In my reunion visit in 2024 there were many lovely building upgrades - including much needed air conditioning and a lovely canteen eating area. What lovely learning spaces the girls have these days!



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Where are they now?

Did you set out with a career plan?

From age 7 I dreamed of being a Mathematics Professor at university!

It was more of a learning plan than career plan - to get into a maths degree at uni. I loved mathematics and problem solving.

I completed my PhD in applied mathematics (statistics) and I work at Swinburne University but not as an academic. So... I would say, a dream came true!

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

I am proud to declare that there have been a lot!

Some of my significant milestones have been my:

- Catholic faith and involvement in youth groups and youth programs. I have been to two World Youth Days (Sydney and Madrid) as well as a recent 2023 pilgrimage to Jordan and Israel.

- Migration to Australia from Croatia as a baby/ my heritage and migrant story. My sisters and I got to sing with a famous Croatian rock star in national costume in front of thousands at Festival Hall. (pictured)

- Supportive parents who worked hard and sacrificed a lot for their children's education and economic opportunities.

- High school experiences, especially friendships, supportive teachers, the year 9 Footsteps Program and VCE.





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- *Getting into my maths degree despite achieving an enter score of under 80 (unlike many in my year level who achieved over 80). I went on to complete a Bachelor of Mathematics and Statistical Science with Honours, and Master of Statistical Science at La Trobe Uni.*

- *First job after uni, as the sole Statistician at the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) where I worked for around 9 years in medical education. I had the most wonderful manager and team.*

- *Doctor of Philosophy (PhD Mathematical Science) at RMIT and the Industry of Doctoral Training Centre (IDTC) (pictured). My specialization is in psychometrics - Item Response Theory and Computer Adaptive Testing. I looked at ways of using them to enhance the measurement of General Practitioners clinical exams.*

- *During my PhD I was flown to QLD to participate in the Unearthed hackathon competition we came 2nd! (Pictured)*





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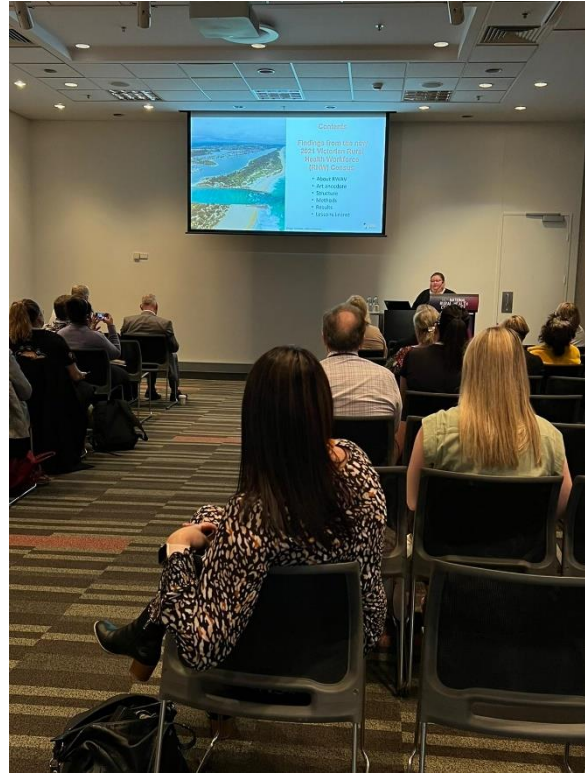
Where are they now?

Covid-19 experience, where it hit my family hard in the early days before vaccines and made me rethink my values and career path.

Other professional roles where I worked with surgeons, rural health practitioners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

I love the work, the friendships, the growth. There is something to learn from everyone.

I presented at the 2022 National Rural Health Conference in QLD 2022 (pictured).



- Volunteering and fundraising work with my church and local community since a teenager and I still do it today. I even started initiatives at my workplaces.

- Meeting my husband, his family and many other wonderful friendships over the years!

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

I have met people from all walks of life, and I had some wonderful opportunities to travel interstate and internationally for work and conferences.

I also love connecting with rural Victorian communities and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and making a difference to their health outcomes with my analytics work. The health industry has a lot of key players, and I am glad that I have met many General Practitioners, Surgeons, Nurses, allied-health professionals.

As a statistician, I have also met many bright mathematicians, statisticians, scientists and professors who work around Australia and globally.



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Where are they now?

Have you maintained any school friendships?

Yes, I have a couple of friends I see from time to time and many more on social media. My mother-in-law is also a Mercy College Alumni (1970's).

What's next for you?

I am thinking about taking a leap into academia one day or maybe starting my own data/statistics consulting business. I am continuing volunteer work, like serving on boards, running my Youth STEMM program (pictured) and spending quality time with family, especially my nieces, nephews and godson.

If I can share some life lessons... Trust in God and pray. Be brave. Have confidence. Be kind to others and yourself. Travel if you can. Stay healthy – in body, mind and relationships.

You can change the world too, one statistic at a time, just like what I have been trying to do. It doesn't have to be with statistics. Whatever you hate with a passion – like pollution, injustice or poverty or whatever you love with a passion – like art, design or science, you can turn it into the best experiences and successful career.

Thank you, Monika, for sharing your insightful and inspirational journey. We are certain there will be many more accomplishments to come!

One last question!

Would you like to share a message for current students?

Don't be hard on yourself if life didn't quite turn out how you planned or if you are not quite sure of next steps.

Some future careers and a lot of technology is not even invented yet!

You will work it out!