



Andrew Pridham honoured in 2019 Australia Day Honours List

One of the University of South Australia's most distinguished and philanthropic graduates – and Pridham Hall benefactor and namesake – has been honoured this weekend in the Australia Day 2019 Honours List. [more...](#)



Planting the seed of innovation in Australia's agribusiness industry

A passion for crossing borders and building relationships have firmly cemented radiography graduate Dalene Wray as a leader of change in Australia's agribusiness and trade industry. [more...](#)



The business brains behind SA's Big Battery

Josh Carmichael's business take on sustainability and renewable energy has served him well – and the state – throughout his career. By turning his sustainability hobby into a career with his business acumen, he now serves as a Renewable Energy, Grid & Mobility Specialist influencing some of the most important renewable endeavours around the world. [more...](#)



Green is the new fashion

The throwaway fashion industry, where things can be mass produced cheaply and ordered online, has a huge environmental impact. But Adelaide could be at the forefront of a movement to make fashion sustainable. [more...](#)



A true trailblazer in the law profession

Lawyers Weekly have honoured UniSA Law and Journalism graduate, Melissa Davies, acknowledging and rewarding women who have challenged, influenced or enhanced the practise of law in Australia at their 2018 Women in Law awards. [more...](#)



[>> Image gallery: UniSA alumni events](#)

Alumni Events

- 04 FEB-15 MAR** **Sanaa: A Better World Through Creativity- Adelaide**
Showcasing the work of Australian and African artists - from the grassroots level to some of the African continents leading visual artists, Sanaa: A Better World Through Creativity.
- 06 FEB** **MBA Alumni Mixer - Adelaide**
UniSA MBA graduates are invited to join us for an evening of canapes, wine and networking as we "kick off" this year's program of MBA Alumni Mixer events in the Yungondi Building, UniSA City West Campus.
- 14 FEB** **Octopizzo: The Journey - Adelaide**
Join us as we hear from Octopizzo about his life and musical journey, the Octopizzo Foundation, his vast range of community initiatives, as well as his love of music, art and creativity.
- 15 FEB** **Feshene: Fashion Parade - Adelaide**
Feshene showcases Australian based African Print Collections from emerging and established designers. An evening of fashion, live music, the chance to view the Sanaa Exhibition and to meet the visiting international Sanaa artists.
- 16 FEB** **UniSA Alumni Chinese New Year Get-together- Singapore**
Join UniSA Alumni for a Chinese New Year Get-together organised by the University of South Australia Singapore Alumni Chapter.
- 28 FEB** **Developing Closer Ties: EU Member State Perspectives on EU-Australia Relations - Adelaide**
For the first time in Australia, European Ambassadors and High Commissioners will come together at a public event to discuss, dissect and debate the EU's relationship with Australia.
- 28 FEB-05 APR** **Adelaide/International**
The Adelaide/International is a new series of exhibitions for the 2019, 2020 and 2021 Adelaide Festivals, each comprising works by artists from Australia and overseas, along with associated forum programs.
- 02 MAR** **Performance, Forum + Party**
The 2019 Adelaide/International forum will provide a platform for debate on our changing and ever-more-connected world, and will feature talks, panel discussion, and a performance by Eugenia Lim.
- 07 MAR** **Can Trees Talk, Think and Heal?**
Pioneering scientists Brian Pickles and Monica Gagliano explore the fascinating hidden world of tree communication, plant cognition and the healing powers of forest bathing.
- 12 MAR** **Gene Eating, Dr Giles Yeo**
Join us and University of Cambridge Geneticist, Dr Giles Yeo as he launches his new book Gene Eating: The science of obesity and the truth about diets.
- 28 MAR** **Sydney Alumni Cocktail Reception**
Join Vice Chancellor Professor David Lloyd and fellow alumni for a networking event in Sydney.



[Alumni website](#) | [Alumni Giving](#) | [Alumni Business Directory](#) | [Contact us](#)

>>Stay Connected The best way to reap the benefits of being an Alumnus of the University of South Australia is to keep us up to date with your changes of address or workplace.



Andrew Pridham honoured in 2019 Australia Day Honours List



Investment banker, Chief Executive Officer of Moelis Australia and Sydney Swans Football Club Chairman, Andrew Pridham, was awarded an Officer (AO) in the General Division of the Order of Australia in the 2019 Australia Day Honours List for distinguished service to the investment banking and asset management sector, to sporting groups, and to philanthropy.

After Graduating with a Bachelor of Applied Science in Property Resource Management from UniSA in 1988, Andrew earned a reputation as one of Australia's preeminent deal-makers. He has made his mark with more than 20 years of experience in the sector for UBS and JPMorgan Australia, before setting up the Australian arm of New York-based investment bank Moelis in 2010.

More recently he has turned his attention to a number of philanthropic endeavours with the establishment of the Pridham Foundation, supporting a range of organisations including: The Sydney Swans Foundation, GO Foundation, Art Gallery of New South Wales, and the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation.

Most notably Andrew extended his generosity and investment in the future of UniSA with the establishment of Pridham Hall in 2015, creating a new heart of the University and an iconic venue where thousands of memories will be made.

The gift from the Pridham Foundation is the largest single private donation in the University's 28-year history and is named to acknowledge the extraordinary benefaction and leadership of Andrew Pridham.

His transformative gift to the University acknowledges his gratitude to UniSA for his 'outstanding education' as well as reflecting his belief in the positive role education can play in one's life.



While Andrew studied Property Resource Management at UniSA, "through happenstance" he found himself in investment banking, specialising in property. His rise was meteoric.

Following his appointment by global investment bank UBS as Managing Director and Head of Investment Banking Australasia before turning 30, he later filled senior positions for UBS based in London and Singapore before returning to Australia where he later became Executive Chairman of Investment Banking at JPMorgan.

A leading investment banker, he is today Chief Executive Officer of New York headquartered global investment bank Moelis & Company. However, to many in the wider community he is better known as Chairman of the high-flying Sydney Swans.

Andrew joined the Sydney Swans Board in 2002 and his timing was perfect, as it so often has been. Sydney broke the AFL's longest premierships drought with its famous victory in 2005, and has played in five of the past 12 grand finals, winning two Premierships.

To see a full list of the 2019 Australia Day Honours visit: gg.gov.au/australia-day-2019-honours-list.



[Back to Alumni News](#)

[Postgraduate Study](#) | [Research Degrees](#) | [Alumni Giving](#) | [Career Services](#) | [Events](#) | [Contact Us](#)

© 2018 University of South Australia | [CRICOS Provider Number: 00121B](#) | [View our privacy statement](#)

DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY: While every effort is made by the University to ensure that accurate information is disseminated through this medium the University of South Australia makes no representation about the content and suitability of this information for any purpose. It is provided 'as is' without express or implied warranty.

Planting the seed of innovation in Australia's agribusiness industry

Dalene Wray
Managing Director, **OBE Organic Australia**
Non-Executive Director, Council for Australian Arab Relations, **DFAT**
Bachelor of Applied Science (Medical Radiations)



An adventurous spirit combined with deep family roots in Australia's outback have led Dalene Wray on a career path that has taken her around the world and back.

Now her international trade experience is proving to be a gamechanger for OBE Organic, a marketing and export organisation founded and owned by outback Australian organic cattle farmers.

Dalene grew up in a multigenerational cattle family in Birdsville, South West Queensland, where her family settled in 1885. Following in her father's footsteps she went to boarding school in Adelaide, before studying radiography at UniSA.

"On graduation I worked for a year and a half as a Radiographer in Toowoomba then Broken Hill before moving to the UK to work in various hospitals around Britain, and then Nice, France, to work as a European tour guide for three years," she says.

"At 27 I had been living away from home for some time by then and my father tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'isn't it time to come home?'"

This return to Australia was the catalyst for the beginning of Dalene's transformative work with OBE Organics, which is chaired by her father.



Image: The stunning Australian landscape on which OBE Organics calls home

"OBE was founded in the early 90s in a little outback town called Thargomindah by a collective of organic cattle farmers in the region," she says.

"When I started there was just one other person working for OBE, we've now grown to 10 full-time employees in an office based in Brisbane."

When OBE was founded, they were Australia's first and only premium organic beef supplier, "raising cattle exactly the way nature intended". Now, OBE Organic's free-range production operation is spread over seven million hectares of grazing land, located primarily in the Channel Country in central Australia – about the area of Tasmania.

OBE's natural ethos and unique approach to farming is both good for the cow and the consumer.

"Our cattle are grazing land that has never been farmed. The grasses the livestock eat are the same grasses that have been growing there for thousands of years."



Image: OBE Organic

"The animals choose their diet. With land equal to one square kilometre per cow we are talking about vast, vast paddocks. The animals get to use their intellect to decide what they need rather than have humans decide for them. They look after themselves and are only occasionally interacted with, so they have the benefit of a more natural cycle of life."

The OBE Organic suppliers approach to valuing the land and respecting their animals is reflected in Dalene's work. She has introduced a sustainability program that includes a Reconciliation Action Plan and support for the female economy.

"To my knowledge we were the fourth agribusiness in Australia to have a Reconciliation Action Plan, we're really proud of that," she says.

"We have a supply chain that is unique. It produces a product that is highly valued from New York to Hong Kong to Dubai to Riyadh, and many places between, and we wouldn't have this product if the land hadn't been cared for by Aboriginal Australians for centuries before Europeans arrived."

"Over the years there have also been a lot of Aboriginal Australians who have worked, and continue to work, on the properties we source livestock from. We need to acknowledge their contribution and talk about why it is so important. So we're also sharing our experience widely to show what is possible and encourage other companies to adopt reconciliation plans."



Shortly after taking the plunge to work for OBE full-time, Dalene moved to Beijing and then Hong Kong, also opening up new trade partnerships with the Middle East. Five years later she returned to Australia. She took up the role of Managing Director for OBE Organic in 2017.

Her work has been gaining attention ever since. She's also challenging some long held mind-sets along the way, and joining the women trailblazing a path in Australia's agribusiness industry.

"This year I became the first female to win the Queensland Country Life Beef Achiever Award," she says. "I'm also one of the first young people to win it and I've never worked in a stockcamp, so I'm not the typical winner of this award."

This year she was also awarded the Advance Global Australian Award for Food and Agriculture; as well as winning the Chief Executive Women AusTrade Women in Export Scholarship to attend Harvard's Executive Business School in Boston.

In 2017 Dalene was also appointed to the board of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR).

"I think that there is a perception that the Middle East is just too far away to form business ties," says Dalene, who was recently appointed Deputy Chair of the Council.

"Each year CAAR administer a grant program. We are incredibly proud of the outcomes which the grantees are achieving."

"A great example is Lifesaving Victoria, which provided expertise to Royal Lifesaving Bahrain. The project has been immensely successful and soon in 2019 Australian-trained local lifesavers will be patrolling waterways there."



Image: Lifesavers from Lifesaving Victoria teaching in Bahrain, Dalene Wray

Dalene also recently visited Mongolia at the request of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to assess the opportunities for Mongolian production of organic beef.

"We were a good fit as they wanted to learn from someone with similar issues in their early set up – a company that took things that looked like adversity like a very remote location, extreme weather, limited access to telecommunications and infrastructure, and turned it into a positive."

When asked if she thinks OBE's work has a flow on effect in the agriculture industry she says she hopes so – but this isn't just a wish. Dalene uses her building profile to challenge the disparities and widely spread issues related to the agriculture and food trade.

"One of the things I would like to see improve is the reduction of technical trade barriers. There is so much opportunity to solve huge world issues by improving these systems – things like waste and food security – big critical issues that nations around the world are experiencing."

"Old policies that haven't been updated to reflect scientific evidence and changing political landscapes lead to unbelievable waste in food and agriculture export. I think the world would be a better place if these issues were resolved."

To learn more about OBE Organic's mission to positively impact the health of families around the world visit www.obeorganic.com or follow Dalene ON Twitter at @DalWray.



[Back to Alumni News](#)

The business brains behind SA's Big Battery

Josh Carmichael
Renewable Energy, Grid & Mobility Specialist (Transdev – Connexion)
Bachelor of Science
Bachelor of International Business



Image: Josh (right) with colleagues at the site of the Hornsdale Power Reserve and Big Battery

When Josh Carmichael returned to his hometown of Adelaide in May of 2016, joining the South Australian Government in the midst of SA's so-called 'energy crisis' after seven years at automotive manufacturing company DENSO, he could not have imagined what the next two years would entail.

As the Director of the Low Carbon Economy Unit, Josh put his business acumen to good use and led his team through the development and success of some of the state's most extraordinary renewable energy projects – including delivering the World's Largest Lithium-ion Battery (100 MW Battery) – all while welcoming the newest member to his young family.

After making such a substantial contribution toward South Australia's electricity sector being cleaner, more reliable and more affordable, he upended again to the Netherlands and joined Transdev, a leading mobility specialist and public transport operator, as a Low Emission Technology expert.

Josh takes us on a deep dive into his fascinating career, expertise in renewables, his time at the South Australian Government, and what he really thinks about Elon Musk's tweeting habit.

Would you be able to tell us a little bit about what you are currently doing at Transdev (Connexion) as a Low Emission Technology Expert?

Transdev operates everything from ferries to light rail train, trams and buses and autonomous shuttles as either the Global Transdev brand (as in Australia) or as a local brand like Connexion in The Netherlands.

My role is to advise the organisation on how to best roll out buses, batteries, chargers and infrastructure for the expected boom in electric and fuel cell buses by 2025 – 2030 in The Netherlands, from a commercial, technical, chemical, procurement and operational point of view.

What motivated you to pursue this career path in renewable energy, how did your time at UniSA help shape it?

I've always been very interested in sustainability, but more from a business impact point of view – product development, strategy, supply chain and power balance perspective – than the environmental perspective. I would never have guessed while at UniSA in the early 2000s I would end up where I am now.

I chose good mentors who supported and encouraged me to say yes to every opportunity during my time at UniSA. My journey started when I said yes to a random opportunity to go on exchange. UniSA had just signed a new contract with The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in Hong Kong to do exchanges, and they found it hard to get people to go to China over Europe and USA in 2003, so they offered \$5000 in grants to go and promoted it via the professors. I spoke to a couple mentors and they encouraged me to apply.

I was successful and met plenty of enthusiastic American and European students in Hong Kong – particularly the Dutch – which made me want to live and work in The Netherlands. So I moved after my studies, did my Masters and graduated in 2008.

I managed to use my Japanese language skills to get a job with DENSO in the middle of the global financial crisis, in a role that was meant to be industrial products but turned into innovation and business development across Telecom, Health, Security and Energy industries for over eight years.

I then said yes to a chance to relocate back home to SA with the government – while having no previous ambition to work in the public sector – in a role that I could never have imagined would be so good for me in terms of development, experience, knowledge and network. First in Hydrogen, then the big battery, virtual power plants and 20 other projects through the Renewable Technology Fund worth one billion dollars in private investments into SA as Director of the Low Carbon Economy Unit.

It was my pleasure to be a manager of such a capable team, in the thick of action with Cabinet support and fully decision making freedom with support of executives across government and my second-in-command, Richard Day.

Most recently I took a job with a public transport operator – never thought that would happen either – in the largest (again) electric bus depot and fleet in Europe.



Image: Construction of the Hornsdale Power Reserve in regional South Australia

Speaking of your time with the South Australian Government, the state has a very complex energy market and power needs and you were involved in leading the massive 100MW Battery Project, could you describe your role and experience working on this significant development with a company like Tesla?

PRFL: Where to begin?

There is no other company like Tesla. I've worked for a large international organisation before at DENSO (20,000 employees, \$60B revenue), but Tesla was a whole different ball game. Everything is huge, quick and via the twitter account – which was very different way of working, especially for a Government agency and Premier's Office used to having their way.

The sheer scale, size, timing and complexity of this project was unprecedented. The 100MW battery was 5-20 fold larger than anything comparable on the market at the time. It was pushing the boundaries of engineering possibilities. Furthermore, it wasn't a simple local project – it attracted close to 90 competitive global bids from all corners of the world. The process to decide the right partner was already the first challenge.

Every stage of the process was unique. We had to fit procurement, negotiations and installation in a nine month window. The installation phase alone – including the registration, licensing and connection procedures in the energy market – can take three months each from three different parties outside of the government's control. So in total it would have taken 9 to 18 months with existing known technology. We only had three months for that with a technology, rule book and protocol that largely didn't exist.

But, we were able to make a success of this phase in the three months because everyone came to the table with a solution – not problem – mentality. We were also able to have frank discussions about what was wanted, what was needed, and able to be implemented in the energy grid at such a scale and speed.

My team in government did an enormous amount of work upfront working with key stakeholders to ask them about implementing a product that had not been tested at such size before – irrespective of who would win the project. That helped at the backend of the project when we went to implement the winning solution with Neceen and Tesla.



That's an intense three months – and this was all happening under intense media scrutiny, wasn't it?

The international media were using (sometimes inaccurate) local sources to report on the state of the project – since we were going to get it for free if it took more than 100 days – which added a lot of pressure.

That was alongside the speedy production and delivery of the balance of plant equipment (inverters, transformers, cabling, concrete etc.) and battery packs which were being delivered to site at breakneck speed via planes – just as they hit the end of production line – while building the site from scratch in a safe manner with no serious accidents on site in Jamestown.

If that wasn't enough, we also had to plan two parties with global attendance and attention (including an appearance from Elon Musk, industry bigwigs, government officials and guests from all over Australia), without interfering with the site's progress, onsite testing requirements, and performance of the products with no spare days in the schedule.

I'm guessing Elon Musk's now infamous penchant for tweeting sensitive information didn't help?

It's well documented that Elon tweeted during the process that he could do it in less than 100 days, and then dared by fellow billionaire Mike Cannon-Brookes, said he would do it for free if he couldn't. This created a problem and more complexity within the project.

The problem was some saw it as the unfair reason he won the contract (which it wasn't), while others wanted to see us unfairly take him up on the offer. But we know that would see the battery and renewable industry back years and give the Federal Liberal Party and coal lobbyists the ammunition to wipe out batteries and renewables by 5-10 years. South Australia needs all the energy storage it can get, so it made no sense to destroy the first major project to achieve that and jeopardise future investment into the state afterwards.

To this day I think it's still the only occasion in which a tweet has been successfully used in a commercial contract to hold a party liable for the content of the tweet – that's pretty cool. In the end we didn't need to activate it and South Australia benefited significantly from the 100MW Battery being delivered on time.

Subsequent deals also brought other battery manufacturers into the state, with other projects like Sunjive Gupta in Whyalla and more renewable projects, creating a new industry, jobs and hope. That's even cooler.



Image: Tesla chief executive, Elon Musk (centre) and former SA Premier Jay Weatherill (right) during the 2017 press conference at Adelaide Oval

That must have been so much pressure on you both personally and professionally?

Make no mistake, I had enormous support from internal colleagues, especially my partners Peter Hawkes and Chris Gostling, an executive team across government led by Sam Crafter, Premier and Ministers offices, and was externally supported by technical, commercial and legal consultants in a tightknit project team of about 20 people. Tesla and Neceen both also allocated significant resources to the project, which enabled quick responses from key stake holders to clear blockages in the road.

But yeah – I didn't sleep much for 9 months. My real superstar on the project was my partner Martine. She also gave birth to our son James in the peak of the project in September 2017. All while working and helping me through all the tough challenges on the project as my unofficial advisor, supporter, motivator and positive thinker; especially when the going was really tough!

What do you love most about your field?

When I was studying at UniSA sustainability was a hobby for environmentalist. It wasn't until I did my MBA in Holland that my professor said, "the key to getting sustainability mainstream is to make it a business decision, not an environmental one." Get the CFO excited. The CEO will like an idea that he can write about in the annual report, but it's the CFO that holds the pen on investment. You need to get the CFO excited.

I'm proud that from a hobby in 2003 to mainstream business decision-making, renewables are now maturing and seen as the future. SA is leading the world on so many areas – which I hopefully played a role in accelerating during 2016 – 2018. It wasn't the plan, but it's been a great journey.

Renewables are here to stay, and SA is a great place to be for that.



Image: The Tesla 100MW lithium-ion battery at the Hornsdale Power Reserve, near Jamestown, South Australia

You've had extensive experience in the Netherlands as well, are there things their energy industry do that Australia doesn't? Is there anything we can learn, and vice versa?

The world is on a path to transition to a more sustainable carbon constrained world. Australia is leading from the energy transition, but lacking in transport and building industry. Europe is leading from a transport perspective, but in a more orderly fashion.

We can certainly learn from each other. Australia can learn how to get bipartisan policy support and more orderly transitions – as well as how to transition the transport sector quickly while supporting the grid. On the other hands Europe can learn from Australia's mistakes and the solutions that they are now deploying to fix those issues which are globally significant and show leadership at a faster pace – which Europe could use a bit more of – especially in the energy sector.

What do you love most about living and working in The Netherlands? Do you miss anything in particular from Adelaide?

I love Europe because everything is so close, and every place has its own rich history over thousands of years that still exists in small ways through their culture, food, and language. I love being a two-hour flight from my favourite cities in Italy and Spain for long weekends, summer breaks, or winter ski seasons.

I love The Netherlands because it's so active on the bike – either to work with the kids, for shopping or sport on the weekends. Also the work-life balance discussion is more mature. I currently have a daddy day once-a-week with my one-year-old son, James, and three-year-old daughter, Siena.

I miss my family and friends from Adelaide a lot, but am more fortunate than other expats because my partner is Dutch with an Australian history – so we both have friends and family in each other's country.

I do really miss the weather, beaches and wineries. I'm a Henley boy (go Sharks!) through and through, which my partner also loves, so both miss hanging out at the Square with the kids and my parents for a coffee during the day, or a balmy summer night on the terrace with a beer with mates. I do miss my old colleagues at SA Government and exciting projects – but I don't miss the politics and scrutiny.



Image: Josh (blue top, centre) celebrating being ruckman in the European Championships in Hiel, 2010 with his DAFA team

Do you have any achievements or moments you are personally particularly proud of?

Besides the kids and family, while in Europe the first time between 2006 and 2015, I was a part of establishing the Dutch Australian Football Association (DAFA). At one point I was the President, player and coach, helping to grow the competition from a central national team to a domestic league of four city-based teams next to the national team.

We came close a few times to winning the European Championship, and had some fantastic weekends away for games across Europe, aside from being proud of the friendships that formed in that period – and seeing the competition grow – I am also most proud of AFL Europe (of which DAFA was a founding member) influence on the AFL HQ in Melbourne 20,000 kilometres away.

In many ways Europe was more advanced than Australia in the AFL with female participation, 12-a-side and touch formats (due to the limitation of cricket fields in Europe meaning we had to play on rugby and soccer fields), which we advocated to be implemented in Australia for over a decade. Today, you see the result of this work in things like the highly successful National Female Australian Football League and the 12-a-side summer competition, AFLX.



Image: Josh (top row, centre) celebrating being ruckman in the European Championships in Hiel, 2010 with his DAFA team

Do you have any suggestions how consumers and everyday individuals can make more renewable energy choices and support renewable energy efforts?

Yes, but the key is to do it for economic reason – not environment. People should be going renewable and energy efficient because it's now officially cheaper and smarter – while being good for the environment.

Energy efficiency is one of the easiest wins. Install energy efficient lights with control software that turns things like air conditioners, pool pumps, white goods etc. on/off efficiently. Every little bit helps. Becoming a prosumer is another way. Take advantage of the governments subsidies for solar and batteries to become a consumer producing – not consuming – energy while earning money.

Finally, if you are in a position at your work to have power or influence the procurement of your energy, do so. There are very attractive corporate solar power purchase agreement (PPA) on offer in Australia, direct or indirect from wind and solar farms and renewable energy SME retailers which are cheaper than the current big energy retailer offers in the market.



Back to Alumni News

A true trailblazer in the law profession

Melissa Davies

Legal Counsel at **Lucas Total Contract Solutions**

Bachelor of Law

Bachelor of Journalism



University of South Australia Law and Journalism graduate, Melissa Davies, has been honoured with the Lawyers Weekly Women in Law In-House Lawyer of the Year in 2018 – placing her amongst the country’s top legal professionals.

2018 Women in Law Awards recognises some of the best and brightest in the profession across 20 categories for which lawyers and firms can nominate.

In-house lawyers, like Melissa, are at the forefront of a company’s day-to-day operations, influencing both legal and business decisions. This award recognises outstanding performance by a female lawyer working in-house including both corporate and public-sector lawyers.

The 27-year-old works as Legal Counsel for Lucas Total Contract Solutions, a privately owned civil construction and mining company founded over forty years ago with projects in multiple locations throughout Australia.

The company has a core commitment to support South Australia, its home state, and has been a key participant in some of the state’s landmark civil construction projects.



Image: Melissa accepting her award at the Lawyers Weekly Women in Law Award ceremony

“Being an in-house lawyer at a civil construction and mining company means my day looks different every single time. Some days involve reviewing contracts, drafting joint venture agreements, negotiation of terms and conditions, resolution of disputes and preparation of board reports; yet other days I need to don my steel cap boots, throw on my high vis and walk around on site,” she says.

It’s quite a turn of events given Melissa wasn’t interested in studying law. It was only after enrolling in her Journalism degree and sitting in on a law lecture to learn about the significance of student association rules that she became hooked.

“I never thought I’d study law at university because I felt I was very different to the stereotypical law student.”

Having no links to the legal industry during her studies proved to be a challenge, which Melissa grabbed with both hands. She dedicated time to researching firms that specialised in the area of law that captivated her interest and contacted a few of the partners offering to undertake work experience for free.

One of the partners offered her the work experience opportunity which she says secured her a clerkship with MinterEllison and later lead to full time employment. Melissa stayed with MinterEllison for a couple of years before accepting the in-house role at Lucas Total Contract Solutions.

This spirit to overcome challenges has put Melissa in good stead. She was “thrown into the deep end” 12 months ago when her legal manager resigned, but after an extremely busy year Melissa is still the sole lawyer for the civil construction and mining company.



Image: Melissa donning her high vis and hard hat on site at Lucas Total Contract Solutions

Throughout that period, she reviewed more than 200 contracts, increased monetary thresholds for purchase orders, created a joint-venture with an Indigenous corporation, settled four major disputes before reaching litigation, implemented new processes business-wide, and created subcontract templates.

So, it’s easy to see how she stood out among the nine nominees.

Melissa is most proud of this professional achievement and wants other graduates to achieve the same success. Her advice – work hard.

“The first two years at uni is hard, don’t quit during this time. The first couple of years after graduating is hard, with long hours and being in an environment where you’ll know the least and feel disposable, again, don’t quit!”

“I promise it gets better. From my experience, after two years of full time work is when the magic happens.

“Seek out mentors and network with people of all different ages. I am lucky to have had some great mentors along my journey. I still catch up with two of them monthly for an early breakfast before work.

“It is incredibly rewarding to seek objective advice and support from people who have walked in your shoes before. It’s never too early to look for a mentor. Join a mentoring program or ask someone for their time. You won’t regret it.”

If you graduated in the last three years, you can still tap into the advice of a mentor through the [Business Career Mentor Program](#) and the [Executive Partners Program](#). Alternatively if you would be interested in sharing your experience with current students as a mentor, please contact the Business Careers team at businessalumni@unisa.edu.au

Share Share

[Back to Alumni News](#)