



A global career in humanitarian aid and child protection

A childhood dream of fighting for the rights of the less fortunate inspired Nadine Rachid to pursue her law qualifications. Six years on from graduating, with thousands of kilometres travelled and many life-changing experiences under her belt, she reflects on her time working for the United Nations in Lebanon. [more...](#)

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Ovarian cancer researcher riding for a cure

Along with a team of dedicated UniSA cyclists, cancer researcher Professor Peter Hoffmann, will be riding through Kangaroo Island, amongst its pristine coastline and breathtaking wilderness, in hopes of raising vital funds for his research in early detection of ovarian cancer. [more...](#)

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One of Adelaide's in demand artistic ceramicists you should get to know

Ayesha Aggarwal has spent her life immersed in creative artistic expression. Her latest endeavour to create beautiful handmade ceramics is gaining attention as an artist to follow in Adelaide. [more...](#)

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Smartphones: are they just a pain in the neck?

With our entire world is now accessible from the palm of our hands, phone and technology use is becoming an increasingly intrinsic part of our lives. However this ease of accessibility and connection also comes with a number of risks according to UniSA researchers. [more...](#)

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Alumni Events

- UNTIL 27 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.
- 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.
- 14 MAR** **Fighting Poverty Through Education**
Join us to hear the inspiring achievements of The School of St Jude's and its students, and to appreciate how this pioneering leader in charitable education is achieving its mission by 'fighting poverty through education'.
- 15 MAR** **UniSA Careers Expo**
If you're seeking employment or looking to further your career, this is a must attend event for you. UniSA has partnered with the Australian Association of Graduate Employers (AAGE) to deliver a one-day UniSA Careers Expo.
- 20 MAR** **MBA Info Session**
Elevate your career and transform your future with an MBA from UniSA Business School.
- 27 MAR** **Europe - Quo Vadis: A German Perspective**
In this provocative lecture, Dr Anna Prinz contends that reform in Europe must go beyond narrow economic parameters and address the issue of a stronger, more flexible Union that strengthens the EU, without weakening its neighbours.
- 28 MAR** **Sydney Alumni Cocktail Reception**
Join Vice Chancellor Professor David Lloyd and fellow alumni for a networking event in Sydney.



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A global career in humanitarian aid and child protection

Nadine Rachid

Electorate Assistant, John Gardner MP, Minister for Education
Government of South Australia
Bachelor of Laws



When a close friend of Nadine Rachid's started studying law, it piqued her interest. Her friend would discuss what she was learning and how her perspective on life, her ideas and train of thoughts were growing and changing. These conversations reignited Nadine's life-long dream of fighting for the needs of the less fortunate and inspired her to enrol in a laws degree at the University of South Australia.

"I liked the idea of advocating for the good of others," she says. "I wanted to make a difference."

And make a difference she has. Six years on from graduation, Nadine has shaped an impressive CV of humanitarian work.

Her first role was as a Case Worker for INTERSOS, an Italian humanitarian aid organisation, to support people in high risk environments.

"I began working with INTERSOS in 2014 in Lebanon. For two years I worked in a variety of roles, dealing directly with refugees who had faced child protection and gender based violence issues," she says.

As a case manager Nadine was responsible for identifying and assessing children and adults at risk of abuse and violence. She also worked closely with Syrian refugee women, helping many access employment training.

"At INTERSOS I would also work closely with individuals, deliver prevention awareness and emotional support groups," she says.



Image: Nadine (left) in the midst of preparing for 'Ramadan Village', an event staged organizes every year to feed poor people during the Ramadan.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) supports INTERSOS' work in the region. While at INTERSOS' head office, Nadine would also act as the Relief Focal Point for the Protection Officer.

Her work impressed the UNHCR Protection Team so when two protection posts arose she jumped at the opportunity and was shortlisted for both positions.

"I had applied for previous UN vacancies and I was familiar with how difficult the application process could be – a one hour exam and a panel interview. But I also knew what my strengths and weaknesses were in terms of answering their questions.

"I remember having 'all nighters' where I would study for the exams. I kept telling myself that this time I was going to really impress them and would give them no choice but to choose me."

Three weeks after her interviews Nadine was offered one of the posts.

"To my luck I was offered the post that I wanted most, which involved child protection," she says.

Her joy and relief in landing the job was further more emphasised after experiencing a devastating personal tragedy, a mere few months before, making the role that much more poignant.

"Earlier that year, I experienced a stillbirth and lost my baby at six months. This experience led me to think more seriously about a career in child protection – where I could protect children and make a positive difference in their lives.

"I wanted to turn my sour experience into a step for change. I believe in the law of attraction, and I know that the universe responded to this inner pain mixed with my passion to help others by giving me that job."

Nadine excelled in the two years she spent in her role as Senior Protection Assistant (Child Protection Focal Point) for the UNHCR in Lebanon, with many successful achievements in the protection of basic human rights for young people.

"Another outcome that was incredibly rewarding was my work advocating with the Head of Internal Security Forces in Lebanon for Police Officers to cease arresting street and working children in Beirut.



Nadine also played a key role in implementing the Street and Working Children Program with Makhzoumi Foundation. The Street and Working Children Program is designed to get these kids into a safe, educational and fun environment. It also works to teach these children about self-protection.

"This work strengthened my values and gave me more confidence to advocate for the issues I feel strongly about. – When you work with UNHCR, it owns a piece of your heart forever," Nadine says.

"The UN recruitment system is lengthy and competitive. It can be a deterrent for applicants who have already applied and were not initially successful. I personally applied on multiple occasions and was not successful, but I kept trying and pushed myself to work harder each time for the opportunity.

"The advice I would give to someone interested in fostering or furthering a global career is to never give up."

This tenacity and dedication has served Nadine well – particularly upon her return to Adelaide where she quickly snapped up a role as Electorate Assistant for the state's Minister for Education.

"Working with the Honorable John Gardner MP in the Moriatta Electorate Office has kept me on the track of fulfilling my life's purpose as he makes enormous efforts to assist any enquiries or issues his constituents have," she says.

"As my local MP, John Gardner quickly recognized my skill set and experience and offered me the opportunity to work at his electorate office.

"I am now helping fellow Australians who need assistance in my local community, using the skill sets I developed helping refugees."

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Ovarian cancer researcher riding for a cure



In late May of this year, the University of South Australia and the Flinders Foundation will be joining forces with Tour de Cure to raise vital funds for game-changing cancer research, support and prevention projects that will bring our dream of a world without cancer closer to reality.

A number of dedicated cyclists, including some of our own cancer researchers, will visit the pristine wilderness of Kangaroo Island in May to ride over 300kms in 3 days, experiencing some wonderful communities and a challenging ride on the 2019 SA Discovery Tour.

The passionate team aims to raise over \$300,000 to fund four major South Australian cancer research projects through Flinders Foundation and UniSA, as well as three \$10,000 local cancer grants.

UniSA ovarian cancer researcher, Professor Peter Hoffmann will be riding as part of Team UniSA, and is part of the impressive, dedicated contingent of researchers at the university committed to finding a cure for cancer.

100% of donations from the SA Discovery Tour will go towards funding these worthy research projects at each institution.

As Strand Leader for Biomaterials Engineering and Nanomedicine in the UniSA Future Industries Institute, Professor Hoffmann is developing an early detection test for ovarian cancer. The test offers a chance to improve the survival rates for the more than 1,500 women diagnosed each year in Australia.



"Ovarian cancer is a rare but often deadly disease as it has thus far proven extremely difficult to identify and treat early," says Professor Peter Hoffmann, an internationally recognised expert in the study of proteins and the discovery of biomarkers for early disease detection in cancer.

"If ovarian cancer is detected early it can often be cured. Unfortunately for many women diagnosed with the disease, it is only detected once it has spread through the abdominal cavity and has become very difficult to treat.

"We have identified a number of autoantibodies produced by the immune system at the early stage of ovarian cancer that offer high accuracy as a biomarker test for detecting early-stage ovarian cancer.

"This research resulted from almost a decade of collaborative research with Professor Martin Oehler at the Royal Adelaide Hospital that included validating our autoantibody test on 320 ovarian cancer patient samples and the results are very promising.

"We are in the process of validating a promising new early detection test for ovarian cancer to improve the chance of survival for women with this disease by finding it early."

Since 2007, Tour de Cure has staged a number of tours and in the process raised more than \$40 million, funded 322 cancer projects, achieved 24 significant cancer breakthroughs, and helped to raise awareness about cancer prevention to more than 100,000 school children across Australia.

Now, Tour de Cure Co-Founder and Director of Development, Geoff Coombes, is eager to ride one of Australia's most beautiful scenic routes and attractions – all for a very worthy cause.

"We're excited to be visiting the pristine wilderness of Kangaroo Island, the abundance of wildlife, and its stunning beaches. We'll get the chance to share our message with the local community and inspire them to make healthy lifestyle choices," he says.

"We'd love to get as many people participating in this tour as possible, both riders and support crew. Visiting Kangaroo Island is a bucket list item for many people and seeing it by bike will be an experience of a lifetime."



Funding Cancer Research for Flinders Foundation & UniSA

Want to do your part in eradicating the most pervasive and devastating diseases on the planet? Join the SA Discovery Tour, experiencing the best South Australia has to offer, all while funding vital cancer research and saving countless lives.

As part of Team UniSA, you will be privy to expert fundraising support and one-on-one mentoring, along with a community of supportive cyclists and cancer researchers from all walks of life and abilities along the journey with you.

What: SA Discovery Cycling Tour

When: 23 - 26 May 2019

Where: Return trip from Victor Harbour, to Kingscote via Sealink Kangaroo Island Ferry. 300 - 450km over 3 stages around Kangaroo Island.

Route Details: <https://tourdecure.com.au/tours/sa-discovery-tour/>

If you are interested in riding please contact Jacinta Mazzarolo at jacinta.mazzarolo@unisa.edu.au for more information or expressions of interest.



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One of Adelaide's in-demand artistic ceramicists you should get to know

Ayesha Aggarwal
 Ceramicist, Ayesha Aggarwal
 Marketing and Publicity, Wakefield Press
 Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
 Bachelor of Communication (Media and Culture)



Communications graduate Ayesha Aggarwal's creativity is instinctual. She moves easily from one creative outlet to another. At the Wakefield Press she works as a marketing guru, creating interest for the latest manuscripts to hit the shelves. In her spare time she crafts unique, handmade one-of-a-kind ceramics.

"I started work at the Wakefield Press the very same day I went to my first pottery class, so there's a nice symmetry to my two careers," she says.

"I love that I still get to do creative work in my day job but it uses a completely different part of my brain – having that balance is really fulfilling."

Toward the end of her studies at UniSA, Ayesha yearned for a creative outlet. Years were spent experimenting with different techniques.



"I've always dreamt of a creative career," she says. "Before I found ceramics I couldn't fathom how I could realistically make a living making art."

"I dabbled in many creative hobbies. I made fabric totes for a while, tried my hand at crochet, made lampshades from slides, embroidered pop culture references that I framed... but nothing really stuck until I finished my first year working with clay."

As a child, Ayesha had always been fascinated by the potters in India. After a year of weekly night classes, that she admits were frustrating at times, she tried her hand at making a vase.

Born in India into a family of women she calls extremely creative, Ayesha was immersed in a life of the handmade, botanicals and artistic expression that continue to influence her work today.

"I grew up listening to conversations about colour, pattern and design. I like to think that I bring all of these conversations into the studio with me," she says.

"I see my mum's love of gardening expressed in my obsession with plants, the patterns and colours of Indian textiles in my bold, graphic designs."

"The second I'd made my first botanical vase I decided to make a commitment to clay," she says.

"I began to feel the excitement of having created something that I really liked. For the first time I felt like I had a product that people might willingly pay me for – and that was pretty exciting."



A combination of wheel throwing and hand-building techniques are used in the studio, but Ayesha works freehand on the final form.

"A pattern forms in my head as I go along so I simply let my hands decide where to apply the colour," she says.

"I strive to make work that is unique to me; that no one else is making. I don't really prescribe to what is trendy, I try to make work that speaks to me and hope that others will feel the same way about it."

"My inspiration comes from the unique shapes and colours of leaves. I'm particularly drawn to Australian native flora with their almost alien like shapes and vibrant colour and to tropical plants, which always transport me to my childhood in India. They translate to pattern so easily in my head."



Photo by Sharmone Cockayne

Ayesha has also recently turned her craft to handmade ceramic jewellery, experimenting with thinly rolled and hand cut shapes that bring aspects of her wheel thrown work into the design. She intends to keep working and experimenting with clay for as long as it brings her joy.

"Ceramics is still really my side hustle, but it's what I spend the majority of my days thinking about and doing," she says.

"I've often been told that I should outsource my designs for production and get someone else to do the making so that I can focus on the profits, but that defeats the purpose for me."

"I started making pots because I wanted to make things with my own hands and I think that's what makes each creation all the more special."



"As a child I was taught that a handmade gift was of more value than a store bought one. Handmade to me is a sign of care and affection. It feels increasingly important in our throwaway economies."

"I know the curves of each and every pot I make, the marks from where I accidentally nicked them with my fingernails, the slip of my hand where the paint went on a bit too thick. Each pot is a little piece of myself, a labour of love. That's the intimate magic of the handmade."

To learn more about Ayesha's work visit www.ayshaaggarwal.com. Her work can also be purchased in Adelaide at Urban Cow Studio, The Jam Factory and Art Images Gallery, and in Queensland at Brown's General Store and the store at the Queensland Art Gallery & Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA).

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Smartphones: are they just a pain in the neck?



A large majority of the world's 3.4 billion smartphone users are putting their necks at risk every time they send a text, according to new research involving the University of South Australia.

'Text neck,' as it is colloquially called, places stress on the spine and alters the neck's natural curve, increasing the likelihood of associated soft tissue discomfort.

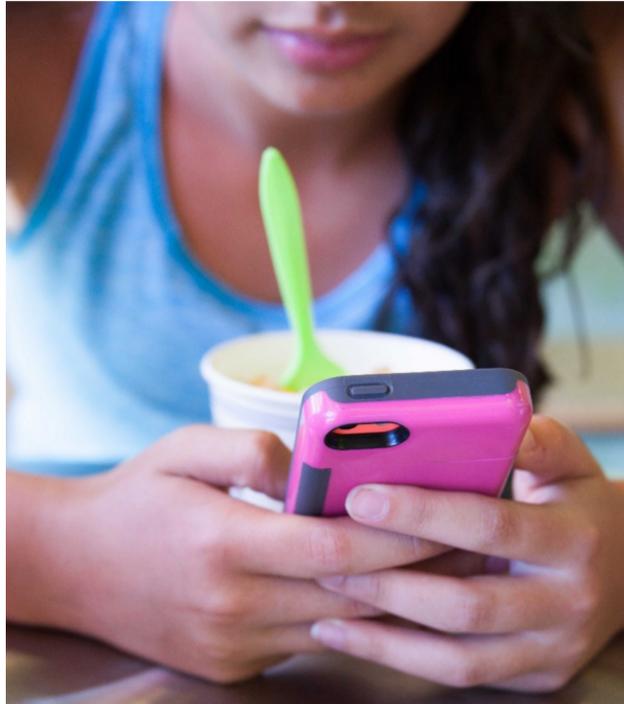
A recent international study published in PLOS One, highlights the high ergonomic risks to smartphone users, particularly young people, who are experiencing neck pain earlier than previous generations.

Researchers from Khon Kaen University video recorded 30 smartphone users in Thailand aged between 18-25 years, who spend up to eight hours a day on their phones.

Using a Rapid Upper Limb Assessment tool (RULA) to measure ergonomic risk levels, they found that the average score for the participants was 6, compared to an acceptable score of between 1-2.

"The results identified issues with unsuitable neck, trunk and leg postures which lead to musculoskeletal disorders," says lead researcher Suwalee Namwongsa.

RULA has been used to assess the ergonomic impacts of desktop computers and laptops in the past but this is believed to be the first time the tool has been used to assess ergonomic risk levels of excessive smartphone use.



Dr Rose Boucaut, a UniSA physiotherapist involved in the paper, says the awkward postures adopted by smartphone users can adversely affect the soft tissues.

"Smartphone users typically bend their neck slightly forward when reading and writing text messages. They also sometimes bend or twist their neck sideways and put their upper body and legs in awkward positions," Dr Boucaut says. "These postures put uneven pressure on the soft tissues around the spine that can lead to discomfort."

In a separate study published this month in the journal WORK, the same researchers also surveyed 779 Thai university students who use smartphones, with 32 per cent reporting neck pain, 26 per cent shoulder pain, 20 per cent upper back pain and 19 per cent wrist and hand pain.

Musculoskeletal disorders were more common among students with higher smartphone use (more than five hours a day) and those who smoked and did little exercise.

Female smartphone users also experienced far more musculoskeletal disorders than men – 71 per cent compared to 28 per cent.

This study is the first to show the association between smoking, smartphone use and neck pain. Of the 11 students who identified themselves as current smokers, nine of them had musculoskeletal disorders. The low number of smokers reflects the no-smoking policy of the Khon Kaen University.

Previous clinical studies have demonstrated that cigarette smoking is harmful not only to lungs but also to soft tissues, decreasing healing time at a cellular level.

Dr Boucaut says the findings should be communicated to health professionals who treat people with neck and back pain and may not always link their symptoms to smartphone use.

"It is also doubtful whether people experiencing back and neck pain (especially young people) are aware it could be as a result of excessive smartphone use," Dr Boucaut says. "Health practitioners need to educate their patients about safe postures and curtailing time spent using smartphones to help prevent these issues."

Some smartphone companies are now sending unsolicited messages to their customers notifying them of their average time spent on daily smartphone use.

"This feedback may help users connect neck discomfort with smartphone use and encourage them to reduce time spent texting," Dr Boucaut says.

The other researchers involved in both studies include UniSA graduate Associate Professor Dr Rungthip Puntumetakul, Director of the Research Center in Back, Neck, Other Joint Pain and Human Performance (BNOJPH), Khon Kaen University, Thailand; Dr Manida Swangnetr Neubert and Associate Professor Dr Sunisa Chaiklieng.



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