WEN

Women in Economics Network

Career Journeys of Australian Economists

March 2021

What does an economist actually do? What are the career opportunities for somebody who studies economics?

Launching on International Women's Day 8 March 2021, Career Journeys of Australian Economists brings you the stories of 37 economists around Australia.

Featuring CEOs, Chief Advisors, Principal Economists, Commissioners, Deputy Secretaries, Academics, and so much more. Read about the various roles each participant has had over their careers, the opportunities which studying economics has brought them, and their most memorable moments as economists.

Career Journeys of Australian Economists is available on the Women in Economics Network website. We encourage you to share this resource with students considering studying economics, early-career economists who are curious about the opportunities ahead of them, and with friends and family who have ever asked you "...economist... so what does that actually mean?"

A huge thank you to all of the economists who participated.

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Amy Auster

Chief Adviser

Commonwealth Treasury

Current role:

- Chief Adviser, Commonwealth Treasury
- Advisory Board, APEC RMIT Study Centre
- Advisory Board, York Butter Factory
- Research Fellow, Monash Business School

Selected previous roles:

- Deputy Secretary, Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance
- Executive Director, Australian Centre for Financial Studies
- Global Head, Marketing and Client Engagement, ANZ Bank
- Chief of Staff, CEO Institutional and International Banking, ANZ Bank
- Head of FX Strategy and International Economic Research, ANZ Bank
- Principal Consultant, ACIL Tasman
- Vice President, Emerging Markets Research, JPMorgan

Education

- Columbia University, Master of Arts in Economics and Finance
- London School of Economics, exchange student
- Northwestern University, Bachelor of Arts (honours), Medill School of Journalism

Day-to-day my current role includes:

- Providing policy advice to Government
- Translating Government priorities to implementable legislation and initiatives
- Engaging with the private, community and not for profit sectors to identify trends and issues, and find solutions
- Leading teams and mentoring staff, including in applied economics and finance

This is different to previous roles, where:

Over the course of my career, my role has evolved from primarily undertaking my own in-depth analysis to leading teams and working with and through people to identify market function problems and find solutions.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Develop and hold a conceptual framework to analyse problems and develop solutions that will be based in first principles and backed by rigorous analysis. This framework also helps me to influence decision makers as the analysis is consistent, and grounded in incentives that policymakers can appreciate and understand.

A memorable moment in my career was:

When the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance was held up by State Treasurers through CFFR as the exemplar for tax policy advice amid discussions on GST allocation reform.

When Victoria launched its first Social Impact Bonds.

When papers I had authored at the Australian Centre for Financial Studies were widely published on research sites.

When a senior member of my staff told me that I had created a work environment where she felt truly able to be herself at work for the first time in her career.

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Janine Bialecki

Principal Economist
ACCC

Current role:

- Principal Economist, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)

Selected previous roles:

- Behavioural Economics Adviser, Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA)
- Economic and Policy analyst – *included macroeconomic forecasting, competition policy, bank policy, investor protection.*
- Commonwealth Treasury
- Finance Tutor, ANU

Education

- MSc in Economics, Specialising in Behavioural Economics and Game Theory
- Graduate Diploma in Economics
- Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice
- Bachelor of Finance
- Bachelor of Laws

Day-to-day my current role includes:

The ACCC promotes competition and fair trading to help "make markets work".
As part of the in-house economics team, I have huge variety in the cases I contribute to. In a given day I might:

- Work with a mergers team to assess the economic impacts of a proposed merger
- Use behavioural insights to advise on the design of a refund scheme for consumers who have been misled
- Assess whether a contract clause might substantially lessen competition in a particular market
- Work with a market studies team to understand barriers to consumer engagement in a particular market.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I reported directly to the Minister / Government at both BETA and Treasury. The ACCC is a regulator which makes decisions in its own right. This gives the ACCC a bit more freedom and flexibility, but it also means we're one step removed from policy makers. Both have advantages and disadvantages, but I really enjoy the direct tangible impact I can have on consumer welfare at ACCC.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Have the tools and frameworks so that I can provide considered advice across a wide range of policy and regulatory issues. Studying behavioural economics has given me a deeper appreciation of human decision making, which has been especially valuable for understanding the demand-side of markets.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Working on the Competition Policy Review while I was at Treasury. It's usually only once in a generation that a government commissions a stocktake of such a broad and important policy area. I worked with colleagues from a range of backgrounds, consulted with people directly affected by proposals, and helped craft recommendations designed to make a positive difference to Australia's economy.

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Catherine Birch

Senior Economist

ANZ

Current role:

- Senior Economist, Australian economics team, ANZ Research, ANZ Bank

Selected previous roles:

- Senior Economist/Policy Adviser at Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
- Environmental Economist at Namibia Nature Foundation
- Economic Analyst at BIS Oxford Economics

Education

- Master of International and Development Economics, ANU, 2015
- Bachelor of Commerce, Deakin Uni, 2010

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Economic analysis, forecasts and research focusing on the labour market, business and infrastructure investment, ESG and the broader Australian economy.

Presentations to staff, stakeholders and external clients.

This is different to previous roles, where:

My current role has much more client interaction than previous roles. I do a lot of presentations to clients, although most in 2020 have been virtual rather than in-person. This has helped me to improve my public speaking skills and I'm now a lot more comfortable presenting in front of an audience and speaking to high level clients.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Work overseas, meet lots of interesting people from different fields and explore issues that I'm interested in. It's enabled me to think through problems and questions using an economic framework – not only on macroeconomic events and policy but also on social, environmental and other issues.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Presenting the results of our national and regional studies on the economics of land degradation related to bush encroachment in Namibia to the government's steering committee and other stakeholders to secure funding for a consolidated program of de-bushing.

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Catie Bradbear

Inquiry Manager

Productivity Commission

Current role:

- Inquiry Manager, Productivity Commission
- Committee member, ACT WEN

Selected previous roles:

- Senior economist and research economist, Productivity Commission.
- Research assistant, Australian National University.
- Policy analyst, Commonwealth Treasury.

Education

- Bachelor of Economics, University of Queensland.
- Master of Economic Studies, University of Queensland.

Day-to-day my current role includes:

My role at the Productivity Commission is to take a deep dive into complex policy problems, such as inequality, disability care, resources regulation or skills. We generally take around 12 months to investigate a problem and provide policy recommendations to the Australian Government that will improve the wellbeing of the community as a whole. In order to do this, my day might involve talking to relevant people in the community, consulting with experts in the field, gathering information from other sources or conducting data analysis. We weigh up this evidence and assess potential reform options. I also spend much of my day immersed in writing, as the final report we deliver to the Government is essential for communicating our work to policy makers and the community more broadly.

This is different to previous roles, where:

The Commission is quite a different organisation to many other parts of Government. We are independent, and operate at arms-length from Government. This means that we do not interact with Ministers on a day-to-day basis and the Australian community can be confident that the advice we provide is motivated only by the public interest. Further, unlike other agencies, we have the luxury of time to investigate a public policy issue, meaning the analysis we undertake is highly detailed.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Studying economics has given me the framework and tools to examine the behaviours of real people and to think about how we can solve tricky real world problems. Ultimately, I believe that economics has enabled me to work towards improving the lives of all Australians.

A memorable moment in my career was:

I have many memorable moments, but I always love meeting with the passionate people who are affected by the policy issue I am working on, whether they are farmers in Tasmania or businesses in Townsville. My role has meant I have met people from all walks of life and from all around Australia.

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Mary Cavar

Executive Manager
Productivity Commission

Current role:

- Executive Manager of the Melbourne office of the Productivity Commission
- President of the Victorian Branch of the Economics Society of Australia

Selected previous roles:

- Director, Tax and Intergovernmental Relations at the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance – *advising on revenue policy.*
- Assistant Director, Macroeconomic Forecasting & Fiscal Strategy and the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance – *economic monitoring and forecasting*.
- Economist and Senior Economist at the Reserve Bank of Australia – *analysis of various aspects of the Australian and international economies*.

Education

- Bachelor of Commerce (Hons)
- Diploma of Modern Languages
- Executive Master of Public Administration

Day-to-day my current role includes:

I'm responsible for planning and coordinating the Commission's inquiry and research work, supporting the development of staff, and advising on analytical matters. A notable part of my job is maintaining the Commission's relationships with the economics community in Melbourne, which neatly dovetails with my role as President of the Victorian Branch of the Economics Society of Australia.

This is different to previous roles, where:

My current role encompasses a lot of organisation-wide leadership, such as communication, risk management and workforce planning. I also need to have a whole-of-organisation perspective on our outputs, their quality and reception. My focus is broad. In previous roles, I was managing specific inquiries or projects, and getting deeply immersed into that subject matter and then moving on to the next.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Economics – and especially economic policy – requires conceptual and analytical skills as well as creativity and empathy. The economics toolkit enables you to analyse so many pertinent issues, from climate change to financial crises, and opens the door to so many career paths. And it's the type of job that is unlikely to be displaced by AI.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Getting a notable tax reform implemented. Making good policy takes time, from initial concepts, to consultation, drafting legislation and getting policy settings implemented. You have to do it in an open and transparent way, be open to ideas and adapt along the way, and ultimately bring the community along with you.

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Dr. Andrew Charlton

Founder and Director
AlphaBeta Advisors

Current role:

- Founder and Director, AlphaBeta Advisors (part of Accenture), *working on economic and strategy problems for clients in the public and private sector.*

Selected previous roles:

- Founder of AlphaBeta
- Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister
- Research Fellow at the London School of Economics

Education:

- Doctorate of Economics, Oxford University
- Masters of Economics, Oxford University

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Working on economic and strategy problems for clients in the public and private sector.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Have an understanding of many of the most interesting and important issues in the world today.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Working on the global financial crisis as part of the government team and attending G20 meetings representing the Australian government.

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Karen Chester

Deputy Chair
Australian Securities & Investments Commission

Current role:

- Deputy Chair, Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC)

Selected previous roles:

- Deputy Chair & Commissioner, Productivity Commission
- Partner, Mercer, Global Head Infrastructure
- Partner, Access Capital Advisers
- Chief Executive Officer, Access Economics
- Senior Executive, Australian Treasury

Education

- B. Economics (1st Honours), University of Queensland, 1986
- Doctor of Economics honoris causa, University of Queensland, 2017

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Working with my fellow Commissioners to lead and over-see ASIC's strategic direction and objectives to achieve our vision for a fair, strong and efficient financial system for all Australians.

So, my role involves a lot of significant and difficult regulatory decisions every single day. As a financial-system conduct regulator, ASIC is a decision-making engine. When and how to monitor, to surveil, to protect, to disrupt, to afford transparency, to provide regulatory guidance, to impose licensing conditions, and to litigate. Ultimately when and how to step in and when and how to step back. In all of this incentives and behavioural responses matter – an economist's 'bread and butter.'

This is different to previous roles, where:

I have had senior economic roles in the Australian Treasury, and partnerships and CEO positions in the private sector at Mercer and Access Economics. I have also held director positions on company boards and leadership roles on expert panels.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Pursue my passion for good public policy and fair and efficient market outcomes. While studying economics at university, I became intrigued by how the power of public policy can affect peoples' lives (having seen and experienced this first-hand during my childhood). I am especially keen on back to the dirt under the fingernail work of building evidence-based policy and regulation. Along with building a much stronger evaluation culture. Their absence means accountability is likely to remain elusive.

A memorable moment in my career was:

As a graduate, sitting in the then Prime Minister's Office (blending with the lamp shade as the silent note taker), as Rod Sims (my boss) discussed with PM Hawke how to convince the ACTU to embrace tariff reform. I mumbled (and was heard) 'because tariffs screw workers'. A plan was hatched. A model built to estimate the regressive impact of tariffs on low income Australians. An evidence base was formed. A case made. And good public policy happened.

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Belinda Cheung

Macro Strategist

Commonwealth Bank of Australia

Current role:

- Director, Fixed Income and Currency Strategy, Commonwealth Bank of Australia
- Councillor, Economics Society of Australia (NSW)

Selected previous roles:

- Senior Economist and Manager, Reserve Bank of Australia
- Secretary, Economics Society of Australia (NSW)

Education

- Master of Economics, UNSW
- Bachelor of Laws (Hons), Uni. of Sydney
- Bachelor of Economics (Hons), Uni. of Sydney

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Story Telling (by turning data into pictures), and Myth Busting!

I conduct research, develop trading ideas and communicate macroeconomic and financial markets views. Much of my work is focussed on identifying long term secular trends and market dynamics to inform clients' investment processes and decision making.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I've extended my background in macroeconomics and developed strong analytical capabilities across portfolio theory, asset allocation, risk analytics, and portfolio construction.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Economics has given me a framework to better understand the world. I'm able to take a complex system, break it down into its components and analyse and predict behaviour.

I'm driven by a mindset of wanting to know how and why things work. Studying economics has given me the tools to do this.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Hard to narrow down! I've had lots of incredible experiences including working on the G20 (in Cairns), being heavily involved in the running of my employer superannuation fund (including investments) and publishing research in peer-reviewed journals.

All these experiences have involved surrounding myself with the best people and collaborating on exciting initiatives.

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Carmela Chivers

Legislative Advisor to Sen. Jacqui Lambie

Current role:

- Legislative Advisor to Sen Jacqui Lambie

Selected previous roles:

- Associate, Grattan Institute
- Research Assistant, Sydney University
- Self-employed economics consultant

Education

- Bachelor of Arts (Hons I): Political Economy
- Bachelor of Arts: Political Economy and Economics

Day-to-day my current role includes:

- Making quick decisions on the fly;
- Rapid-fire policy analysis;
- Explaining policy trade-offs to diverse audiences;
- Mapping the Australian public policy landscape across different areas (e.g. energy, health, social security);
- Weighing different policy perspectives;
- Asking questions (and looking for the right people to answer my questions);
- Writing policy and providing drafting instructions for legislation / amendments;
- Explaining to people that despite my position title, I am not a lawyer – I'm a proud economist!

This is different to previous roles, where:

I was going deep on a single policy issue for a number of months, rather than working across lots of areas at once.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Set aside 'gut feel' and look for evidence about whether a policy change is in the public interest.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Working for myself when I was a student at university, constantly searching for new clients and taking on wildly different projects. I did everything from book editing, to market research, to running economics experiments. It was enormous fun, but it didn't exactly provide a steady income stream...

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Dr Bethany Cooper

Senior Research Fellow

University of South Australia

Current role:

- Senior Research Fellow, University of South Australia
- Associate Director, Centre for Markets, Values and Inclusion, University of South Australia
- Australian Water Association (AWA) Executive Committee (South Australia)

Selected previous roles:

- Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for Water Policy and Management, La Trobe University
- Lecturer, School of Economics, La Trobe University

Education

- PhD (Economics)
- Bachelor of Business (First Class Honours)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

- Collaborating with a multi-disciplinary team to solve real world problems associated with water policy and management;
- Bringing an economic perspective to inform decision makers responsible for the allocation, supply and pricing of water resources;
- Travelling to developing countries to better understand and address water management challenges;
- Delivering and presenting to academic and industry audiences at events such as international conferences.

This is different to previous roles, where:

My current role focuses on applying an economic lens to solve real word problems in the water sector. It focuses on delivering impactful outcomes to society. My previous role as a lecturer focused on teaching university students.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

- Understand different incentives that motivate behaviour;
- Understand how and why people make trade-offs;
- Apply relevant economic tools to inform decision-making and optimise an outcome.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Working in Laos to inform government decision making around infrastructure investment options (i.e. fish passages) along the Mekong River.

The project aimed to improve the lives of some of the poorest and vulnerable people. The outcome was recognised by the Asian Development Bank and used to inform their poverty reduction strategies.

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Dr Swee-Hoon Chuah

Professor of Economics
University of Tasmania

Current role:

- Professor of Economics
- Head of Discipline, Economics & Finance, Tasmanian School of Business & Economics

Selected previous roles:

- Deputy Head of School (Learning & Teaching. L&T), School of Economics, Finance & Marketing, RMIT University (2017-2018)
- Chair, Behavioural Business Lab, RMIT University (2015-2017)
- Deputy Director of MSc Programmes, Nottingham University Business School, University of Nottingham (2011-2014)

Education

- PhD (Nottingham), 2009
- MBA (Nottingham), 2003
- B.Bus (UTS), 1998
- LLB (UTS), 1998

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Broadly three things: (1) research, (2) teaching and (3) administration. My area of expertise is behavioural and experimental economics. In terms of research, I collect and analyse data in this area to address topical issues and disseminate results mainly in the form of journal articles. Increasingly, I do consultancy work for NGOs and government agencies for which I produce reports. In terms of teaching, I develop and deliver courses, introduce university students to behavioural and experimental economics, and then further their applied knowledge and skills in this area. In terms of administration, as head of discipline, I am the line manager of the other economists in my discipline. This latter role takes up quite a bit of my time day-to-day.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I did not have a line management role. My previous roles were more strategic than operational. For example, when I was Deputy Head of School (L&T), I was more focused on devising initiatives that would develop and enhance L&T in the School, rather than on daily people management. I am glad to have this opportunity, though. It is important to be exposed to different things and to keep learning.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Apply economic thinking to everyday issues. Economic thinking provides a clear and structured lens through which to approach decisions in all aspects of life. It helps un-muddle things! Studying economics also gives maximum flexibility in terms of choice of profession. Economists don't just become "economists" :) - they become academics (like me!) analysts (credit, risk, financial, market, policy etc), consultants, reporters, managers (portfolio, product etc), statisticians, actuaries, corporate lawyers (with a double degree) and so on. Studying economics trains rigorous thinking, which all these professions value.

A memorable moment in my career was:

When I got the call from UTAS saying: "Congratulations! We are happy to offer you the position of Professor in Economics". There are still very (too!) few women economics professors in Australia. It's an honour to be among them.

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Lucille Danks

Manager

McKinsey and Company

Current role:

- Engagement manager – McKinsey and Company

Selected previous roles:

- Associate – McKinsey and Company
- Associate – Grattan Institute
- Research assistant and tutor – University of Queensland

Education

- Bachelor of Economics with Honours class I in econometrics, University of Queensland
- Diploma of Global Issues, University of Queensland

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Working with my team and global experts to help clients navigate major decisions and implement complex changes.

No two management consulting projects are the same – I've worked on designing advanced analytics solutions, developing capital investment strategies, setting up an innovation processes, de-bottlenecking operations, devising regulation strategies – you name it!

The thing that these projects have in common is the client's senior management team is looking for expert problem solving support. Our teams are mostly made up of 'generalists' with backgrounds in diverse disciplines. Economics is a great foundation as it encourages curiosity and rewards clear, structured thinking.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I was focused on research. Over my career so far, I've moved from academic research to applied research and now business strategy, where we draw on existing research to help businesses navigate major decisions, often in environments of high uncertainty.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Think clearly about complex problems!

A memorable moment in my career was:

Carrying a piece of economics research from innovation through to applied research and better decisions on the ground.

I completed my honours research on new approaches to measuring the safety of hospital care. It was an econometrics paper – lots of maths! – but I later had an opportunity at Grattan Institute to apply the new approach to data on Australian hospitals, where we found large variations in hospitals' safety and demonstrated that poor safety also hurts hospitals' bottom line.

This analysis has been very powerful in some of the work I've done supporting private and public hospitals at McKinsey, as it has underpinned business cases for investing in safer hospital care and provided clarity on how to make these improvements happen.

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Gabriela D'Souza

Senior Economist
Committee for Economic Development of Australia

Current role:

- Senior Economist, Committee for Economic Development of Australia
- Board Member, International Education Association of Australia
- Adjunct researcher, Monash University Econometrics and Business Statistics faculty

Selected previous roles:

- Data Science Consultant, Own business
  Consulted to ed-tech company on modelling student outcomes
- Associate, Grattan Institute
  Worked on superannuation reform and higher education policy
- Research Officer, NATSEM
  Tax and transfer modelling and measuring inequality

Education

- Masters of Economics, Monash University
- Bachelor of Applied Economics, University of Canberra

Day-to-day my current role includes:

- Data analysis,
- Making fun charts
- Drafting reports
- Engaging with media and journalists
- Presenting research at conferences.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I have a lot of autonomy in my role. And have the privilege of being able to contribute to the agenda and direction of research at my work place.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Make sense of the world. I firmly believe that studying Economics allows you to see the world in a way you ordinarily wouldn't, and it suits my thinking style.

Economics as a toolkit is extremely versatile too.

A memorable moment in my career was:

I've been very fortunate, so there are many, but getting my first publication was a big highlight and seeing my name on a paper. It was a really good feeling.

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Stephen Duckett

Director, Health Program
Grattan Institute

Current role:

- Director, Health Program, Grattan Institute

Selected previous roles:

- Academic: Professor of health policy at La Trobe University
- Bureaucratic: Senior roles in Commonwealth, Victorian, and Queensland health departments

Education

- BEc (ANU)
- PhD (UNSW)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Overseeing a very small team (2 staff) working on health policy issues: we identify key issues where changes are necessary, research ways of defining the problem, and what solutions might work.

We write reports proposing reform. We consult widely with stakeholders as part of developing the report and building support. We also liaise with journalists to help the public understand contemporary issues, and get our message out to the wider community.

At the moment we are developing reports on aged care reform and climate change, and before that we published reports on the health response to COVID-19.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I have had roles as a manager in the bureaucracy - in the thick of it - and in the health system. I have also worked as an academic, researching aspects of health policy.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Advocate for health system improvement combining a focus on efficiency, with a commitment to equity and quality.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Developing creative policy solutions to improve efficiency - introduction of activity based funding in Victoria was one highlight - and quality - changing the way we measured quality of hospital services in Queensland was another. I also address problems of equity - improving access for people to hospital outpatient services, and leading the expansion of community health services in Victoria.

I've had the opportunity of working with many wonderful people, in really fun environments, over my career. Economics is not a dry old subject but is something which can really help to improve public welfare.

Also during my career I have had times when I was in - quite influential - and times when I was out. During the latter times, I was sustained by a network of friends/colleagues. Build yours!

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Luci Ellis

Assistant Governor (Economic)
Reserve Bank of Australia

Current role:

I am responsible for the Reserve Bank of Australia's (RBA) Economic Analysis and Economic Research departments, and serve as the chief economic advisor to the Governor and the Board.

I am also the executive sponsor of the Bank's LGBTI+ allies employee resource group. I have been a member of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council since November 2015.

Selected previous roles:

- Head of Financial Stability Department, RBA
- Bank for International Settlements
- Deputy Head of Economic Analysis Department, RBA

Education

- University of New South Wales (PhD 2003)
- Australian National University (MEc 1995)
- University of Melbourne (BComm Hons 1990)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Much of my job – and the job of my colleagues – as an economist, is interpreting recent data and using that to forecast the future of the Australian economy and contribute to policy decisions. So, the team and I have the chance to make a positive difference to the lives of Australians. For example, in my current role as the chief economist advising the RBA Board, I make recommendations on how it should set Australia's monetary policy.

This is different to previous roles, where:

The emphasis of my role in financial stability was on risk. Rather than focusing on what is happening now and what is likely to happen next, financial stability is all about working out what could go wrong, and why. In my current role, I am responsible for briefing the Board and advising the Board and Governor on economic developments and monetary policy. We draw on our analysis and research, as well as insights from our liaison teams around the country and in Beijing.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Understand how individual human behaviour adds up to complex phenomena; leverage that understanding to help serve the public, by interpreting current developments and providing policy advice.

Two memorable moments in my career have been:

Our response as a central bank to two very different crises. As head of Financial Stability Department in the latter months of 2008, I worked on the response to the Global Financial Crisis. This year, as the Bank's chief economist, I have had the privilege of being deeply involved in the public policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Felicity Emmett

Senior Economist

ANZ Bank

Current role:

- Senior Economist, ANZ
- CEDA NSW/ACT Advisory Committee
- Australian Business Economists Committee

Selected previous roles:

- Senior Economist, Royal Bank of Scotland
- Senior Economist, ABN AMRO
- Economist, BZW Australia

Education

- Bachelor of Economics, Macquarie University

Day-to-day my current role includes:

In my role at ANZ I'm responsible for analysis and forecasting of key Australian macroeconomic indicators, as well as thematic research on the Australian economy.

I also publish specialist analysis on topical issues, including the policy outlook and housing for a range of internal and external clients and provide regular media commentary on these and other key economic issues.

This is different to previous roles, where:

My previous economist roles were with international banks where the focus was primarily on very large institutional clients. At a commercial bank like ANZ there is a much broader client base which includes corporates, from the very large to the very small. I find this more interesting – talking to corporates about their own businesses adds a different dimension to the macro data and adds to my understanding of the economy and how it is evolving.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Work in a research environment, but also be a part of a fast-paced financial markets team. In macro-economics, things are always changing and there's always something new to keep my interest.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Working through both the GFC and the COVID-19 crisis. While both crises were quite different, they were fast-evolving and there was a substantial amount of pressure to understand new developments (whether that be from the intrinsic issue or from the policy response) and work out what that meant for the economic outlook.

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Jo Evans

Deputy Secretary
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources

Current role:

- Deputy Secretary, Department of Industry Science Energy and Resources
- ARENA Board Member

Selected previous roles:

- Deputy Secretary, Department of Environment and Energy
- Deputy Secretary, Department of Agriculture

Education

- BA(Asian Studies) / B Ec Hons (ANU)
- Masters of Environmental Science (Melbourne)
- Masters of Public Policy (Princeton)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Policy and program development. Implementation of government decisions. Problem solving for best approaches to implementation and issues management. Leadership of the Department including participation in People, Finance and Strategy Committees and discussions.

My areas of responsibility cover climate change, development of Northern Australia, radioactive waste management, and remediation of uranium mining and nuclear test sites in Australia. I am also responsible for the National Measurement Institute, which is a specialised part of the department.

I am responsible for policy oversight of the Clean Energy Regulator, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, ARENA, the Climate Change Authority and the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility.

This is different to previous roles, where:

My current role has a broader policy span than my earlier concentration on climate change matters.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Economics has allowed me to bring a structured thinking approach to problem solving and to think through the systems effects of policy choices. It also gave me a capacity to work with analysis and numbers, which has complemented my ability to write clearly.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Being asked to take over the role of Chief Financial Officer in the Department of Agriculture. I had never considered taking on such a role but had the support of my peers and my Secretary to try something completely different. It gave me the opportunity to run a large Division with a range of service delivery and relatively commercial functions, and it drove home the lesson that sometimes your role is to lead, not to be the one with the technical knowledge.

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Gigi Foster

Professor

University of New South Wales

Current role:

- Professor with the School of Economics at the University of New South Wales

Selected previous roles:

- Lecturer and then Senior Lecturer at the University of South Australia
- Research Analyst at William M Mercer, a human resource consultancy, in New York City

Education

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Economics from University of Maryland College Park
- Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Ethics, Politics, and Economics from Yale University
- Diploma from Phillips Exeter Academy

Day-to-day my current role includes:

- Conducting research in diverse fields including education, social influence, corruption, lab experiments, time use, behavioural economics and Australian policy.
- Overseeing the education portfolio of the UNSW School of Economics, as the School's Director of Education.
- Developing, coordinating and teaching undergraduate and postgraduate economics courses.
- Supervising Honours and PhD students.
- Communicating about economics with the public – e.g., via panels, public talks, expert testimony, radio, TV, and print media, including (when in season) co-hosting *The Economists*, a national economics talk-radio program and podcast series with Peter Martin AM on ABC Radio National.

This is different to previous roles, where:

In previous roles, I would often take on less leadership in team-based research and administration tasks. I also now receive more opportunities to communicate about economics outside academia, and spend more time doing this. My current position also enables me to give back in more impactful ways, such as through academic review roles and via the Consortium for Inclusive Economics Education (www.ciee.unsw.edu.au).

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Build the mental toolbox required to think and teach about human behaviour in a way that is useful for the world, and consistent with the natural orientation of my heart, which is always on the lookout for how to get the best outcome for everyone in our world of scarcity.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Being told I would be receiving the Economic Society of Australia's 2019 Best Young Economist award, at the lunchtime break of the conference at whose dinner that night I would need to give an acceptance speech. I had no idea I was even in the running, and so I had nothing prepared! I was the first recipient to benefit from the ESA's new rule to allow those older than 40 to qualify as "young" if they had experienced career breaks for caring responsibilities – which in my case applied mainly to my care for my mother.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Catherine de Fontenay

Commissioner
Productivity Commission

Current role:

- Commissioner, Productivity Commission

Selected previous roles:

- Associate Professor, Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne (to 2019)
- Visiting Faculty, Stern School of Business, NYU (2006)
- Lecturer, UNSW, 1998 to 2001

Education

- PhD, Stanford University, 1998
- B.A., Economics and Arts, McGill University

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Providing feedback and guidance to the staff on the PC's inquiries and research projects.

Some input into modelling and empirical work.

Presentations to government, stakeholders and media.

This is different to previous roles, where:

My roles involved teaching (undergraduate and postgraduate).

My research was self-initiated, and more oriented towards theoretical work.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Have the tools to look at a set of facts, and put them together in a model.

Being able to think about patterns using existing models.

Understand the world better!

A memorable moment in my career was:

Being 'quicknapped' in El Salvador in 1993, when I spent a summer as an intern at USAID. El Salvador had recently signed a peace treaty between the government and various militia groups, and the resulting unemployment among militia members led to a rapid rise in crime. I found myself encouraging my kidnappers to consider the newly available retraining programs, as a safer career alternative! And I was inspired to do research on the economics of crime.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Renée Fry-McKibbin

Professor of Economics
Australian National University

Current role:

- Professor of Economics, ANU
- Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences

Selected previous roles:

- Associate Dean (Research) - *focus on research policy and facilitating excellence in research*
- Australian Research Council – Excellence in Research Australia Committee – *assess university submission on their research excellence*
- Director, Centre for Applied Macroeconomic Analysis
- Advisor – at various Treasuries and central banks.

Education

- Ph.D. Economics
- B.Ec.(hons)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Researching the transmission of international economic and financial market shocks across countries. Supervising PhD and Masters students in their research projects. Teaching. Contributing to public discussion on economics issues.

This is different to previous roles, where:

My previous roles were intensively administrative, especially when Associate Dean. I was a member of the Executive that advised the Dean, sat on the University research committee, ran my own research committee and was involved in developing research policy,

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Travel to conferences to meet other economists who are working on similar issues and to gain an understanding of the economies of other countries, which gives a better understanding of the Australian economy and our place in the world. The best ideas come through informal discussions with people from different backgrounds and perspectives.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Early in my career I felt nervous when presenting my work at conferences. During one large conference I was asked to make sure the keynote speaker was in the right place at the right time. I saw that this world famous speaker was incredibly nervous. I realised that being nervous is a good thing. It means that you care. Know your presentation and know you work inside out and the rest will fall into place.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Alex Heath

Head of International Department
Reserve Bank of Australia

Current role:

- Head of International Department, RBA
- Executive Sponsor of the Gender Equity Employee Reference Group (ERG), RBA
- Member of the APRA Climate Vulnerability Assessment Steering Committee

Selected previous roles:

Head of Economic Analysis Department (EA)
EA advises the Board on current and expected developments in the Australian economy.

Head of Economic Research Department (ER)
ER does longer-term policy-relevant analysis of the Australian economy and financial markets.

Education

- BEc (Hons), University of Sydney
- MSc (Economics), London School of Economics
- PhD, London School of Economics

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Monitoring developments in international financial markets to understand what they mean for international economic outlook and financial stability risks.

Understanding what we can learn from international experience about domestic policy decisions and the implementation of policy.

Following the debates and issues being discussed by international groups such as the G20.

This is different to previous roles, where:

The focus was on forecasting the domestic economy as an input into monetary policy decisions.

The key data were more likely to be monthly or quarterly, so the challenge of working out what was important and in what way was different.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

- contribute to important public policy issues
- do a job where I learn something new every day
- work on a wide range of issues from labour market policy to macroeconomic modelling to the structure of the foreign exchange market
- live overseas (while on secondment to the Bank for International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland) and work with international colleagues.

A memorable moment in my career was:

When I had the privilege of experiencing the GFC from the front-line, initially at the BIS and then at the RBA, and being a part of the policy response.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Nicki Hutley

Economist

Deloitte Access Economics

Current role:

- Partner, Deloitte Access Economics
- Councillor, Climate Council
- Council member, Economics Society of Australia (NSW)
- Board member, 1 Million Women

Selected previous roles:

- Director and Chief Economist at Urbis, leading urban economics and public policy work
- Investment analyst, Access Capital Advisers, advising on superannuation fund investments
- Financial markets economist at Rothschild Asset Management, Deutschebank, Lloyds Bank, Bankers Trust

Education

- BA Hons (Economics)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Leading economic research and analysis on a wide range of policy topics.

Developing thought leadership on issues of interest to me (social justice and climate change are front and centre).

Acting as a spokesperson for Deloitte Access Economics in the media and at client events and conferences, especially on macro-economic issues.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I was much more focussed on macro-economic forecasting and analysis in the past – but I have never lost this love.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Play a meaningful role in developing public policy.

Work across a range of really interesting and stimulating issues.

Continue to learn and develop every day.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Having a meeting with Prof. Joseph Stiglitz to discuss our research into modern slavery and listening to his wisdom.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Jo Masters

Chief Economist Oceania

EY

Current role:

- Chief Economist Oceania, EY
- Member of the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) 2021 Council on Economic Policy
- Executive Member of the Australian Business Economists
- Advisory Board Member for the Financy Women's Index

Selected previous roles:

- Senior Economist, ANZ
- Currency Strategist and Sales, Macquarie Bank
- Senior Economist, Macquarie Bank
- Summer Intern, GT Funds Management

Education

- Masters of Economics, The University of Sydney
- Bachelor of Commerce (Economics), The University of Auckland

Day-to-day my current role includes:

As the Chief Economist Oceania at EY, my role is to bring the economy into business conversations for EY's people and our clients. Some of my day-to-day activities include media interviews, client presentations, panel discussions and internal presentations to EY people. I keep a close eye with what is happening in the world, from ABS data releases to rate cut decisions and major government announcements, to ensure I'm always up-to-date with what is impacting the economy.

This is different to previous roles, where:

My current role is very different to previous in two key ways. Firstly as a Chief Economist for EY, I'm driving conversations on behalf of the firm and taking responsibility for our economic views. I'm also much more involved in the national economic debate and have opportunities to influence policy settings. Secondly, this role is the first time I have worked outside of banking, which means my focus is much broader in terms of clients and looking at structural shifts in the economy.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Understand and drive national-level discussions on the forces that shape the economy. It's also given me a platform to encourage female financial literacy and inspire more young Australians into the fascinating world of economics.

A memorable moment in my career was:

It would have to be 2020 – what a year to be an economist! When the pandemic began to hit Australia hard in late March/early April, the economy was shifting so rapidly as policy announcements were rolled out in response to the health crisis. While these were immensely challenging times, I'm proud to have been able to contribute to policy decisions, provide insights to EY's clients, and have had the opportunity to use the media as a platform to speak to all Australians.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Dr Kar Mei Tang

Chief Circular Economist

NSW Circular

Current role:

- Chief Circular Economist, NSW Circular
- NSW Women in Economics Network Secretary
- Sydney Children's Hospitals Network Human Research Ethics Committee member

Selected previous roles:

- Executive Director, Circular Economy, NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment
- Director, Economy Policy, NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet
- Head of Policy and Research, Australian Private Equity & Venture Capital Association (now Australian Investment Council)

Education

- PhD Economics (Uni Syd)
- M Applied Statistics (ANU)
- B Commerce (Hons) (Uni Melb)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Providing economic advice and thought leadership on transitioning NSW towards a circular economy. This could involve reviewing business cases and research reports, analysing economic and environmental data, speaking at conferences, and meeting with the team and stakeholders.

This is different to previous roles, where:

This is an exciting area to be in at the moment with Australia now beginning to pivot in its approach to climate change and environmental policy.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Apply these skills for public good! Having an economics background has been useful if not critical from my experience, working in different areas ranging from policy advocacy to the public sector and now the circular economy.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Being in Manila for an intergovernmental meeting in the early 2000s when a military coup was underway! We were quarantined at the hotel for the duration of our trip for obvious security reasons.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Lucy Moon

Head of Regulation

Energy Networks Australia

Current role:

- Head of Regulation – Energy Networks Australia (ENA)

Selected previous roles:

- Senior Manager Network Regulation & Pricing – Power and Water Corporation: *Reporting direct to the EGM, I led the regulation and pricing teams for Power and Water Corporation's regulated electricity networks.*

Education

- Masters of Economics – University of Sydney
- Bachelor of Economics – Australian National University

Day-to-day my current role includes:

In my role at ENA I develop, negotiate and communicate economic regulatory policy positions throughout the ENA membership and with key external stakeholders including regulatory bodies and consumer groups to support innovative, efficient network services for Australian communities. For example, this can include policy that better facilitates the efficient integration of solar.

This is different to previous roles, where:

My role at ENA involves significant amounts of industry engagement, and I am focused on policy issues on a national scale.

Whereas my prior roles had more of an organisational focus where I was responsible for delivering the company's regulatory requirements and providing advice to the Executive and Board on regulatory strategy and compliance.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

I decided to study economics at university as I had a great high school economics teacher that made it interesting, however I didn't initially have a clear idea of how I wanted to translate that into a career. I started in electricity network regulation working for the now-CEO of Power and Water Corporation who was a significant mentor to me.

I have been afforded lots of interesting opportunities stemming not only from my work ethic but also due to my choice to begin my career in a regional area (the Northern Territory). I would strongly encourage graduates to consider opportunities outside of the major cities as a way to gain not only diverse experiences but also invaluable exposure to senior executives.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Working within a great team at Power and Water Corporation that delivered the company's first regulatory proposal to the Australian Energy Regulator under the National Electricity Rules.

It was interesting and very challenging – and involved lots of juggling between the demands of a young family and the tight deadlines that you are continually up against through the regulatory process.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Mala Raghavan

Academic

University of Tasmania

Current role

- Senior Lecturer in Macroeconomics
- Head of Discipline (Economics & Finance)
- Board Member of the Australasian Macroeconomic Society
- Committee Member, ESA Tasmania
- Research Associate of CAMA
- The Conversation, Forecasting Panel of Economists; Jane Franklin College (Academic Fellow)

Selected previous roles

- National Committee Member and Tasmanian Representative of Women in Economics Network (WEN) Australia (2017 to 2020).
- Scientific Committee Member, AGEW (2018 to 2020).
- Committee Member of University of Tasmania's Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team (2017 to 2019)
- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM), Visiting Research Fellow (2015 to 2017).

Education

- Ph.D. in Econometrics, Monash University
- M App Econometrics, Monash University
- M Economics, University of Malaya

Day-to-day my current role includes:

My role involves teaching, research, administrative responsibilities and community engagements. Economics is an evolving and exciting area of study, and I can employ plenty of current and relevant events such as COVID pandemic, financial crisis, oil price shocks, policy responses, etc in my teaching and research.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I have more than 25 years in academia, at various universities across Australia and Southeast Asia. In the earlier days, my job description was more teaching focussed. Currently, I am more involved in research work, focussing on macroeconomic policies and international economics. Bringing this research experience into the classroom has allowed my students to understand how economic theory and data can be combined to explain the effects of events in the real world.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Work with central bankers on macroeconomic policy-related topics and to engage with the World Bank, Treasury and the Department of State Growth on international trade issues. Through research, I crossed paths with many economists who are working on various themes such as climate change, gender, resources and social issues, emphasising the role of economic knowledge in decision making across multi-disciplines.

A memorable moment in my career was:

When my expertise in modelling monetary policy for small emerging open economies was recognised by BNM and I was invited to be the central bank's first Visiting Research Fellow (VRF) under the bank's VRF Scholar Programme in 2015. This engagement has opened the opportunity to expand my network with the Southeast Asian Central Banks, European Central Bank and the World Bank.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Leonora Risse

Lecturer in Economics
RMIT University

Current role:

- Lecturer in Economics, RMIT University
- Research Fellow, Women and Public Policy Program, Harvard University
- National Chair, Women in Economics Network

Selected previous roles:

- Senior Research Economist, Productivity Commission, Australian Government, *involved conducting analysis and consulting with stakeholders to present policy recommendations to Australian Government across a range of economic issues*

Education

- PhD Economics (UQ)
- B Economics (Hons I) (UQ)
- B Arts (Journalism and English) (UQ)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

As a lecturer, my role involves: teaching students; administrating courses; conducting research; participating in conferences and seminars where we exchange our latest research with the wider research community; and engaging with the wider public and media as a vehicle for our research to have real world impact.

WEN Women in Economics Network

This is different to previous roles, where:

Working in academia provides a greater degree of individual autonomy to choose the research topics that you focus on and the opportunity to participate more freely in public discussion. However, working for government means you are a lot closer to the policy action and can have more input towards the policymaking process.

Both sectors – academia and public sector – are greatly rewarding. The skills, knowledge, connections that you gain in one sector will be valuable across all sectors.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Understand what causes fundamental problems in society, such as inequalities, and to be part of the community of researchers and policymakers who are contributing towards solutions. This sounds clichéd, but economics truly does equip you with tools to help to make the world a better, and fairer, place.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Visiting outback schools, as part of my work on the Schools Workforce Inquiry at the Productivity Commission – it was moving and inspiring to the see first-hand the challenges these teachers experience and their dedication to their students.

And the opportunity to spend time as a Research Fellow at Harvard University was amazing!

Dr Kamaljit K Sangha

Senior Ecological Economist

Charles Darwin University

Current role:

- Senior Ecological Economist, CDU, Darwin, NT

Selected professional roles:

- Executive Committee member, Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP)- International
- Chair, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities – Sectoral Working Group under ESP.

Previous roles:

- Ecological Economist, CDU, Darwin, NT
- Natural Resource Economist, James Cook University, Qld
- Lecturer, James Cook University, Qld

Education

- PhD, Central Queensland University, Qld
- M.Sc. (Hons.), Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Research on:

- Linking ecosystems and their services to the well-being of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs)
- Developing support mechanisms (Payments for Ecosystem Services) for IPLCs
- Sustainable management of natural resources
- Integrating science with policy decision making

This is different to previous roles, where:

My research is in a trans-disciplinary field of Ecological Economics. I focus on integrating natural resources and their ecosystem services with human well-being, and influencing policy decision making through assessing the value of ecosystem services, estimating cost savings for the government, etc. My particular interest is to understand and highlight the importance of Indigenous and local communities land management practices that benefits the wider public.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

- Develop a holistic perspective of human well-being;
- Understand what development is about;
- Understand the importance of sustainable use and management of natural resources for human survival on this planet.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Several moments, working with, and learning from local and Indigenous communities in Australia, and India. Being part of the environment movement, and for protecting rights of IPLCs through my research and policy analyses.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Zara Shroff

Senior Policy Officer

Australian Space Agency

Current role:

- Senior Policy Officer, Australian Space Agency

Selected previous roles:

- Open Data Program Manager, Department of Premier and Cabinet South Australia
- Senior Economic Policy Officer, Office of the Economic Development Board
- Graduate Economist, Department of State Development
- Tutor, University of Adelaide

Education

- B. Econ (Hons)
- B. Comm (Corporate Finance major)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

The Australian Space Agency's mission is to grow and transform the Australian space sector, and inspire and improve the lives of Australians. I work in the Strategy and Policy team, which contributes to the development of civil space policy matters and implementation of the Australian civil space strategy. In a given day I might:

- Track and analyse the space sector's performance, including investments, to help measure the sector's progress against our goals.
- Work with all levels of government to promote space policy.
- Develop New Policy Proposals.
- Meet with external stakeholders (including industry) to understand the key issues they face on the ground and how we can help.
- Develop industry grant guidelines.
- Prepare briefs and/or talking points for our leadership team or the Minister.

This is different to previous roles, where:

This is the first time I've worked in an area that's solely dedicated to the growth and transformation of a single industry.
It's given me the opportunity to specialise in an area of growing importance for Australia and the world.

The work is also incredibly versatile. It allows me to use and develop my primary skills, and pick up new ones.

This is also my first experience working in the Australian Government, which has given me the opportunity to make important connections across the country.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Learn the skills required for developing evidence-based policy advice. At its core, studying economic theory provides the tools to help make better decisions. Studying economics helped develop my critical thinking, writing, numerical and analytical skills – a key skillset for policy makers.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Making regional trips around South Australia, with the Economic Development Board, to meet with leaders on the ground, understand key challenges and opportunities for industries, and formulating policy advice to boost economic development.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Helen Silver AO

Chief General Manager, Corporate Governance & Conduct
Allianz Australia

Current role:

- Chief General Manager, Corporate Governance & Conduct, Allianz Australia
- Trustee – Arts Centre Melbourne
- Member - Judicial Commission of Victoria
- Director – Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Selected previous roles:

- Chief General Manager Statutory Classes, Allianz Australia.
- Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet Victoria.
- Group Regional Manager, Government Business, National Australia Bank.
- Deputy Secretary, Policy and Cabinet Group, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria.

Education

- Bachelor of Economics (Hons)
- Master of Economics

Day-to-day my current role includes:

- Leading Staff
- Working with Senior Leaders in Australia and overseas
- Attending and Presenting to Board
- Making decisions and leading significant transformational programs.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Pursue an interesting career in roles that have a rich set of issues and problems to oversight and hopefully, resolve. As well it has provided me opportunities to lead at the most senior level in both the public and the private sectors.

A memorable moment in my career was:

The opportunity to be Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet Victoria
This allowed me to participate at the highest level of Government and to play a key role in major commonwealth and state reform initiatives, as well as, leading the administration and development of the Victorian Public sector.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Leith Thompson

Economics Master,
Sydney Grammar School

Current role:

- Economics Master, Sydney Grammar School
- Co-founder of the Consortium for Inclusive Economic Education at UNSW
- Women in Economics Network National and Women in Economics Network Sydney Committee Member

Selected previous roles:

- IBM Australia, Marketing Representative

Education

- Bachelor Economics, University of Sydney
- Post Graduate Diploma Education (Secondary), University of Sydney

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Teaching Preliminary Economics and HSC Economics to High School students.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I used my understanding of Economics to achieve business goals. Now I use my understanding of Economics to convey Economic concepts as simply as possible. To share the breadth and depth of Economic applications to young people. To give them the understanding of current Economic events and tools used in Economics to enable them to succeed in both examinations and life!

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Understand the world better and help young people achieve their goals.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Travelling to the USA and UK visiting academics and educators in an effort to better understand how we can improve inclusion in the field of Economics.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Rachel Ong ViforJ

Economics Professor & ARC Future Fellow
Curtin University

Current role:

- Professor of Economics, Curtin University
- ARC Future Fellow, Curtin University
- Member of CEDA Council on Economic Policy
- Member of the Economic Society of Australia's National Economic Panel

Selected previous roles:

- Associate Professor in Economics, Curtin University
- Editor-in-chief, *Economic Papers*

Education

- PhD in Economics
- Bachelor of Economics with 1st Class Honours

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Evaluating policies, finding and communicating solutions to economic and social problems, generating new ideas,

This is different to previous roles, where:

Previous roles included communicating economic principles to students while my current role is more focussed on communication to policy stakeholders.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Gain insights into household and individual behaviours with respect to everyday decisions, apply useful tools to solve real-world problems in society

A memorable moment in my career was:

When I became the first West Australian and first female economist to be awarded the Economic Society's Young Economist Award in 2018.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Linda Ward

Division Head, Fiscal Policy Analysis
Parliamentary Budget Office

Current role:

- Division Head, Fiscal Policy Analysis, PBO
- Chair, WEN committee (ACT)

Selected previous roles:

- Acting Parliamentary Budget Officer
- Senior Executive, Treasury
- Senior macroeconomist, BHP Billiton

Education

- Bachelor of Economics (Honours)
- Master of Public Policy

Day-to-day my current role includes:

I lead a division that undertakes and publishes analysis of the budget and fiscal policy with the aim of improving transparency and public understanding of the budget. Unlike many government agencies, we operate independently and serve all parliamentarians equally.

Key elements of my role are guiding complex analytical work and communicating technical economic and budget concepts to a non-technical audience.

This is different to previous roles, where:

Prior to joining the PBO, I had spent most of my career working in the public service. Much of that workload, as you would expect, was driven by the government. In my current role, I work to support all parliamentarians and the general public . This has changed the nature of my day-to-day work from policy advice to more analysis and engagement.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

I've had an incredibly interesting career in public policy. There are so many different roles within government for economists. I've had the opportunity to do a lot of challenging and important work across a wide spectrum of policy areas, including the introduction of the GST, industry policy, commonwealth state-relations and international engagement.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Attending the annual IMF and World Bank meetings when I was the senior executive responsible for international financial matters at Treasury. It was very exciting to be in the room with finance ministers from around the world and some amazing economists.

Another highlight was having the chance to work as a macroeconomist in BHP Billiton's Singapore office.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Jenny Wilkinson

Deputy Secretary, Fiscal Group
Treasury

Current role:

- Deputy Secretary, Fiscal Group, Treasury
- Melbourne Institute Advisory Board
- Grattan Institute Public Policy Committee

Selected previous roles:

- Parliamentary Budget Officer
- Division Head Treasury – Superannuation, Small Business Policy.
- Division Head Climate Change – Emissions Trading
- Deputy Department Head RBA – Economic Group

Education

- Bachelor of Economics with Honours
- Masters in Public affairs, Economics and Public Policy

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Leading Fiscal Group to provide policy advice to the Government on budget strategy, the fiscal implications (and merits) of policy proposals, population projections and commonwealth state financial relations. We are also responsible for key labour market programs such as JobKeeper and the JobMaker Hiring Credit. In providing policy advice, we try to carefully define the problem that needs addressing and the range of potential policy responses, drawing upon available evidence. We take a whole of economy perspective and work collaboratively with stakeholders within and outside Government in the development of this advice.

This is different to previous roles, where:

- I ran an independent fiscal authority (the PBO) and influenced policy through our publications program
- I was responsible for the implementation of priority reforms for government (superannuation reforms and climate change reforms) including the associated legislative reforms
- I analysed and provided advice on macroeconomic conditions and forecasts (RBA and Treasury, Macroeconomic Group)

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Have an influence over a wide range of important public policy issues and pursue a career that has been varied, challenging and rewarding.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Returning to work after 5 years off (looking after young children) and realising that: I got a huge amount of satisfaction from working; that my economics training would provide me with opportunities far wider than I had previously expected (in this case to shift from macroeconomics to climate change policy); and that working with Ministers, while challenging at times, was also highly rewarding.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Christine Ann Williams

Director & Chief Data Scientist
Evalue8 Sustainability Pty Ltd

Current role:

- Chief Data Scientist of Evalue8 Sustainability Pty Ltd
- Director of Evalue8 Sustainability Pty Ltd
- Director, St John Ambulance Australia Ltd
    - Finance, Audit and Risk Committee
    - Governance Committee

Selected previous roles:

Australian Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources

- General Manager, Startup Data Project
- General Manager, Innovation Metrics Review

Australian Bureau of Statistics

- Program Manager, Governance and Parliamentary Liaison Branch
- Various statistical program manager roles

Other government roles

- Manager, Performance Management and Modelling Branch, Department of Social Services
- Manager, Economic and Policy Research Branch, Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment

Former director of various for-purpose organisations

Education

- Honours degree in Economics
- Master of Business Administration
- Advanced Diploma of Financial Services (Financial Planning)
- Advanced Diploma of Governance, Risk and Compliance
- Australian and International Company Directors courses

Day-to-day my current role includes:

Working out how to make Evalue8 Sustainability's software help save its customers more energy and money while reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I provided information, reports or policy advice to elected Government members or to senior executives of their departments. Sometimes I designed the data collection systems or data integration processes to enable the information required to be generated.

Studying economics has allowed me: to work in:

- the financial markets in the private sector
- academia
- the government sector, in both central and line agencies and a statutory authority.

A memorable moment in my career was:

establishing the ABS Centre for Data Integration.

WEN Women in Economics Network

Danielle Wood

CEO

Grattan Institute

Current role:

- CEO, Grattan Institute
- President, Economic Society of Australia

Selected previous roles:

- Program Director in Budget Policy and Institutional Reform, Grattan Institute, researching *tax, budgets, intergenerational inequality and government integrity.*
- Principal Economist, ACCC, *providing economic advice on the impact of business behaviour on competition, e.g. cartels and firms misusing their market power.*
- Senior Consultant, NERA Economic Consulting, *advising businesses on dealing with regulators and assisting with litigation*
- Senior Research Economist at the Productivity Commission, *working on a range of policy questions, from road user pricing, to the impact of medical technology on health spending.*

Education

- Masters of Competition Law
- Masters of Commerce (Economics)
- Bachelor of Economics (Hons)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

A mix of research – working out what policies make sense – and then advocating for those policies to politicians, bureaucrats as well as trying to convince the public via the media.

Since becoming CEO at the Grattan Institute, I spend more time managing the organisation and its people. I also need to be across a huge range of policy issues – everything from climate change to education policy.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I got to delve more into the detail of policy problems. It's a common experience as you move up in your career that you sacrifice some of the more technical work for more time thinking about the big picture. Sometimes I miss those spreadsheets!

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Spend my days thinking about challenging questions that matter for people's lives.

If you want to understand the world and make it better, then economics is a great foundation to do that. It's a perfect career for people who have both a creative and an analytical side - the best economists bring an element of both.

A memorable moment in my career was:

My first time inside the budget lockup. I had been watching the budget speech and the commentary afterwards since I was 16. I didn't realise the journalists (and some economists) get locked in Parliament House with the budget papers for five hours before its made public. It's like a giant exam in there - with everyone rushing to get across the details of 100s of pages of budget papers. It was an absolute thrill to be part of it and to be one of those people talking about the budget on tv and radio that my 16-year-old self used to listen to!

WEN Women in Economics Network

Katherine Wynn

Lead Economist

CSIRO Futures

Current role:

- Lead Economist, CSIRO Futures

Selected previous roles:

- Associate Director, Deloitte Access Economics
- PhD student and economics tutor, University of Melbourne
- Analyst/Senior Analyst/Manager, Deloitte Access Economics

Education

- PhD in Economics, specialising in valuing agricultural technology investments
- Bachelor of Economics
- Bachelor of Laws
- Graduate Diploma of Language (French)

Day-to-day my current role includes:

CSIRO Futures is the strategic advisory arm of Australia's national science agency. We bring together science, technology and economics to help external clients enter new industries and prioritise their investments.

As the team's lead economist, I:

- Lead the development of tools and methodologies to estimate the economic impact of emerging technologies and the market size of technology-based industries
- Manage the delivery of projects which generally involve a mix of desktop research, stakeholder consultations, economic analysis, report writing and public launches
- Lead the monthly CSIRO Economic Outlook publication
- Build relationships with CSIRO and external stakeholders to identify new projects
- Mentor and manage more junior staff.

This is different to previous roles, where:

I worked in the private sector. The CSIRO is a government agency and a research organisation that commercialises its own technologies with industry. This gives CSIRO a unique position at the intersection between research and industry but it also means we can't publicly comment on policy. There are advantages and disadvantages of this, but I love being able to influence investment in science and technology through my work.

Studying economics has allowed me to:

Have the theory and practical tools so I can provide advice to clients to address their strategic and technical problems in new ways. My PhD gave me the depth of experience and confidence to develop new methodologies and estimate the potential value of new and emerging technologies.

A memorable moment in my career was:

Working on the recent CSIRO COVID-19: Recovery and Resilience report. This project was CSIRO's first public report on its response to COVID-19 and involved consultation with senior business, research and government leaders. After our public launch event, I was approached by two separate people who both said to me how inspired they felt to hear of the many technology-led opportunities for Australia's economic recovery.

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