

Women have made significant contributions to science throughout history. Nobel Prize winner Marie Curie; actress and inventor Hedy Lamarr; fossil hunter Mary Anning; and countless other extraordinary women have made important discoveries that have shaped our world. The incredible stories of these women are powerful, inspiring, staggeringly challenging and all around us.

By sharing these stories we present visible role models who can inspire, encourage and motivate the next generation of young women to follow their dreams and pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

Her Story: Inspiring Women in STEM celebrates amazing women who are blazing their own trails and encouraging others to do the same. Their stories are honest and inspiring, and show that by following your passion, you can achieve anything.

Emily Hack

11 February 2020 – 10 May 2020

Professor Caroline McMillen

14 May 2020 – 16 August 2020

Pamela Melroy

20 August 2020 – 15 November 2020

Dr Rachael King

19 November 2020 – 7 February 2021

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Her Story

Emily Hack

“If I’m helping someone then maybe they’ll be inspired to help someone else”



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Emily Hack

Emily Hack is a recent graduate with a degree in Civil Structural Engineering and a Bachelor of Science, double majoring in Chemistry from the University of Adelaide. While completing her degree she undertook work experience with SA Water and was offered a part-time role as an Asset Management Support Officer.

On completion of her studies she was accepted into their Graduate Program supporting the Water Asset Management Team who are responsible for tasks related to potable water distribution, for example water pipes and water treatment plants. The team deals with anything involved in getting drinking water from the water source to the tap, including leakage analysis and developing replacement programs for defective assets.

From learning abstract concepts to solve real world problems

In Emily's senior years of high school there was a particularly large cohort of girls choosing maths and sciences, which created a valuable and supportive study environment for the group. While Emily didn't have a clear idea of her planned study pathway after school, she did have many friends considering Medicine or Engineering. She applied for Engineering and discovered it was something she really loved.

“When you're studying it's very abstract. Throughout high school and university it's giving you all of the skills that you need to then apply to solve real world problems. While you're studying you wonder if you're ever going to use a quadratic equation or any matrices. Now by working in industry I can see that it's because I learned maths in high school and then learnt all of these new things from uni, that I can now apply it to solve real world challenges and make an impact.”

Finding support

University studies for Emily started well but by second and third year she had major doubts. Civil Engineering group work led to her not being offered opportunities to show her potential and she was concerned that work life after university might be similar. Emily sought advice from female academics who assured her that this was not the norm in industry and encouraged her to persevere. At this time Emily also applied to participate in the university's Women in STEM Careers Program, which aims to equip female STEM students with the confidence and tools to pursue a long-term career in STEM. The program offered a range of personal and professional development workshops that provided an environment for Emily to thrive and realise her potential leading to her first work experience opportunity in SA Water. "It was all knowledge that I knew deep down I had, but I didn't really know how to articulate it."

Active in the community

Outside of work and study Emily has been very involved in the Girl Guide community, being a leader since she was 10. Emily is passionate about helping other people see their potential. As Emily worked toward completing her degree she found it increasingly rewarding to seek volunteering and community-focused activities. "I'm doing this for my future and so I've needed to supplement that with lots of other things within the community to feel like I'm still making an impact wider than myself during this time."

Advice for young women

"Find a supportive tribe of women in STEM; it helped me find my place in a STEM career, that led to new opportunities to use my skills and make a positive impact in the world."

