



ALAN THOMPSON

Year 12—2001

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Where Are They Now?

Dedication, commitment and resilience are words that come to mind if you know Alan Thompson. A modest and highly personable character, Alan is a proud graduate of Wee Waa High School, in fact he graduated as Captain of the school.

Tell us about your time at Wee Waa High School?

Alan laughed when asked about his six years at Wee Waa High School.

"I wasn't always a model student. In Year 7, I spent a lot of time in Mr Brown's office, he was the Deputy Principal then, but by the end of that year I grew out of being so 'mischievous' and decided I better smarten up.

This is when I realised Mrs Booby wasn't my enemy at all, but actually one of my greatest supporters. She had a big impact on me. She had my back and really encouraged me. I had a lot to do with her over the years as my Art Teacher, when she was the Librarian and then through the SRC."

What were your favourite subjects?

"Wood work, geography and science. I've always loved working with my hands and problem solving."

Best memories of Wee Waa High?

"The culture and the great teachers."

While at high school, what career direction did you think you would head in?

"I was really interested in mechatronics or joining the Police force. With the Police force option I think the appeal was because of the responsibility and the standing Police have in the community. With mechatronics, I didn't get the grades I'd hoped for so I headed in the direction of Bio Medical Science and loved it."

Can you tell us about your first four years after finishing high school?

"I took a gap year and did seasonal work with Namoi Cotton and did some farm work. Then I went to the University of New England (UNE) in Armidale and studied Bio Medical Science. I studied there for four years but then I felt I needed to take a break and I came back to Wee Waa. For me, taking a break was the right move. I started working for the Australian Cotton Research Institute (ACRI) at Myall Vale and I'm still here.

I'm getting close to finishing my degree and have just two subjects to complete. I've had a few hurdles and challenges along the way, but I wasn't going to let that beat me. Just like at school, when Chemistry wasn't available locally, with the school's help I organised to study it externally. You can always find a solution."





What Are You Doing Now?

“I’m still at ACRI and loving it. I’m working on an abiotics stress program. Basically we work to find more heat tolerant and less water depended varieties of cotton. We run trials on many different varieties of cotton in different environments and we record how each performs. We use amazing technologies to monitor water use and photosynthesis, growth etc.”

What do you love about what you do?

“I love everything we do. My boss makes it easy to do my job and it's because of him that I've stayed this long. He is a great teacher and we have a good rapport. He trusts me to get the job done and to do it well. One mistake can set us back two years, so you’ve got to be thorough and committed. It takes time to build trust and it comes from demonstrating over time, dedication, commitment and that you care about what you do.

I've been given the chance to work in many different areas of the organisation including entomology and in our award winning plant breeding team, which is where I am today. In my role I'm always going through some sort of training on technology and new programs through to work health and safety and getting ticketed to be able to operate a forklift, drive a truck and load it correctly.”

What do you think is the secret to success in life and work?

“It's about dedication and commitment, diligence and thoroughness. It’s also embracing who you are and working in an environment that allows you to be the best that you can be, and where you love what you do.”

Do You Have A Life Motto?

“If it's gonna be it's up to me!”

Article written in 2016

