



NICK WATTS

Year 12—1995

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Forging a career in world first cutting edge research and technology

Dynamic and energetic have to be two key words needed to describe 1995 graduate, Nick Watts. With hard work and determination, Nick demonstrates that location is no barrier to creating and delivering high impact research and technology to the world from right here in Wee Waa.

We recently enjoyed catching up with Nick and talking about his years at Wee Waa High School and his career to date.

What were your favourite subjects?

“Ancient History, biology and chemistry.”

Can you share with us your best memories of being a student at WWHS?

“My close knit group of friends and school mates. I am still best of friends with a number of people I went through school with. Another aspect I loved was that kids from all different age groups were friends. Some of the great teachers I had. I still respect and appreciate their mentorship.”

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

“I had my heart set on being a zoo-keeper or animal behaviourist.”

Can you tell us about your career path after finishing high school?

“I went straight on to university and studied a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Zoology and Biodiversity at Macquarie University. I also completed a Geographic Information Systems major (GIS).

Since completing my degree I have focused on bringing new technology to the agricultural industry, something I became passionate about while studying my degree.”

Did you have any hurdles early on in your working life that you had to navigate?

“Actually, yes. I really had my heart set on being a zoo-keeper at Taronga zoo, I did work experience there and volunteered during my Uni years. Despite excellent feedback and relationships at the zoo, I realised very early that it was a role I was unlikely to secure fulltime or be able to earn enough money to survive or raise a family on.

Zoo Keeper positions attract applications from people all over the world, particularly people with a Veterinary degree. Taronga Zoo is so highly regarded that keepers with years of experience apply for positions there as well. Also the roles don't come up that often because once you have a job there, very few people ever leave. So I had to make the call not long after finishing Uni that, in the short term at least I would have to set aside my dream and pursue something more pragmatic.” I have never regretted that decision. By pursuing the job I did I earned good money straight out of Uni and I was able to travel extensively around the world. I met my wife and mother of my kids in London, so despite the initial disappointment it has been a great result





What are you doing now?

"I am the Project Director for Innovate Ag and the Sales Manager for Growth Agriculture.

Growth Agriculture is a regionally based, family owned business that has in excess of 20 years' experience in providing sustainable and environmentally acceptable products to the agricultural industry in Australia. We are importers, wholesalers and manufacturers of a unique range of products that are heavily focused on foliar nutrition and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in crop production."

Can you tell us about the journey to get to your current position?

"My path to my current role was wide and varied. From 2003 to 2006 I worked as the Head of Business Development and Client Services at Target 250 in the UK.

I held a key role in the development of a new Information Technology and Security company which grew from 4 to 110 employees while I was there. The experience of managing a rapidly expanding company has left me well placed to direct the expansion anticipated with Innovate Ag over the coming years."

What is the key purpose of your current role?

"As Project Director I have worked on the biological pesticide Sero-X project since its inception in 2007 and am leading the commercialisation process we are undertaking."

What do you love about what you do?

"Being involved in world first cutting edge research is fascinating, challenging and very rewarding. We have technology that is set to revolutionise pest management in all food and fibre crops around the world. We will be helping communities and countries secure their food supply and at the same time dramatically reducing the environmental impacts that chemicals can have.

One particularly rewarding aspect is the knowledge that our technology will eliminate the harmful effect chemicals can have on honey-bee (and other pollinators) populations. Bee colonies around the world are under extreme risk at the moment with populations being reduced dramatically. Without bees our food security is very precarious but we can help reduce that risk."

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

"BALANCE! When working on something so exciting it is very easy to get caught up in it all and not focus enough time and energy on a good work/life balance.

Setting weekends and after work hours aside to be with your family in a way that you are not distracted by the pressures of work is critical to success and happiness.

Do you have a motto you live by? eg: 'the World is run by those who turn up.'

"My son's current motto is "Gotta catch 'em all". He's obsessed with Pokemon! I hope I don't live by that motto but ambition is a good thing!!"

Article written in 2016

