



Women of Bio21: Diana Stojanovski, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Lab Head - Mitochondrial Biology

What did you want to be growing up? I was fascinated by human behaviour and wanted to be a behavioural psychologist. But, my high school career counsellor highlighted that I would need to do a PhD. The thought of 8 years at University shook me to my core. I ultimately pursued a degree in Cell Biology, which ironically led me to a PhD in Biochemistry. I often think this was fate, because that's how I met two of my great loves, mitochondria and my husband Michael.

A key challenge you've faced? Having my children while establishing my independent laboratory. Although I am a very resilient and motivated person, at times this particular challenge seemed like a beast too big to tame. But, I never stopped believing in myself and my children are my biggest motivator. What I have learned through this experience is that hard work alone is not enough. The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology provided me with outstanding mentorship and support, nurturing me through this challenging phase of my career. Knowing that the senior staff "had my back" so to speak pushed me to work hard while maintaining realistic goals. I will forever be indebted to the Department for the support it showed me at this time.

What achievement are you most proud of? I am a first generation Australian of Macedonian heritage and was the first in my family to graduate from University. Graduating with a PhD in Biochemistry is one of my proudest achievements because my parents sacrificed so much to establish a new life in Australia for this very reason,

to provide their children with unlimited opportunities. I never take my education for granted and the life it has given me. **What do you hope for women in STEM?** It is thrilling to see women in science and gender equality as such a prominent conversation currently. My hope is that this conversation morphs into action and policy development, aimed at transforming not only woman's careers, but our industry. This will happen through visionary and confident leadership and I am excited to see what the future holds.

Who inspires you most? My parents! Like most immigrants who came to Australia in the 70's my parents had physically demanding jobs in factories their whole lives. But, growing up all I remember is them leaving for work with a smile, coming home with a smile and never complaining. Their work ethic continues to inspire me and I feel fortunate to have an amazing job that I love and that challenges me to grow both personally and professionally.

What is your passion/hobby/interest outside of work? Once I discovered lab work and mitochondria at the age of 21, I honestly had no other interest other than being in the lab. There is no denying science has been one of my great loves, it has made my life rich and rewarding. Having my two children definitely balanced my life, but also motivated me in a way that I never thought possible. My children are still young and generally consume all my time outside of work. But they are the most interesting little creatures and I love spending every spare minute with them.



My lab's mission is to create new knowledge in mitochondrial biology to improve understanding of the inner workings of the most fundamental unit in life, the cell. Our research aims to understand how mitochondrial proteins are trafficked within cells, and how failure in protein trafficking leads to disease.



For more information, visit www.bio21.unimelb.edu.au

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