

WHEN THEY LEFT SCHOOL THEY WERE ALL STAR PUPILS



SO DID THESE HIGH ACHIEVERS FIND EQUAL SUCCESS?

In 1994, these men and women graduated from high school, all of them among the top performers in their respective states. Twenty years on, some of the women are outearned, some are outranked, but none of them, it seems, are outraged. By Nicole Partridge

How do their annual salaries stack up?

Total earnings of the men: **\$1.52 million**

Total earnings of the women: **\$733,000**

CAROLINE STEVENSON

School: Brisbane Girls Grammar.
Achievement: Dux.
Ambition: To become a psychologist, travel to Germany and have a family.



Now: Principal of Quantum, a data analytics company.
Marital status: Married with two children.
Days worked per week: Four.

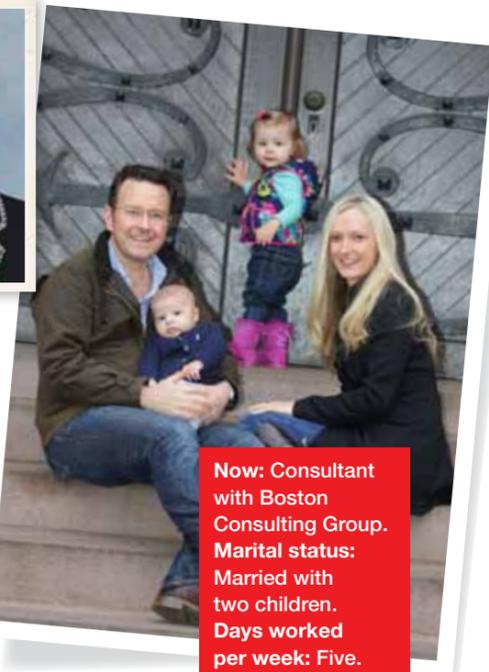
“Compromises have to be made”

“I came out of an all-girls school believing I could do anything, but I soon learnt that choices and compromises do have to be made. I arrived at my current role armed with a maths/stats degree via stints at QBE Insurance and Goldman Sachs in Germany, where I was born 38 years ago. In 2007, around the same time I got married and started planning a family, I was promoted to a principal at Quantum. When my first daughter was 18 months old, my husband was

transferred to Melbourne and I was asked to set up a Quantum office there. We'd already decided to have a second child, but I took on the challenge. I've become an expert at juggling, but occasionally my two worlds collide. I'll be playing on the floor with the girls and might need to take a work call or send an email. At week's end, I'll often fall into a chair with a glass of wine and think to myself, 'I don't know how I did that,' but somehow I muddle through.”

RODNEY COCKS

School: Melbourne High School.
Achievement: Tertiary Entrance Rank of 95.
Ambition: To be an officer in the army.



Now: Consultant with Boston Consulting Group.
Marital status: Married with two children.
Days worked per week: Five.

“I re-evaluated my career with family in mind”

“At 17, I could never have written the script for [what became] my ‘Forrest Gump’ life. After a stint at the Royal Military College - Duntroon [in Canberra], I served as a platoon commander while completing my law/commerce degree. On a military exercise when I was 21, my commanding officer said we could do ‘anything’ with the opportunities that would present themselves. He was right. After a peace-keeping role in East Timor, I worked with the UN in Asia and the Middle East,

then the British government in counter narcotics. My career has taken me from presidential offices to helicopters looking for opium crops. In 2007, I decided to contest the federal seat of La Trobe [in Victoria] for the ALP. When I didn't get in, I re-evaluated my career with family in mind. After we married in 2009, my wife and I headed to the US so I could study and we had our two kids there. I'm lucky to have such an amazing family and, looking back, I'm glad I didn't have a linear career. Success is happiness.” ▶

FIONA MCCLURE



School: Ballarat Clarendon College, Victoria.
Achievement: Score of 99.95 out of 100.
Ambition: A challenging career, travel and maybe have a family.



Now: Research and development manager at Rheem Australia.
Marital status: Single.
Days worked per week: Five.

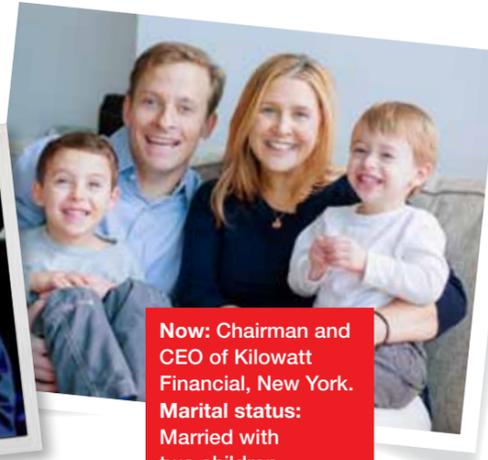
“Success for me has never been about becoming CEO”

“I was a nerdy, academic kid and prided myself on being in the advanced maths class, though I didn’t really know what I was going to do with my life. I chose engineering science in the end. My first job was at ExxonMobil in Melbourne, where I worked as an inspection engineer. After that, I did a Masters in mechanical engineering in Montreal, then a PhD at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Although I’ve worked in male-dominated industries, I’ve never felt overlooked or underpaid. Success for me has never been about becoming CEO, but doing interesting work that allows me to keep learning. In Year 12, I could never have imagined dog sledding in Quebec or watching the midnight sun in Norway. I’m a little sad about not getting married and having children, but if I had I wouldn’t be sailing on Sydney Harbour three times a weekend or buying designer shoes – so everything has an upside.”

DAN PILLEMER



School: North Sydney Boys High School.
Achievement: Tertiary Entrance Rank of 99.65.
Ambition: To play professional soccer, have a family and run a business.



Now: Chairman and CEO of Kilowatt Financial, New York.
Marital status: Married with two children.
Days worked per week: Five.

“I was so self-absorbed”

“In my final year of uni – I studied pure maths and graduated with honours – I was offered a position at the investment bank Goldman Sachs in Sydney, which led to a posting in New York 18 months later, first as an investment banker and then as an investor. Twelve years after that Year 12 photo was taken, the responsible, trustworthy kid you see in it was working crazy hours, binge drinking and gambling in Vegas. I was earning real money and being sucked into this vortex of capitalism and opportunity. I was so

self-absorbed. One day, my now wife, a tax lawyer and banker, told me I needed to be able to look in the mirror and be proud of who I was. I wasn’t. In 2011, after earlier starting a boutique merchant bank, my partners and I launched Kilowatt Financial, which is part finance and part clean energy. I love what I do. My wife and I continue to have a powerful and honest relationship. Not only does she care for our children because her job is more flexible, but she is my business confidant and best friend.”

LAUREN ATMORE



School: Abbotsleigh, Sydney.
Achievement: Dux.
Ambition: To be an astronaut or marine biologist.



Now: Head of the chief customer officer’s office at AMP.
Marital status: Single.
Days worked per week: Five.

“I’ve never jostled my way into positions”

“At the end of Year 12 I had lots of unrealistic dreams, but I did know I would have a lengthy career. It wasn’t an aspiration – it was an assumption. At 21, I took my engineering degree and got a graduate job in a consulting firm. Getting thrown into the deep end with senior executives was a bit daunting. I had moments where I thought they were going to catch on that I didn’t know what I was talking about! Confidence has been an ongoing issue for me, but I’ve pushed on through a fairly eclectic career,

mostly in telecommunications and finance. I’ve never jostled my way into positions, but opportunities have arisen through networking. While I’ve seen women in the workplace being objectified and belittled, discrimination hasn’t been an issue for me. That said, I have had the odd instance where men have talked to my chest or expected me to get coffee at a meeting. If marriage and family came my way I’d be really happy, but it’s not what I’m counting on. I don’t want to settle for the wrong person.”

BONNIE CHU



School: Presbyterian Ladies’ College, Perth.
Achievement: Beazley Medal (highest academic achievement in WA).
Ambition: An intellectually stimulating, family-friendly career.



Now: Consultant radiologist at Fremantle Hospital.
Marital status: Married with two children.
Days worked per week: Two.

“I’ve never felt discriminated against”

“I worked really hard in Year 12 so I’d have plenty of options for university. In the end I chose radiology, not because I’d dreamt of becoming a doctor, but I wanted a career where I could work with people that would challenge me academically and be flexible if I got married and had a family. In 2010, after completing the West Australian Radiology Training program and a fellowship in Toronto, Canada, I was appointed a consultant radiologist at Fremantle Hospital. When

my son was born in 2012, it seemed natural for me to take the time off as I was the only person in the relationship who could breastfeed. Having children and working two days a week has been a juggle, but luckily I chose a really flexible career that supports women. These days it’s all about time management. I regularly read medical journals while the kids are sleeping. Although there are still more male radiologists, I’ve never felt discriminated against.”

DR LACHLAN COIN



School: Brisbane State High School.
Achievement: Dux.
Ambition: To work in health/sciences or be a tennis champion.

Now: Deputy division head, Institute for Molecular Bioscience, The University of Queensland.
Marital status: Married (with a baby on the way).
Days worked per week: Five.



“My career path has been unusual”

“Looking back, my path to a career in biomedical science was almost as unusual as the thought of me playing top-level tennis. In my final year of a science degree at the Australian National University [in Canberra], I was offered a graduate position at Boston Consulting Group. I did well analytically, but management felt I needed to ‘find my personality’. My father was also a scientist and his death from melanoma in 2001 prompted me to return to the health field. I did a PhD at Cambridge before taking a position at Imperial College London, where I researched the genetics of complex disease. My career has had its challenges: rejected grant applications, negative results and intense competition. My wife works in neuroscience. She faces similar hurdles, but also has to battle for respect in a male-dominated establishment. At home things are pretty equal – we both fight for control. When we have our child, my wife will take three months off and then I’ll take three months off.”

GRANT HOLMAN



School: Hale School, Perth.
Achievement: Score of 401 out of 510.
Ambition: To be an architect, play footy and surf.



Now: Director at Wood & Grieve Engineers.
Marital status: Engaged with one child.
Days worked per week: Five.

“Why should women give up everything they love?”

“Recently I found an old report card where a teacher had written, ‘A conscientious student ... but needs to learn how to deal with opinions that differ from his own.’ Not much has changed! I did study architecture, but it wasn’t for me and I ended up with an engineering degree. I’m still with the firm I joined after uni. In 2002 they asked me to relocate to Melbourne, which I did with my then wife. The job flourished, but my relationship didn’t. It was a challenging period, but without sounding corny, it

was also a chance to grow. In many ways my journey has exceeded my expectations. I was made a director in 2011 and a year ago my fiancée, Kate, and I had a son. Because Kate had a high-powered role in the medical device industry, we had a long conversation about parental leave. In the end, it made more financial sense for me to keep working. I am hoping one day I can create an opportunity for Kate to return to her career. Why should women give up everything they love?”

DILKARRA PHOTOGRAPHY, PERTH