

**Please do not publish my name with this document.**

I was enrolled in a Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree between 2013 and 2018, after growing up in Australia completing my HSC in 2012.

During this period of time, my studies were severely impacted by domestic/family violence. I was physically threatened at home and needed to move out urgently in 2016. I went through a period of couch-surfing with friends for a few months. I was supported by a community housing not-for-profit from 2016 onwards. At the time I had nearly nothing in savings and no family support, as all my extended family is overseas and we are not particularly close. During the later years of my undergraduate degree I was precariously employed in casual and “gig” jobs, earning around minimum wage or lower.

I completed my Honours by research in 2018. It was in the sciences, but I will not say in what specialisation, because there is already enough information here to identify me, and I prefer to be anonymous. I had aspirations of becoming a scientist and building a career in academia or research. In 2019, I started my PhD candidature. I was a high-achieving and hard-working student up to that point.

Unfortunately, my PhD project was grossly mismanaged by my primary supervisor. They insisted on giving me a project in a discipline that was only loosely related to their own area of expertise, and they clearly lacked technical knowledge required to help with my project. The research problem was ill-posed, due to absence of reliable ground truth data, and the evaluation framework was not well-defined. Basically, the problem was framed in a way that can't actually be validated properly and would have very little chance of getting past peer-review by experts. I was also over-worked and micromanaged in general, and felt that the working environment was psychologically unsafe and difficult to operate in. When I reached out to the school/faculty for help, they entirely sided with my supervisor, and they were dismissive towards me and failed to address the aforementioned issues in any helpful way.

The main reason I did not quit my PhD earlier, was my reliance on the research training stipend and my poverty and recent experience of near-homelessness. There were (and still are) very few jobs in Australia for Bachelor's degree graduates in that particular field of science. A PhD is practically required for any jobs with higher skill level than a routine lab tech, and many lab tech jobs predominantly hire from high school and TAFE graduates. So a Bachelor of Science is basically a bad intermediate that can make a graduate both “overqualified” and “underqualified” at the same time. The field of science is very small in Australia, especially for graduates who are not willing or able to travel interstate (let alone relocate internationally). Almost all job listings in my chosen field require a reference from the most recent supervisor, which meant that after quitting my PhD under unfortunate circumstances, I was basically barred from most alternative graduate jobs.

When I was growing up, I was exposed to many media and PR campaigns to encourage young people, *especially girls and women*, to consider training in science. We were not properly warned about the dearth of funding and jobs in research in Australia, and the lack of back-up jobs in industry, especially for fields that are not adjacent to engineering or tech. There is little to no media coverage on bad experiences in PhD training, exploitative supervisors in the sciences, or hostile working conditions for graduate students. The PhD stipend is still close to minimum wage, or lower, if one considers the fact that many PhD students are expected to work overtime on their research. In my experience, the scarce funding in science necessitates a culture of constant outreach and self-promotion, and that was very difficult for me as someone who is both highly introverted and neurodivergent (autistic), and needs a lot of solitude and quiet time to do deep work.

After quitting my PhD I could only find a low-skilled and part-time job, and could only afford to live because I was supported by my partner. I have moved on with different plans for my life and career, but have no idea what will come next.

Please withhold my name from all publications. I share my story in the sincere hope that you will improve conditions for graduates, *both at the Bachelor's and postgraduate level.*