

# Spotlight on Dr Georgie McClellan

In 2012 Dr Georgie McClellan, now Senior Manager of Strategy, Research and Communications at Screen Australia, became the second person to graduate with a Doctor of Cultural Research (DCR) from the Institute for Culture and Society (ICS).

When she signed up for the degree, Georgie was working successfully as Manager of Policy and Research at the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), where she had been for the past four years.

After meeting Professors Ien Ang and Greg Noble through commissioning a large research study on young Australians' attitudes to media and diversity, Georgie first entertained the idea of the DCR.

"I enjoyed my job, with a strong personal commitment to the SBS Charter, and was looking to add a new layer to my work at SBS. The DCR gave me the opportunity to explore some areas of my work in a different way, drawing on theoretical frameworks that are rarely part of daily media work. The fact that I could keep working at the same time was also very attractive," she says.

Under the supervision of Professors Ien Ang and David Rowe, Georgie spent the next four years building on her experience in 'applied research' and on the interactions between research and policy.

"Applied critical thinking, as encouraged by the DCR model, relies on translation between different ways of understanding problems. I continue to draw on the agility I learned by moving frequently between these different worlds."

Georgie says that her time and project management skills were also strengthened during her candidacy through juggling

work and study commitments with unforeseen personal challenges.

Two years into her doctorate, and only a year after giving birth to her daughter Billie, Georgie was diagnosed with cancer and underwent 16-hour emergency surgery. Despite this big setback, Georgie continued her candidature, maintained her research momentum, and submitted her doctorate on deadline.

While she recognises that navigating her way through illness, recovery, motherhood and the doctorate was a "challenge", Georgie had a lot of help from family and friends, and acknowledges the personal and intellectual support of her supervisors as invaluable to her DCR journey.

"After I was diagnosed with cancer, I discussed taking medical leave with my supervisors, but I decided not to, and they backed me. The ICS team sent me gorgeous flowers and provided lots of support, including assistance in accessing library books (crucial when you're writing on deadline and can't get what you need)," she recalls.

"In my supervisory meetings, I was able to talk through research problems and attempt to articulate my ideas in discussion with two experts – a profoundly crystallising experience. Part of my supervisors' role was to encourage me to take on a more reflective approach



Dr Georgie McClellan with Professor David Rowe and her mother Wendy Power.

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in developing the intellectual work of my doctorate. By the same token, I felt very personally supported throughout some of the challenging periods," she adds.

Looking back on her time as a doctoral candidate, Georgie encourages others to enjoy the experience of being able to devote time to study and research.

"To be in some way part of the arc of scholarship, to live the examined life, is a real privilege," she says.

When asked about her aspirations for the future, Georgie answers: "I am hopeful that I get to continue to engage in the world of ideas. It's important to me to connect what I do to some bigger story of public benefit. I like the work of translation between research and practice and finding a way to translate between theory and everyday challenges."

Georgie hopes that her work will always have some element of public engagement, explaining: "I'm really interested in public debate around ideas and new ways to promote or facilitate conversations. I know I'm at my best when I'm surrounded by great ideas and I believe this is true for all of us. Great research and new ideas can help us build a richer, more expansive sense of how we want to live as a community."

Georgie maintains her productive relationship with ICS via her role on its Advisory Board.