

Helen Maree Imhoff – Cadet Technologist, Dept Main Roads QLD



Education, Experience & Achievements

- Preschool to Grade 10 - Millmerran State School.
- Gr 11 & 12 St Michael's Catholic Secondary College (Stratford, Canada) & Pittsworth State High School.
- Studied at James Cook University – Townsville, Griffith University – Nathan Campus Brisbane, University of Southern Queensland – Toowoomba.
- Tertiary subjects previously studied: Geographical Science, Forensic Science & Criminology.
- Tertiary subject currently studying: Associated Degree in Civil Engineering
- Resided in both Canada (1996/1997) and UK (2003-2005)
- Travelled through North America, Europe, Indonesia and a number of Pacific Islands.

What led you to choose Engineering as a career?

I was working as an Auction Co-ordinator for truck and machinery items when I met an older gentleman from Main Roads whom dealt with the disposal of RoadTek equipment. Through our working relationship he convinced me to apply for a cadetship within the department. I missed out on my first application and only got in by the skin of my nose on the second round. Sadly the gentleman who helped direct me into this field passed away not long after I started my cadetship and will not get to see the fruits of his coercion nor know how grateful I am. I had no inclination towards a career in engineering or design but have found it to be one of the most rewarding and satisfying occupations. I only wish I had started in this field a decade earlier.

What is it about Engineering that inspires you?

- The chance to be both innovative and creative while providing effective and useful infrastructure
- Every problem has a number of solutions – the pursuit of the most economic and efficient solution while considering environmental and social concerns really encourages you to think outside of the box
- The interaction between so many different technical, professional and administrative fields
- The opportunity to see a project evolve from the concept phase through to finalisation/ operation

What has been the high point in your career to date?

- Being a part of an interactive, cooperative & considerate team at Main Roads
- The opportunity to visit large construction projects

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you solved it?

My initially poor computer skills – when I first started at Main Roads I had never even heard of let alone seen either AutoCAD or 12D. I managed to raise my skills up to a level equivalent to my colleges through self guided training modules. I spent hours practicing and trying new tools and functions until my confidence grew.

How have you managed your work and family commitments?

I managed all commitments by finding a balance and setting priorities. Time management is one of the most vital skills in today's working environment.

Do you have any advice for women who are considering engineering as a career, or for those who are already Engineers?

- Enjoy it – don't be frightened to show excitement about projects.
- Be vocal – speak up, ask questions, make suggestions.
- Be proactive – don't take a back seat, only you can build the career you desire.
- Be a self-learner – go out and seek knowledge and don't always accept the first answer provided.
- Don't be too serious – engineers have a sense of humour too.
- Take advantage of social events – they are a way to build and maintain life-long networks.