

# Christopher Nolan

## Studying Astrophysicist

HSC Year: 2005      ATAR: 96.65  
Equal Dux



### Training (eg TAFE, University etc)

- Bachelor of Science with a double major in Mathematics and Physics (Newcastle University)

### Special Educational Achievements

- Honours degree in Physics, for which I got first class honours (89%).
- I was awarded a University Medal in Physics. This is awarded to a person who "displays outstanding ability in the discipline concerned". The student must achieve Honours Class 1 and a minimum grade-point-average of 6.5 (a distinction average is 6.0 and a high distinction average is 7.0).

### Jobs

- When I finished high school I worked as a labourer for a year to save up enough money to apply for independence from Centrelink and support me through my years at uni.
- When Uni started I transferred my job down to the office in Newcastle and did a bit of casual work for the first year.
- In second year I gave up the job because Uni became busier and I realised that if I really wanted excellent marks I needed to put all my time and energy into my Uni work so I gave up my job.
- I applied for a few scholarships and fortunately was awarded a commonwealth accommodation scholarship which supported me through the rest of my degree.
- In the last few years I've been doing casual tutoring for first year uni students and HSC maths which really helps.

### What are you doing now?

- I now have a full time job doing research in physics at the University till the end of the year.
- I'm currently in the process of applying to do a PhD in Astrophysics at the Australian National University in Canberra starting early next year. The astrophysics department there is located up on Mt Stromlo.

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- I'm also applying for a summer scholarship at ANU over the summer holidays to get a feel for the area of Canberra and the field of astrophysics.

### **Relevant Experiences since leaving school (eg special achievements)**

- My honours project involved designing and testing a computer simulation of the ionised gases surrounding the earth, and a fluid instability called the Kelvin-Helmholtz instability.

### **Interesting Experiences**

- As Uni holidays are pretty long and the Uni offers summer research scholarships each summer, I applied and was awarded one of them, which really helped me develop my research skills and I also got experience doing paid research work under Assoc. Prof. Colin Waters. This has led to my current position of full time work.

### **Other comments /Memories from Chatham High Days**

I remember Mr Watt's awesome jokes in Engineering Studies. Also, Business Week was crazy hectic, but fun.

### **Tips for our students**

- I guess my tips for students are that once you get to university there are so many opportunities.
- Apply for as many scholarships as you can. The less time you have to spend working to earn money the more time you can spend investing in better marks.
- Push yourself. Don't get to uni and get caught up in the easy lifestyle. Push yourself so that you can get the best marks possible. After uni those better marks will make finding a job much easier.
- If you want to go the extra mile, apply for summer scholarships that interest you which will help build the skills that you can't get by sitting in a lecture theatre. Ask lecturers about part-time research jobs. Make your interest known so they don't forget you.