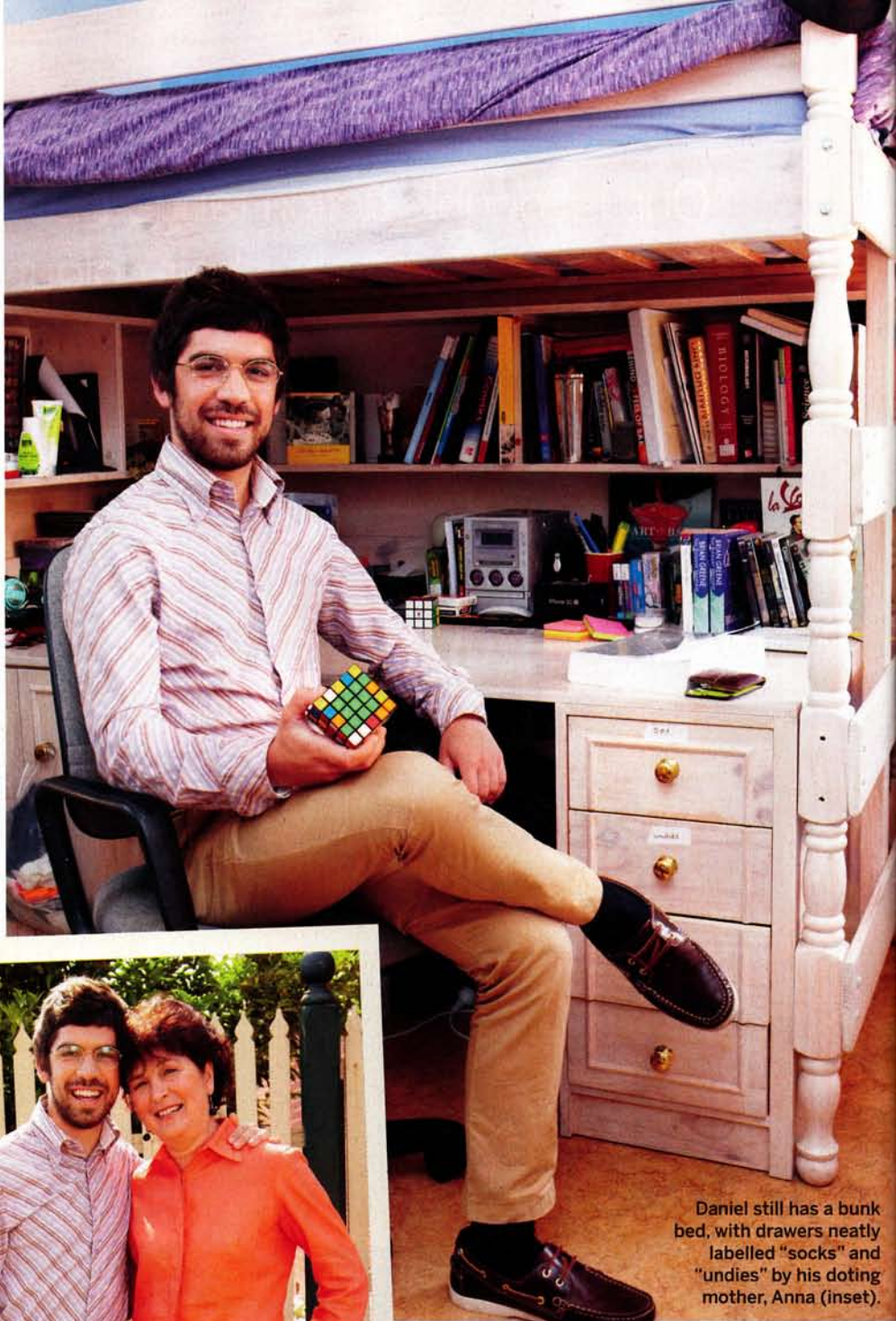


Daniel's quest  
to save his mum

# DUTY AND THE GEEK

He's a self-confessed  
nerd with a heart of gold, as  
CARLA CARUSO discovers



Daniel still has a bunk bed, with drawers neatly labelled "socks" and "undies" by his doting mother, Anna (inset).



Being a geek is not all Dungeons & Dragons and bad dress sense. For Daniel Iachini, it has also meant something bigger – being able to help his mum.

The 23-year-old molecular biologist, who is a finalist on *Beauty And The Geek*, has been intent on finding a cancer cure ever since his mother, Anna, 55, was diagnosed four years ago.

Relaxing at his family home in Adelaide on a break from filming the Seven Network reality series, Daniel recalls the night his mum, and father Felice, 58, told him the terrifying news.

"It was all quiet and Dad said, 'Mum wants to tell you something.' She said she went to the doctor's for a routine check and they found a small lump in her chest," he remembers. "Mum burst into tears. My parents couldn't even say the word 'cancer'."

Fortunately for Daniel's mum, the cancer was found to be "non-mobile", which meant it could be removed quickly and her breast was saved. But, for Daniel, it transformed his life.

"I was studying my Bachelor of Biomedical Science and wasn't sure what I wanted to major in," he says. "That kind of gave me a 'hit' to do breast cancer research for my honours."

He dedicated his thesis to his mum and now works in a science laboratory, continuing his hunt for a cancer cure.

Anna, a fashion design teacher, says Daniel was a real help during the trying time.

"He was actually the best in the family," she says. "He was always positive."

Still, despite his braininess providing the means to conduct life-saving research, being a "geek" hasn't always been a plus for Daniel.

"I got bullied quite horrifically at school," Daniel says. "At one stage, some of the boys cut open my bag and threw all my books, and I had to collect them with everyone laughing at me. The ringleader got expelled and then followed me home one day and punched me. So, for the last three weeks of high school, I caught a bus in the opposite direction – which took an extra hour – just to avoid him!"

Even so, Daniel's having the last laugh as a TV star, bunking with gorgeous women, and even locking lips with one beauty on the show. "One night Ellie and I went for a spa and, yes, we shared a kiss," Daniel says shyly. "I'm still single. I didn't come onto the show expecting romance. As a scientist, I like to let things gravitate towards their natural solution."

There has also been talk of Daniel not being as nerdy as he seems because he's been seen out at nightclubs, but he is quick to dispel the rumours.

"Being a geek doesn't mean I can't go out and enjoy myself," he says. "These people don't know me. My mother will vouch for the fact that I haven't had much success with women!"

It's unlikely Daniel will be having women stay at his house anytime soon, either. He still has a bunk bed – of which he says, "I never thought of changing really. It's functional!"

*Beauty And The Geek*, Thursdays, 8.30pm, Seven.