

Ruth Drinkwater shares her experience in business and startups

Business professionals, St Margaret's staff, alumni and students gathered on Thursday 21 October for the final Professional Women's Network Breakfast for 2021, where guest speaker Ruth Drinkwater shared her experience as an innovative entrepreneur and angel investor.

Debbie Smith, Chair of St Margaret's School Council, interviewed Ruth, tackling topics including getting ideas into the market, the investment environment in Queensland and her professional journey since commencing her career in science.

Ruth has had a diverse career with more than 20 years' experience in business development, marketing and commercialisation, investment in emerging technology companies and capital raising.

For Ruth, looking for opportunities and lifelong learning have been consistent principles throughout her career.

As an experienced non-executive director, Ruth has sat on several boards and advisory panels. She is currently chair of Alkira Software Pty Ltd and Mrs Clucks Pty Ltd and a past CEO of Alkira Software, as well as a past director of a number of other quasi-government, university and private company boards. She is a co-founder of Mrs Clucks and continues as a member of the Queensland Government's Advance Queensland grant assessment committee.

Ruth has been at the forefront of change in angel investment and start-up activity and is also a long-term member of Brisbane Angels, actively investing in early-stage technology companies.

On the topic of investment, Ruth said that in deciding whether to invest in a start-up she looks at the tenacity of the person and "the impact that business makes".

Her advice to anyone going into business was to "focus, do one thing at a time, tread your own path, be confident", not to wait for an answer and be a problem-solver.

To the students in the room, Ruth had this advice: "Be strong, be independent, be prepared to take the knocks."

She said that being passionate, adaptable and persevering were also critical skills for students to develop.

Thank you to the series sponsors for their support throughout 2021, including major sponsor Pitcher Partners, associate sponsors Programmed Property Services and Wolff Coffee Roasters, as well as supporting partners Downer, Clear Insurance, Red Oak, O'Reilly Shaw Lawyer, NAB and Westpac.

Through the support of our sponsors and profit from ticket sales for the 2021 Professional Women's Network Series, more than \$38,000 was raised and donated to St Margaret's Foundation Endowment Fund to assist in supporting needs-based bursaries for regional/rural and indigenous students attending St Margaret's.