The Inaugural RACI Margaret Sheil Women in Chemistry Leadership Lecture

IN SEARCH OF A CAREER: TRAVELS WITH WILD CHEMICALS

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In 2017, RACI established an award to honour the trail-blazing contributions of Professor Margaret Sheil, the first Australian female Professor of Chemistry, and who is now the Vice Chancellor of Queensland University of Technology. Throughout her career, Margaret has championed women in chemistry, and in science and engineering more generally. Both Margaret and I began our academic careers as lecturers at The University of Wollongong.

In 1983, I made a career-changing decision, leaving behind a role as a medicinal chemist in the UK pharmaceutical sector to migrate to Australia to undertake field-based research on the Great Barrier Reef. In my presentation, I will explore some of the challenges thrown at me as a result of this remarkable scientific opportunity, and illustrate the scientific journey in general terms through selected examples of the chemistry and the exquisite molecules that my research group has encountered in the intervening years.

I also explore the important role that mentorship plays in career progression, and discuss the opportunities that can arise from engaging with professional bodies such as RACI and IUPAC.

(Photo details - Prof Garson collecting samples of nudibranchs (brightly coloured marine molluscs) for her research in the area of bioactive natural-product chemistry)