

Name Ruth Fernando – Newcastle Division Co-Chair & National Committee Representative.



Education, Experience & Achievements

I completed my Bachelor of Chemical Engineering at the University of Queensland in 2002.

My first job was as a Graduate at a Coal Mine Handling and Preparation Plant in the Hunter Valley. The coal industry was a great place to start work it provided me an excellent Health & Safety Platform that I constantly draw upon today.

I am currently employed as a process engineer for a large consultancy and this has provided me the opportunity to work in Aluminium Smelting, Copper, Titanium, Alumina and water treatment industries whilst travelling through four different states in Australia. It has been an exciting time for me as I'm constantly learning.

What led you to choose Engineering as a career?

A logical, process of elimination! I was strong at maths and science in high school, and a high affinity to problem solving. I had also attended several engineering open days held at Universities. I also spoke with some good family friends who were practicing Engineers, the latter helped the most.

What is it about Engineering that inspires you?

Engineers are involved in almost everything that we use/see in our everyday lives. Seeing the results of our contribution is the most exciting part. My work has seen me optimise minerals processing plants so that they operate more efficiently. More recently I'm working on Environmental projects, which makes me reassured that our future will be a green one!!

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

In a consultancy, work generally does not get handed to you on a plate. As such, my most rewarding opportunities to date has been bidding and winning my own work. This has resulted in me Project managing some large projects for BHPB- v. exciting, and very rewarding!

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

Working in a remote area has been one of the biggest challenges in my career. However, I found that these things do not solve themselves! It is important to make an effort, get involved within the community by participating in group sports, volunteering time, socialising and generally being open minded.

How have you managed your work and family commitments?

Work life balance is a high priority on my list. It generally means that I have learnt to be more organised. The more you take on the more you need to juggle your time! Work provides me the

mental stimulation that I require. Outside of work I ensure that I am physically active, whether that be participation in group sports or individual gym sessions, this helps me balance out those sweet indulgences and also provides a great outlet during those busy work weeks!

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

For those considering Engineering, try and speak with as many different people in the Engineering work place as possible. This will help you determine whether it is suitable for you. For those who are already engineers, don't forget that there is always a support network around you. I find that having a mentor is always best, whether they are a formally appointed one, or someone who you informally chat with every now and then. Everyone (at any stage of their career) can benefit from a mentor/mentee relationship.