Professor Adrienne Clarke (’54)

It was as a Year 10 student on an ‘excursion’ to the Great Barrier Reef when world-renowned plant geneticist and botanist Professor Adrienne Clarke had a life-changing moment. On the Reef Adrienne ‘discovered the world under the sea. The extraordinary kaleidoscope of colours and shapes of the corals and fish totally entranced me. I wondered how the colours and shapes could be constructed and determined to find out.’ Adrienne was Dux of Ruyton and was awarded a Government Scholarship to study Science at Melbourne University. She credits Ruyton’s inspirational English teacher, Miss Dorothy Derham, with some of her success. ‘Miss Derham taught me to write and speak well and those communication skills have been terribly important throughout my life and have helped with my insights into science.’ Professor Clarke was the first female appointed Laureate Professor at the University of Melbourne, is a former chairman of CSIRO and Lieutenant Governor of Victoria. She has been a director of a number of public companies, sits on several boards. She became Chancellor of La Trobe University in February 2011. Adrienne was made a Companion in the Order of Australia in 2004.