

Speak Out Loud:

Stories of Strength from the Southern Downs

EPISODE: NAVIGATING BUSINESS IN TOUGH TIMES

GUEST: Julia Keogh, President Warwick Chamber of Commerce

PUBLISHED: 27th February 2022

SUMMARY OF EPISODE

I'm joined on the podcast today by Julia Keogh, President of the Warwick Chamber of Commerce. The Southern Downs Region supports a wide range of industries and businesses, including agri businesses, which feel the direct impact of events such as drought, bushfire, and flooding. In this conversation Julia shares practical ideas for business owners to manage their preparation for, and their recovery from adverse events, such as these as well as the impact of COVID-19. I hope you'll be inspired for the future and enthused to take action after listening to this episode with Julia.

Listen to the podcast conversation to hear Julia share:

- the story of her connection to the Southern Downs
- why she first joined the Warwick Chamber of Commerce
- how fear and hesitancy got in the way of her joining the Chamber and connecting with mentors earlier than she did
- being brave and volunteering for roles on the executive committee
- the wide variety of businesses, industries and services that are currently operating on the Southern Downs with primary production being a major economic driver
- recent rainfall has led to massive growth in her garden which is reflective of the boom in the business sector
- how recent weather, climate and other events have impacted local businesses
- the immediacy of bushfire and flood disaster response is in stark contrast to the ongoing and pervasive impact of long-term droughts and the COVID-19 pandemic
- the increasing fatigue levels among business owners in the context of COVID-19 indicates the need to look after ourselves and our teams
- the importance of recognising that first and foremost we need to be kind and caring and that this leads to a change in attitude
- how businesses are navigating the changing COVID-19 landscape in retail and hospitality and how the Chamber is providing support
- intolerance and impatience has the capacity to fragment communities, and the retail and hospitality sectors are seeing increases in this
- experienced workers can be mentors for less experienced workers helping them to navigate challenging times and situations

Speak Out Loud: Stories of Strength From the Southern Downs Podcast

www.kathrynwalton.com.au

- why it's important for all employers to provide resilience training and ongoing professional development for their staff
- ultimately each individual chooses whether to focus on the negative impacts of tough times or to focus on and look for opportunities and solutions
- the Chamber provides opportunities to develop peer networks and peer support
- a flexible mindset helps business owners respond to changing times and needs
- the value of focusing on what you can control instead of what you can't
- digital literacy is one of the surprising benefits of recent tough times providing improved connectivity for teams, increased productivity, better work-life balance, reduced travel time, better time management and greater accessibility
- technology has improved disaster management communications, location accuracy, response times and real time connections
- Chambers of Commerce provide a way for business owners to connect with each other which contributes to resilience and recovery in tough times
- community organisations will only thrive when people are active in them
- practical and valuable ways to help your business and community thrive as an active member of the Chamber of Commerce
- movement and action are necessary for vibrant communities to grow
- unless your business is consistently taking steps forward, there will never be any change
- it's okay to feel nervous about the current times but what's most important is focusing on what steps you can take
- there is a wealth of resources available to support business owners
- reflective practices in your business include identifying your current struggles and difficulties, then
 - seeking solutions or support by doing your own research
 - reaching out to the Chamber of Commerce
 - accessing training provided for free to business owners by TAFE
 - engaging with peer networks, and
 - being brave and asking for help
- being too busy is never an excuse to not access solutions or supports
- solutions will not manifest unless you invest the time and take the action
- business owners can access support for mental health through peer networks, GPs and Employee Assistance Programs (face-to-face or virtually through Telehealth)
- if you want to create a sustainable business you need to do your research, strategic planning, access professional advice, know what your product is and have a mindset and internal fortitude to go through tough times
- her great hope for the business community is that we learn from past and recent experiences so the community continues to build resilience
- how to contact the Warwick Chamber of Commerce

CONTACT WARWICK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

W: <https://warwickqld.com.au/>

Social Media: @warwickchamberofcommerce

RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THE PODCAST

Southern Downs Regional Council <https://www.sdrc.qld.gov.au/>

Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland <https://www.cciq.com.au/>

Southern Downs Disaster Management Plan <https://www.sdrc.qld.gov.au/council/disaster-management/disaster-management-sub-plans>

Southern Downs Disaster Dashboard <http://disasterdashboard.sdrc.qld.gov.au/>

Better Access initiative <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/better-access-initiative> (referrals through your GP)

Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN <https://www.ddwmpnh.com.au/> (for information about health pathways)

Season 1, Episode 3 of the Speak Out Loud: Stories of Strength podcast “Financial Recovery with Donna Neale-Arnold, Lifeline Financial Counsellor”
<https://www.kathrynwalton.com.au/wp1/sol-podcast/>

Rural Financial Counselling Service <https://www.rfcssq.org.au/>

Southern Downs Economic Development and Tourism Unit
<https://investsoutherndowns.com.au/>

TAFE Queensland <https://tafeqld.edu.au/isolearn>

Stanthorpe and Granite Belt Chamber of Commerce <https://stanthorpecoc.com.au/>



The Speak Out Loud: Stories of Strength podcast has been produced by Kathryn Walton Consulting www.kathrynwalton.com.au



This project has been jointly funded under the Commonwealth and State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (2018).

The information shared in the podcast and handouts is intended for general information only. To the best of our knowledge, this information was correct at the time of publishing. Please consult with your doctor or health provider for support based on your individual needs.

Speak Out Loud: Stories of Strength From the Southern Downs Podcast
www.kathrynwalton.com.au