

Association for Women in
the Sciences



AWIS Convenors' Report 2023

Submitted on behalf of AWIS by:

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AWIS National Co-Convenors

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Membership in our Regions

AWIS had 65 members at the end of the 2022/23 year, broken down into regions: Auckland 20, Christchurch 7, Dunedin 18, Manawatu 1, Rotorua 1, Tasman 3, Waikato 6, and Wellington 9.

Auckland, Dunedin, and Christchurch regional branches have been active this year. Our Auckland branch held the networking event "Evening with Susan Turner" on April 22, and the AUT Women in STEM film festival and fundraiser raffle on July 22. We are grateful to the University of Auckland and AUT for their sponsorship of the Auckland film festival. In late July 2022, the Auckland branch also met for lunch and to watch the documentary *Juliet Gerrard: Science In Dark Times*.

We held two screenings of the documentary *Juliet Gerrard: Science In Dark Times* on October 22, one in Christchurch and another in Dunedin. AWIS is grateful to Director and Producer Shirley Horrocks for providing the film and for joining us on both nights to introduce the film, and to ESR, Te Punaha Matatini, Division of Health Sciences University of Otago, Dr Jilly Evans and NZ Institute of Chemistry for their support of the film screenings.

Christchurch and Dunedin held two networking and catch up events with Dr Jilly Evans on March 23. Dr Jilly Evans is a New Zealander who has led drug development programmes in Canada and the United States, and the Chief Scientific Officer and co-founder of PharmAkea Therapeutics (USA). Jilly is passionate about the promotion of science and fostering women participation in the field. She generously hosted two evenings for our members to share her story and inspire and encourage others in their own career journeys.

Executive and Rules

The AWIS Executive have been meeting monthly via Zoom for the past year, to discuss activities, progress with the committees and conference updates. Three committees were established to work on: 1) Strategy for reconnection and increased membership numbers; 2) Revision of our rules/budget and overall strategy; and 3) Diversity.

We are concerned about our low membership and have formed a working group to address this issue. The group is currently exploring ways to attract and retain members. To gather valuable insights, we will be distributing a survey to all current and recent members, seeking their feedback on how AWIS can better meet their needs.

As part of our diversity strategy, we have updated the language in our website for more inclusive language, in line with the rules updates, and have pushed for diversity and broad representation in our events or events we are invited to attend.

Rules updates at last AGM covered a more inclusive language replacing “women” with “anyone who identifies as a woman” throughout our constitution, and the creation of a lifetime membership category.

Our Awards & Scholarships

Dell Award

The 2023 Miriam Dell Award for Excellence in Science Mentoring is currently open for nominations (nominations close 31 May 23). The Miriam Dell Award was introduced in 2013 and is awarded on a biennial basis to someone who demonstrates outstanding mentoring efforts to retain females in science, mathematics or technology. The Award is named for Dame Miriam Dell, Patron of AWIS, botanist, secondary school teacher and advocate for women’s advancement.

AWIS Women in STEM scholarship

The AWIS Women in STEM scholarship aims to support women studying STEM for undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications with study or living costs. The Award is aimed at women studying a field where women are currently under-represented and whose social identity is under-represented in their field.

The AWIS Women in STEM scholarship, administered by the New Horizons for Women Trust, was not awarded in 2022. With the funds raised from the AUT Women in science film festival and the two screenings of the Juliet Gerrard documentary, we will offer the scholarship in 2023 to be awarded in 2024, in alignment with the New Horizons for Women's trust new guidelines:

<https://www.newhorizonsforwomen.org.nz/education-awards.html>

The Gatehouse Travel Award was awarded to Sonali Sali this year. These awards help cover indirect costs associated with attending events with personal/professional development opportunities, with a maximum value of \$250.

Mothers in Science Action plan for Funding agencies

AWIS has partnered with Mothers in Science and 16 other organisations across the world to call for immediate action to promote inclusion of caregivers and increase retention of women in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine) careers. Led by Mothers in Science, this global movement has released a unique action plan outlining policy recommendations to close the gender gap in research funding and eradicate systemic inequities suffered by mothers in science. More info here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc33ubrc>

AWIS conference - ICWES 2023

Planning is well underway for the 2023 International Conference for Women Engineers and Scientists (ICWES19), a triennial conference of the International Network of Women Engineers and Scientists (INWES) in partnership with AWIS. The meeting will be held in Auckland in September 2023 and we anticipate receiving more than 300 attendees from New Zealand and overseas. Around 150 abstracts have been accepted into the programme, which can be consulted here:

<https://www.icwes19.com/programme>

Membership in other organisations

We are an active Constituent Organisation of the Royal Society Te Apārangi, and have attended their annual meetings and supported Fellowship nominations.

We are also a member of the National Council of Women of New Zealand.

Thanks

Thanks to all who have served in the Executive for their help and support, and supported Carolina and Kieren as co-convenors. Many thanks to the regional convenors for organising AWIS events throughout the country, and to the Exec members who are stepping down.