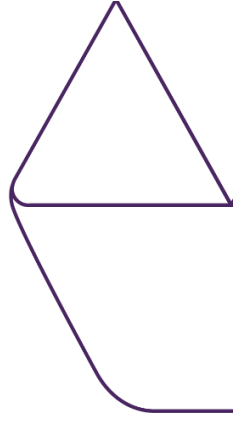




Association for Women in the Sciences



AWIS Convenor's Report 2024

Emma Timewell and Kieren Arthur, National Co-Convenor

Presented on 26 July 2024

Our regions

AWIS had 69 members at the end of the 2023/24 year, broken down into regions:

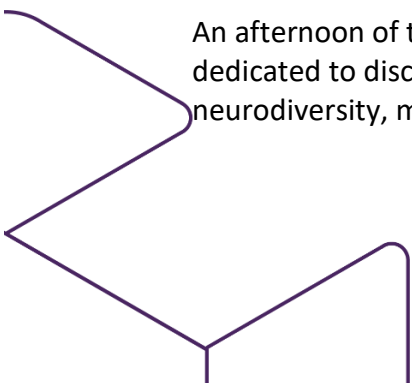
- Dunedin 20
- Auckland 15
- Christchurch 12
- Wellington 12
- Waikato 6
- Manawatu 2
- Tasman 2

On the national front, it's been a busy year, with an international conference, an online webinar series, and the latest Dell Award.

ICWES19

In September, we co-hosted, with Engineering New Zealand, the 19th International Conference of Women Engineers and Scientists. Over four days, ICWES19 showcased more than 100 speakers from 25 countries, with keynote sessions on the diverse topics of Antarctica, space and COVID-19, and with concurrent sessions themed around eight broad STEM-related topics. Workshops throughout the conference provided professional development opportunities for attendees to develop their own skills, such as how to share their story and tips for designing a STEM engagement programme.

An afternoon of the conference, chaired by Diversity Works CEO Maretha Smit, was dedicated to discussions on how to improve diversity in STEM, including not only gender but neurodiversity, mainstreaming LGBTQ+ and Māori engagement.



Unfortunately, the conference did not attract the number of attendees as expected particularly those from international and engineering-focused organisations. ICWES19 subsequently made a significant loss, primarily due to the large venue contracted to meet the anticipated numbers. Engineering New Zealand and AWIS share this loss equally, and plans are in place to ensure we pay this debt while not impacting on AWIS' long-term viability.

Thanks to the various organising committees who helped create a truly excellent conference programme, and to the organising committee members of Bryony Lane from Engineering New Zealand and Rachel Cook, and her team, from Conference Innovators who worked tirelessly for three years alongside AWIS to deliver the conference.

Dell Award

The sixth Dell Award was presented to Cate MacInnis-Ng at the ICWES19 conference dinner, as well as the formal presentation of the 2021 award to Di Tracey.

The Dame Miriam Dell Award for Excellence in Science Mentoring 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 2023 award was the first to be awarded since Dame Miriam passed in 2022.

Cate is Associate Professor of Ecology at Waipapa Tamata Rau The University of Auckland, Chair of the Constituents' Forum of the Royal Society Te Apārangi, and Past President of the New Zealand Ecological Society. She was particularly recognised by the Award judges for the activities she has undertaken in her voluntary roles, such as establishing a mentoring scheme for the NZ Ecological Society and publishing and commentating on gender bias in academia.

The next Dell Award is scheduled for 2025.

My Story webinar series

In March 2024, AWIS partnered with Plant & Food Research to begin a monthly webinar series entitled My Story. My Story webinars introduce viewers to women working in STEM with a link to New Zealand who share their stories in their own words. Speakers range across disciplines and career stages, giving different insights into what a STEM career can look like.

The series will continue until the end of 2024, when it will be reviewed with the partner to determine whether it should continue into 2025 and if any format changes would be required.

Regional activities

Auckland have held a members' dinner during the ICWES conference and a Pink Ribbon breakfast to support the Breast Cancer Foundation. They also partnered with Aerospace Auckland, Te Ao Marama, Women in Space Aotearoa NZ and the University of Auckland Women in Science to host NASA astronaut Heidemarie Stefanshyn-Piper alongside a viewing of Women in Motion documentary.

Christchurch held a Ms Information movie night in November and Dunedin co-hosted a Women in Science brunch as part of the International Science Festival.

Our scholarships

The AWIS Women in STEM scholarship – which aims to support women studying STEM for undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications with study or living costs – was awarded in 2023 for the 2024 academic year. This award is administered by the New Horizons for Women Trust and is aimed at women studying a field where women are currently under-represented and whose social identity is under-represented in their field.

The Gatehouse Travel Award was not awarded this year partly due to the lack of suitable applications and latterly due to our financial position.

Thanks

Thanks to all the Executive for their help and support. I particularly acknowledge Carolina Loch and Sarah Baird, who stepped down from the AWIS Executive during the year, Bobbi Laing and Naomi Fleming, who are stepping down from the Executive today, and Alice Harford who has been a valuable part of the Auckland committee for a number of years. And special thanks to Kieren Arthur, who is stepping down as National Co-Convenor after a three-year term.