

# Women in Mathematics Special Interest Group (WIMSIG)

2014/2015 Annual Report to the Australian Mathematical Society

August 28, 2015

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## 1 Executive Committee

Until 31 January 2015:

- Asha Rao, Chair
- Giang Nguyen, Treasurer
- Joanne Hall, Secretary
- Amy Glen, Committee Member
- Lesley Ward, Committee Member

From 1 February 2015:

- Lesley Ward, Chair
- Giang Nguyen, Treasurer
- Joanne Hall, Secretary
- Lynn Batten, Committee Member
- Deborah Cromer, Committee Member
- Asha Rao, Immediate Past Chair

## 2 Events

WIMSIG currently supports three types of events: Women in Maths Gatherings, Embedded Events, and Endorsed Events.

### 2.1 Women in Maths Gatherings

WIMSIG organised 12 Women in Maths Gatherings around the country in the last year. Funding was provided by the host organisations.

- November 2014 Gatherings were hosted by QUT, UMelb, USyd, and Flinders
- June 2015 Gatherings were hosted by UniSA, UQ, RMIT, Monash, UTas, ANU, UNSW and Curtin

These Gatherings are open to people of any gender. They provide a venue for discussion of gender equity and are a great way to build informal networks.

In 2015 WIMSIG arranged support for use of the AMSI Advanced Collaboration Environment (ACE) system to allow gatherings to include people based at remote sites.

## 2.2 Embedded events

WIMSIG actively supported women's gatherings at five national events, in most cases funded by the event. Members of the WIMSIG Executive Committee took lead roles in many of these events.

- Women in Mathematics Dinner at ANZMC December 2014 (Funded by Nalini Joshi's ARC Georgina Sweet Laureate Fellowship)
- Women in Mathematics Lunch at ANZIAM January 2015 (Funded by Nalini Joshi's ARC Georgina Sweet Laureate Fellowship)
- Women in Mathematics evening at AMSI Summer School (January 2015)
- Women in Mathematics Networking Event at AMSI Winter School (July 2015)
- Women in Mathematics Dinner at AustMS Meeting September 2015 (Funded by Nalini Joshi's ARC Georgina Sweet Laureate Fellowship)

## 2.3 Endorsed events

WIMSIG endorsed several conferences, workshops and lectures organised by others. See the full list at <http://www.austms.org.au/WIMSIG+Events>.

WIMSIG is happy to advertise to our membership any conference or workshop that has specific and suitable measures in place to increase female participation. Such measures could include female invited speakers, women's gatherings, financial incentives (travel funds or reduced registration), suitable arrangements for childcare upon request, or any other efforts to attract female participants.

WIMSIG's advice sheet for organisers of such events is available at <http://www.austms.org.au/WIMSIG+Events>.

## 3 Activities

### 3.1 Advocacy

- **SAGE:** The Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Initiative of the Academy of Science is a program of activities designed to improve gender equity in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) sectors. The SAGE steering committee is co-Chaired by Nalini Joshi and Brian Schmidt.

The Chair of WIMSIG (Rao) participated in the inaugural SAGE Forum workshop, held in Canberra on 25–26 November, 2014. Bringing together 140 participants including senior representatives of universities, medical sciences institutes, science funding agencies (ARC

and NHMRC for example), government research organisations (such as DSTO and CSIRO), as well as other stakeholders, along with the Equality Challenge Unit that runs the Athena SWAN Charter in the UK, the workshop aimed at discussing the stagnation as well as decline of female representation in scientific careers, especially in academia.

A key outcome of the workshop was the recommendation to adopt an approach in Australia similar to the Athena SWAN Charter, while keeping in mind that such an approach would result in significant impact and there is a need to adapt it to the Australian context. The implementation phase of a SAGE Pilot has now begun; the call for applications from Australian universities closed on 20 July 2015.

- **Annual Council of Heads of Schools of Mathematical Sciences:** The Chair of WIMSIG (Ward) gave an invited talk at the ACHMS meeting, 18 February 2015, on gender equity issues in the mathematical sciences. Her slides are posted at <http://www.austms.org.au/WIMSIG+Events>. Highlights:
  - Data on rates of participation by women in the tertiary sector in Australia, by discipline and by level (Bachelors/Honours/PhD/Casual/A/B/C/D/E).
  - Known mechanisms that diminish gender equity.
  - References to examples of best practice.
  - Practical measures that Heads of School and others can adopt to promote gender equity.
  - Example: Of the 3524 speakers in special sessions at American Mathematical Society conferences in 2013, the **percentage of women speakers in special sessions that had no women organisers was 19%, while that in sessions with at least one woman organiser was 27%**. —*Notices Amer. Math. Soc.* 61 (2014), no. 9.

### 3.2 Travel Awards

From 2014 to now, we have run the first two rounds of the AustMS WIMSIG Travel Awards. We received 11 applications for the Cheryl E. Praeger Awards and two applications for the Anne Penfold Street Awards. The Selection Committees consisted of Cheryl Praeger (Chair), Amie Albrecht and Julie Clutterbuck for Round 1 (closing date 1 October 2014), and Julie Clutterbuck (Chair), Amie Albrecht and Deborah Street for Round 2 (closing date 1 April 2015). In total there were six Praeger awardees and two Street awardees.

- Praeger recipients:

R2: Adelle Coster (UNSW) SMB 2015 conference, Atlanta \$2000

R2: Hang Wang (Adelaide) NCSI 2015 conference, Montreal \$2000

R1: Vivien Challis (UQ) ANZIAM 2015, Gold Coast \$600

R1: Joan Licata (ANU) Research visit to University of Georgia, USA \$1200

R1: Valentina Wheeler (UoW) ANZMC8 meeting 2014, Melbourne \$600

R1: Sylvia Young (Melbourne) Research visit to USA \$2000

- Street recipients:

R2: Adelle Coster (UNSW) SMB 2015 conference, Atlanta \$320

R1: Joan Licata (ANU) Research visit to USA \$400

The Round 2 Selection Committee also recommended a Praeger Award of \$400 to Regina Burachik (UniSA) to attend the Varana 2015 conference in Erice (Italy). Unfortunately, this amount was not sufficient to help her fund the trip, so she declined.

Each awardee who has completed her trip wrote a brief report. Some extracts:

*“I am extremely appreciative for this support in the dual challenge of being a mathematician and a parent.”*

*“It was great to have the opportunity to connect with new and old friends within the Australasian applied mathematics community, especially after taking a recent break for maternity leave.”*

The Selection Committee for Round 3 (closing date 1 October 2015) consists of Amie Albrecht (Chair), Deborah Street and Barbara Maenhaut.

### 3.3 Connections with other organisations

- *Choose Maths*: AMSI and BHP Billiton have formed a partnership to design and deliver *Choose Maths*, a five-year national program to increase the participation of girls and women in mathematics. *Choose Maths* will have four main components, operating at school, tertiary and community levels, and is funded for \$22M by BHP Billiton. AMSI is hiring 13 new staff for *Choose Maths*. WIMSIG is already in contact with A/Prof Inge Koch, the incoming Executive Director: Choose Maths. WIMSIG stands ready to partner with AMSI on this potentially transformative program.

The WIMSIG Chair (Ward) attended the *Choose Maths* launch in Melbourne on 28 April 2015.

- The Women in Astronomy chapter of the Astronomical Society of Australia have been trailblazers in gender equity advocacy. WIMSIG Secretary Joanne Hall attended the Women in Astronomy Workshop (July 2015) to learn about successful initiatives in astronomy.

### **3.4 Newsletter**

Beginning in January 2015 the frequency of the WIMSIG newsletter was increased; it now appears at the start of each month. The newsletter is published using the WIMSIG mailing list and the WIMSIG website. Feedback on the newsletter has been very positive, with several people indicating that they have applied for events and other opportunities after seeing them advertised in the newsletter.

### **3.5 Website**

The WIMSIG website

[www.austms.org.au/Women+in+Mathematics+group](http://www.austms.org.au/Women+in+Mathematics+group)

is maintained by WIMSIG Webmaster Amy Glen. There are links to organisations, scholarly articles, other resources on gender equity, and other items of interest. Pages include the Hanna Neumann Lectures, Cheryl E. Praeger Awards, Anne Penfold Street Awards and interviews with female plenary speakers at AustMS and ANZIAM meetings. New this year, a page has been added which contains the WIMSIG newsletters.

## **4 Membership**

The WIMSIG membership list and mailing list is maintained by WIMSIG Secretary Joanne Hall. WIMSIG currently has just over 300 people on the mailing list, of whom about 200 are members of the AustMS. Membership is approximately 90% female and 10% male.

## **5 Funds**

Last year WIMSIG requested and was approved funding for

- \$1000 for group expenses, including travel money to attend events for advocacy.
- \$6400 for the Cheryl E. Praeger Travel Awards.
- \$1600 for the Anne Penfold Street Awards.

A summary of expenditures, and WIMSIG's future funding request, have been prepared as separate documents by the WIMSIG Treasurer Giang Nguyen.

## 6 Starred Item for Discussion

### 6.1 \* Advertisement for nominations to AustMS Council and Committees of Council.

Currently, notices announcing nominations for AustMS Council and Committees of Council are published in the Gazette. This is in distinction to advertisements for nominations for awards, fellowships and medals of the Society, which are published in the Gazette, through the Society's mailing list and on the Society's website (both on the News page and in the Resources section).

We suggest that in future, advertisements for nominations of members of AustMS Council and Committees of Council should be published in several places, including the Society's mailing list and the Society's website.

More broadly, could the Nominations Committee play a greater role than at present in developing diverse slates of candidates for these positions?

Joanne Hall  
Secretary  
Women in Mathematics Special Interest Group  
Australian Mathematical Society  
28th August 2015