



Celebrating female scientists – AWIS2017

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This July, New Zealand's female scientists from the past, present and future will be celebrated as Auckland hosts the ninth triennial Association for Women in the Sciences conference.

AWIS was created more than 30 years ago, and the conference offers a great opportunity to reflect on how the science sector has changed over this time and how the organisation can best support its members into the future. There will be sessions that consider the changing needs of women, particularly those in science, alongside the conference's customary streams focused on professional development and active research.

The two-day conference will offer opportunities for women working, or wanting to work, in any field of science to develop their skills to benefit both their careers and personal lives. Key to the event is the range of networking opportunities allowing attendees to learn from each other's stories. The programme has been developed to appeal to all women with an interest in science, including research scientists, administrators, businesswomen and educators. The programme is also intended to be accessible and of interest to young women nearing the end of their secondary or tertiary studies.

AWIS 2017 will start with a summary of current research by Jane Parker and Nazim Taskin of Massey University looking at New Zealand women's career progress and aspirations, which will help to inform our discussions over the two days. This theme will continue on the first day with a session that looks at where AWIS started, how things have changed since its inception, and the key drivers for women entering science now and in the future; and on the second day with a panel discussing what the issues are for women in science, including representatives from the Ministry for Women, UNESCO and the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Throughout the conference programme there will be three concurrent streams, themed around Science Snapshots, Development, and Affecting Change. The Science Snapshots will showcase how new technologies and techniques are being applied to science looking at the past to the future, with sessions based around archaeology, psychology and behaviour, computer science, and futuristic science (or 'rockets, robots and awesomeness' as we have termed it!). The Development stream will look at a range of professional and personal development themes – from work-life balance, to writing research proposals, communication skills and mentoring. Affecting Change will focus on ways in which we can change people's attitudes to science, through museums, citizen science, and the media, as well as showcasing projects that have changed societal attitudes to wider issues such as health and safety and gender equality.

The planning committee have made sure there's also plenty of time to relax and celebrate, including the formal presentation of the Miriam Dell Award* to Ros Kemp of the University of Otago, and, of course, a fantastic conference dinner.

Thanks to funding from the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO, attendees at AWIS2017 have the opportunity to mentor a female student from a South Auckland school. The Shadow a Scientist programme will offer 12 late-stage secondary students the opportunity to attend the conference and be assigned a mentor for the two days. During breaks, the students will be expected to get to know their mentor and meet other attendees, making the most of the opportunity to broaden their knowledge of science careers that might be available to them. After the conference, the students will be asked to create a written or multimedia summary of what they learnt and a profile of their mentor that can be shared via AWIS' website and social media to help other budding scientists make decisions about how they can enter a career in science.

AWIS would like to thank the sponsors of the conference – Te Pūnaha Matatini, The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Plant & Food Research, The MacDiarmid Institute, The University of Auckland Faculty of Science, the Dodd-Walls Centre and the Cawthron Institute.

**This year's Miriam Dell Award nominations will open in May for those interested in giving recognition to those who mentor females in science.*

**The conference is on 13–14 July at the Heritage Hotel in Auckland
and there is a special accommodation rate on the conference website**

Registration for AWIS2017 is now open

Go to: <http://www.scienceevents.co.nz/awis2017>

Also keep an eye out for speaker and activity announcements on Facebook and Twitter, @awisnz #awis2017