

**2022**  
**Athena Swan**  
**Annual Report**



**Published by:**  
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## Acknowledgement of Country

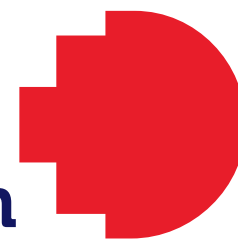
RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

Artwork: *Luwaytini* by Mark Cleaver, a proud Palawa person and RMIT Master of Human Resource Management student.



## Foreword Professor Kay Latham Athena SWAN Lead



2022 ... a year of ... multiple gender, equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives in play; a changing remit of SAGE Athena SWAN; as well as business as usual – progressing over 100 actions across 7 themes in our Action Plan towards Silver! It was busy, at times confusing, and certainly anything but dull. It also ended with the incredible news that we (RMIT) have achieved our first Cygnet award – for our work tackling inequalities in the recruitment of STEMM women and gender-diverse people to academic roles. We are the first Victorian university, the first ATN (Australian Technology Network) university, and only the third institution nationally to receive such recognition.

There were many other highlights of 2022! We saw a maturing of the *Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Group (DIAG)* in 2022, a year after they formed. The Group, which started with at least one Advocate in each STEMM School, expanding into small teams of academics, teachers and leaders in Schools cf. 4 in the College of Vocational Education; 7 in Health & Biomedical Sciences; and 15 in Engineering. In the School of Property, Construction & Project Management there have been 4 streams of equity and inclusion activities occurring since the start of 2021. The Advocates are now coming together to form a tight network to support one another and act collectively at their College-level. This will be of tremendous support as Athena SWAN goes enterprise-wide.

Across Colleges and Portfolios, there are a vast range of school outreach and engagement activities that roll out each year in partnership with industry and community, reaching 1000s of students. An absolute highlight in our dedicated Women in STEM Outreach program, was our flagship initiative, *Future STEM Leaders*. With multiple touchpoints for lasting student engagement (see page 20), it reached over 460 students in 2022, and attracted an almost \$1,000,000 grant, in partnership with *University of Technology Sydney* and the *University of Adelaide* from the *WiSE (Women in STEM & Entrepreneurship)* program as part of a nationwide initiative.

So, what's next? Well, work on recruitment of STEMM women and gender-diverse people to academic roles is not done. There are initiatives to sustain our progress and those to take it to the next level that need to be actioned. We are also preparing another Cygnet application, focused on supporting parents and carers. Alongside this, significant work will continue around support for career progression for all staff cohorts, and on respectful cultures and behaviours.

It's an exciting and dynamic time for inclusion, diversity and equity at RMIT. The scope of SAGE Athena SWAN has changed from a STEMM focus to enterprise-wide, so as of 2023, after having enjoyed the intense sponsorship of STEM College, the College of Vocational Education, and other STEMM areas within the University over the years, we will be working even more broadly with every College, Portfolio, Discipline and Department across campuses in Australia and globally. The University will also be bringing together the range of gender equality initiatives and legislative requirements that operate in the University to work more effectively whilst maintaining their individual specialisms and foci.

To support these ventures (and the Student Equity Plan and IDEA below) we are moving our data access, collection, and analysis functionalities towards 'Gender +' capability – multivariate, intersectional data collection, analysis, reporting and response. This will give the University real insight into the potentially compounding barriers faced by people who identify with multiple equity groups, and the data to inform the creation of targeted and impactful initiatives to address issues.

We will also be watching closely and working collaboratively with the Education Portfolio as the new Student Equity Plan evolves, and pending approval by Council, on the new D&I Framework which after a total refresh in 2022 morphed into *IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Access* or the *Inclusive Excellence* model. This new approach embeds IDEA from the ground up and into everything we do by universal design principles.

The message is clear, RMIT University is as committed as ever to a diverse and inclusive experience for all staff and all students.

**Professor Kay Latham**  
Dean, STEMM Diversity and Inclusion



# Snapshot of Athena SWAN 2022



**1st**

1st Victorian university and Australian Technology Network university to be awarded a SAGE Cygnet Award



**+19%**

+19% increase in women applying for STEMM roles during 2018-2021 compared to 2015-2017



**60%**

Number of women appointed to senior-level STEMM roles increased by 60%



**85%**

85% success rate for women in Academic Promotions



**\$1million**

Awarded a Federal WISE (Women in STEM & Entrepreneurship) grant of \$1million, in collaboration with the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Adelaide, for a nationwide initiative focused on female student engagement in STEM



**500**

Ally Network membership reached over 500 members



**91%**

91% of supervisory population completed the Respectful Research Training program



**400**

Engagement of almost 400 staff and students during the consultation phase to inform the IDEA framework



**40**

Women in STEM Student Ambassadors across VE and HE increased to 40

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## On the cover

Caley Manzie, a proud Noongar woman and RMIT Graduate in Bachelor of Science (Geospatial Science) (Honours) and now working with RMIT's Ngarara Willim Centre as an Indigenous Outreach Coordinator.



# Acknowledgements

We are privileged to work with a wide range of people and teams across RMIT University and would like to acknowledge all our contributors over the past year.

Four teams work towards the Athena SWAN Bronze Award 7-year action plan for guidance, implementation, and review.

## Our Athena SWAN Project Team

Owners and dedicated staff for the RMIT's Bronze Athena SWAN Action Plan.

- Prof. Kay Latham, Dean - STEMM, Diversity & Inclusion
- Dr. Maddy Yewers, Senior Project Coordinator
- Rany Schnell, Senior Project Officer

## Our Athena SWAN Steering Group (ASSG)

The purpose of this group is to govern and oversee the implementation of RMIT's Athena SWAN Action Plan. Challenge and question the project delivery team and stakeholders to ensure initiatives are strategically, financially, and operationally appropriate.

- Prof. Ian Burnett, Deputy Vice Chancellor & Vice President STEM College, and VCE Sponsor for Athena SWAN (Dec 2022 - )
- Prof. Calum Drummond, Deputy Vice Chancellor & Vice President Research & Innovation, Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor & Vice President STEM College and VCE Sponsor for Athena SWAN (July - Nov 2022)
- Prof. Aleks Subic, Deputy Vice Chancellor & Vice President STEM College & Digital Innovation, and VCE Sponsor for Athena SWAN (Jan - June 2022)
- Prof. Kay Latham, Dean, STEMM, Diversity & Inclusion
- Meegan Marshall, Chief People Officer - Human Resources (Jan - July 2022)
- Bridgid Connors, Chief People Officer - Human Resources (Oct 2022 - )
- Gaynor Witts, Executive Director, People - Group Entities, Organisational Development - Human Resources
- Michelle Dickinson, Associate Director, People Partnering - Academic - Human Resources
- Tara Waller, Head of Culture & Inclusion, Organisational Development & Talent - Human Resources
- Amy Love, Organisational Development Senior Practice Lead - Diversity - Human Resources
- Prof. Swee Mak, Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor Research & Innovation Capability
- Prof. Matt Duckham, ECP Director, Info & Systems (Engineering), Research & Innovation Capability
- Prof. Karin Verspoor, Dean, School of Computing Technologies, STEM College
- Prof. Ron Wakefield, Dean, School of PCPM/ADVC International, College of Design & Social Context
- Prof. Nava Subramaniam, Professor - Accounting, College of Business and Law
- Assoc. Prof. Angel Zhong, Associate Professor - Finance, College of Business and Law
- Nicole Eaton, Director, Campus Planning & Services
- Megha Mano Manohar, Student representative, STEM College
- Mish Eastman, Deputy Vice Chancellor Vocational Education & Vice President, College of Vocational Education (CoVE)
- Paula McKenry, Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor Learning & Teaching, CoVE
- Lara Rafferty, Associate Director Equity & Inclusion, Students Group
- Dist. Prof. Charlie Xue, Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor International, STEM College

## Our Athena SWAN Implementation Group

The Athena SWAN implementation group progresses and actions initiatives from the Athena SWAN Action Plan. This group also works towards the Cygnet Reports and the SAGE Athena SWAN Silver Award. The implementation group meets monthly.

- Prof. Kay Latham, Dean, STEMM, Diversity & Inclusion
- Dr. Maddy Yewers, Senior Project Coordinator
- Rany Schnell, Senior Project Officer
- Tara Waller, Head of Culture & Inclusion, Organisational Development & Talent - Human Resources
- Amy Love, Organisational Development Senior Practice Lead - Diversity - Human Resources
- Mat Lewis, Diversity & Inclusion Advisor, Organisational Development & Talent - Human Resources
- Katie Mitchell, Coordinator, Diversity and Inclusion, Students Group
- Carol Corzo, Senior Talent & Inclusion Manager, Organisational Development & Talent - Human Resources
- Tim Gardner, Employer Branding Manager, Organisational Development & Talent - Human Resources
- Swati Gupta, Associate Director, People Partnering - Enabling, Human Resources
- Sarah Hughes, Senior Manager, People Partnering, Human Resources
- Ashley Bloom, People Business Partner, People Partnering, Human Resources
- Kate Frazer, Senior Communications Business Partner STEM College, Colleges & Research and Innovation Communications
- Nick Adams, Senior Communications Advisor, Colleges & Research & Innovation Communications
- Shaun Brown, Associate Director, Planning & Operations, STEM College
- Kinnari Jani, Profile Planning Coordinator, STEM College
- Alice Boland, Associate Director, Research & Innovation Capability
- Nicole Fetchet, Women in STEM Engagement Coordinator, College of Vocational Education







## Our STEMM Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Group (DIAG)

The Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Group provides informed advice and direction to their respective College Leadership Groups. The DIAG identifies and addresses the remaining barriers to inclusion and progression for women, diverse-gendered staff and students, and those from other minority groups at the University.

- Prof. Kay Latham, Dean, STEMM, Diversity & Inclusion
- Prof. Mark Easton, Director, RMIT Advanced Manufacturing Precinct, Engineering, STEM College
- A./Prof Chrystal Zhang, Aerospace Engineering & Aviation, School of Engineering, STEM College
- Melissa Tinetti, Director, Built Environment & Sustainability, Programs & Delivery, College of Vocational Education
- Paula McKenry, Associate DVC, Learning & Teaching, College of Vocational Education
- Liam Freeman, Director, Creative Industries, Programs & Delivery, College of Vocational Education
- Robbie van Dijk, Director, Governance & Strategic Initiatives, College of Vocational Education
- Prof. Vanessa Cooper, School of Accounting, Info Systems & Supply Chain, College of Business and Law
- Dr. Nicola Willand, Lecturer, School of Property Construction & Project Management, College of Design and Social Context
- Dr. Farshid Rahmani, Lecturer, School of Property Construction & Project Management, College of Design and Social Context
- A./Prof. Ricarda Bigolin, Associate Dean, Fashion & Textiles Design, School of Fashion & Textiles, College of Design and Social Context
- Dr. Leanne Zilka, Senior Lecturer, Architecture, School of Architecture and Urban Design, College of Design and Social Context
- Dr. Ruwini Edirisinghe, Senior Lecturer, School of Property Construction & Project Management, College of Design and Social Context
- A./Prof. Julie Porteous, School of Computing Technologies, STEM College
- Dr. Kylie Quinn, Senior Research Fellow, School of Health and Biomedical Sciences, STEM College
- A./Prof. Taghrid Istivan, Associate Professor, Biosciences and Food Tech, School of Science, STEM College

**We would also like to acknowledge the Ngulu Committees for sharing and advising on First Nations knowledges and perspectives, as well as the Cultural, Diverse Genders, Sexes and Sexualities, and Accessibility Working Parties, and the VC's Advisory Group for the Prevention of Gender-Based Harm, for their invaluable insights and contributions to the Athena SWAN program of work.**

**We also thank all staff and students for their ongoing support and contributions - work that has enabled us to continue to make gender equality a reality in STEMM.**





# Athena SWAN, pathway to Silver

**RMIT is among a group of over 40 institutions participating in the SAGE Pilot of Athena SWAN which includes 31 Australian universities, 7 medical research institutes and 5 government science organisations.**

The program provides an opportunity for RMIT to address the significant under-representation of women and minority groups in the tertiary sector alongside our programs of work for the Workplace Gender Equality Agency - Employer of Choice Citation, our Gender Equality Action Plan (2022-2025) under the Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020 and Respect. Now. Always for the prevention of gender-based violence and sexual harm.

Under the Athena SWAN framework, RMIT is required to:

- collect comprehensive data on current gender equity standards, policies and practices
- identify weaknesses and shortcomings
- develop and implement plans to improve gender equity and intersectionality at all levels

- apply for institutional accreditation with Athena SWAN currently at Bronze level (March 2019) with eligibility for Silver level to February 2027
- implement actions identified in the Bronze Action Plan to address weaknesses and shortcomings across the seven themes:

1. Leading local action – leading transformation to support female careers in STEMM
2. Pipeline – Inspiring and attracting future female talent
3. Fulfilment and progression – Nurturing female talent in STEMM
4. Engaging moments of transition – In-time and flexible support mechanisms
5. Culture and wellbeing – An inclusive, respectful, and compassionate workplace
6. Supporting and encouraging our intersectional communities
7. Strengthening foundations – Future proofing Athena SWAN through good governance and leadership

RMIT University was successful in achieving Athena SWAN Bronze Accreditation which is valid for 7-years from February 2020 (date of presentation of Award).

Successful implementation of the Athena SWAN Bronze Action Plan, together with receipt of 5 intermediary Cygnet Awards for impact in our high-priority areas, will enable RMIT to review our practices and outcomes to apply for Silver accreditation.

Four out of the five key priority areas have been identified for RMIT's Cygnet Awards. In order of submission, these are:

1. Barrier to Attraction – Recruitment (2022)
2. Barrier to Participation - Parent and Carer Support (2023)
3. Respectful Cultures and Behaviours (2024)
4. Barrier to Progression - Career Progression (2025)
5. TBC Local Cygnet (Focused on a specific sub-group e.g. discipline or cohort) (2026)

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## First Cygnet Award received for inclusive recruitment practices

We are so pleased to announce that RMIT received its first SAGE Cygnet Award in December 2022 and is now officially on the pathway to Silver! Over the past four years, we redesigned our recruitment lifecycle to ensure a fairer and more inclusive experience for women and gender diverse candidates.

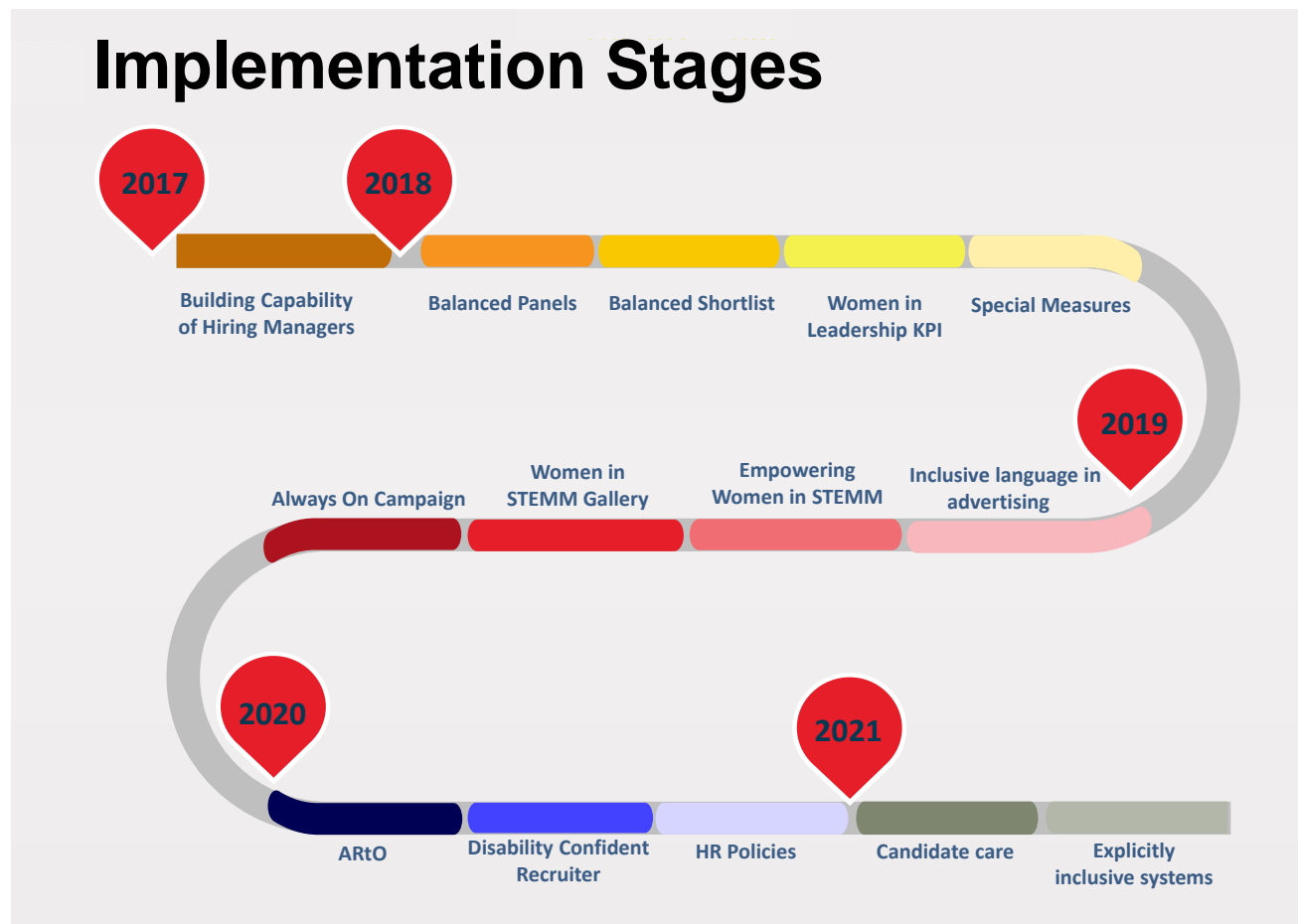
We became the first Victorian university and first university in the Australian Technology Network to be awarded a Cygnet.

Throughout 2022, the process of the cygnet award application provided the opportunity for deep analysis of our recruitment practices through quantitative analysis of trends over time and an understanding of the lived-experience of women who recently joined RMIT as well as the experience of hiring managers and the talent acquisition team through focus groups, one-on-one interviews and observational insights.

The activities and outputs reviewed in this cygnet spanned the entirety of the recruitment lifecycle and were aimed at reducing bias whilst promoting inclusivity. These included building the capability of hiring managers, balanced panels and shortlists, KPIs for women in leadership, special measures for women, trans and gender-diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, communications and strategies on RMIT's employer value proposition, and Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARtO).



# Implementation Stages



Timeline of key actions taken to address sub-issues.

At the end of the intervention period (2018-July 2021), and compared to the 2015-2017 period, on average 19% more women applied for STEMM roles and 36% more women were appointed. The number of women appointed to senior-level STEMM roles also rose by 60%. The STEM College now has 50% women in Executive Leadership compared to 100% men in 2019.

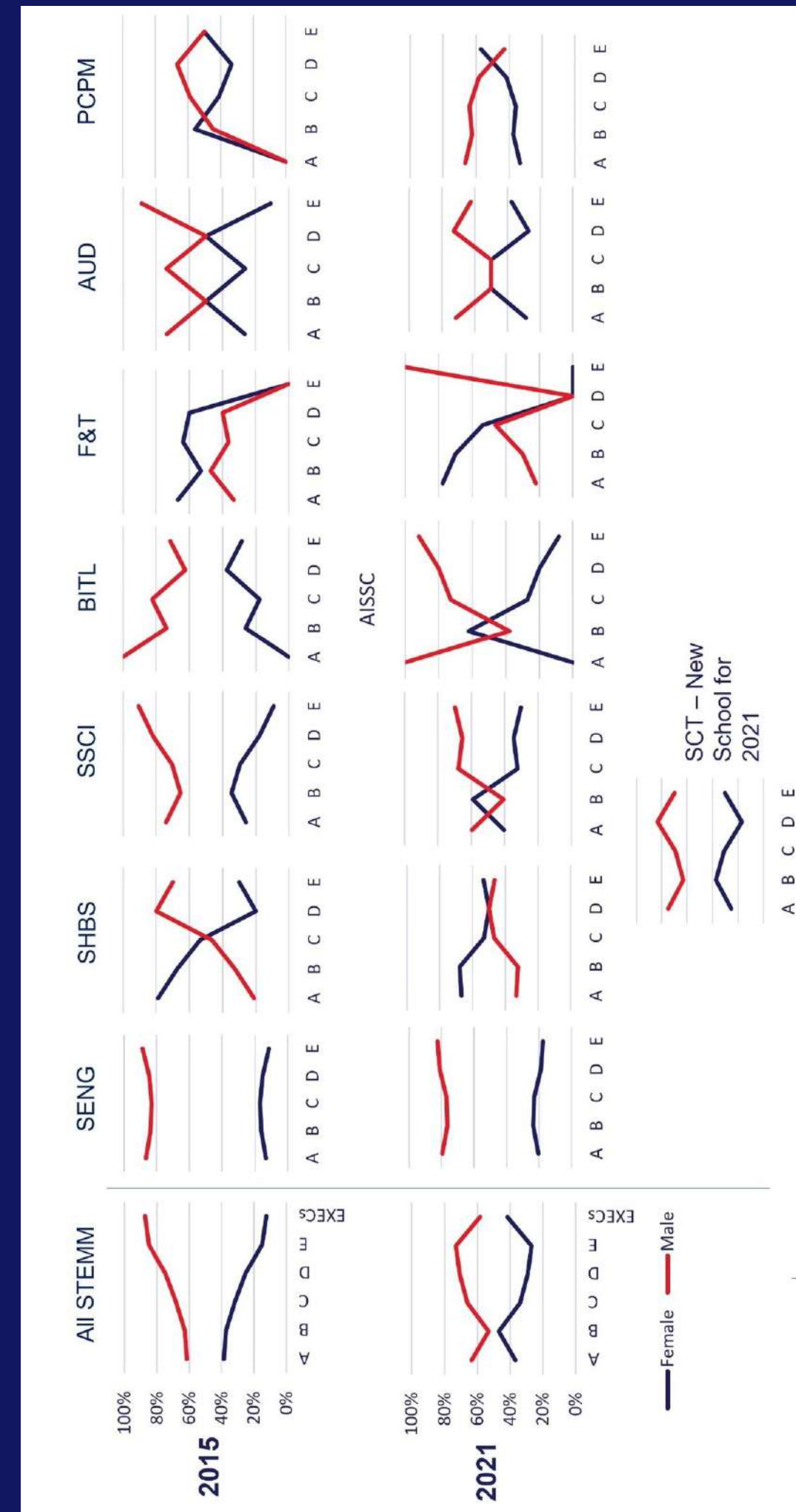
Overall, the proportion of women in RMIT's STEMM workforce has changed significantly since our Bronze Athena SWAN award (see page 14). We recognize both the role of recruitment practices and staff success in academic promotion as major influencers on this change. The latter will be explored in a later cygnet.

[RMIT University's Cygnet Award application](#) can be found on the SAGE website

**Dr Janin Bredehoeft**  
**CEO, Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE)**

The evidence from RMIT shows that we can increase diversity in STEMM by taking a systemic change approach to recruitment. It's a timely reminder, in light of the Government's upcoming Diversity in STEM review.

SAGE awards encourage organisations to evaluate and showcase their gender equity and diversity outcomes, which in turn helps others invest in actions that work. I'm very pleased to present RMIT with their first Cygnet Award – congratulations to the team on their phenomenal work.



Scissor graph of changing academic profile by gender and level - ALL STEMM and for each STEMM School



# Leading local action

## Leading transformation to support female careers in STEM

Objective: Enable managers to lead effective change locally and build an inclusive culture through everyday decisions and actions

## STEMM Diversity & Inclusion Dashboards

In 2021, a new Power BI Dashboard was developed, giving College Executive teams real-time analysis of the representation of women in senior positions within their College.

Each STEMM School's Dashboard has continued to be updated with staff and student data providing leaders with relevant equity and inclusion data to inform strategy, decision-making and planning across core business deliverables.

## Equity and Data Inclusion Project

In collaboration with colleagues across the People Team, Education Portfolio and School of Graduate Research, we have been working with stakeholders and members of the Data & Analytics team to form a 'platform' of equity, diversity and inclusion data that can be auto-fed into the STEMM D&I Dashboards that currently inform STEMM School Executive teams.

This project aims to meet the needs of all equity, diversity and inclusion functions across RMIT.

At present we have informed 13 case studies of staff and student demographics and across research outcomes and participation which the Data & Analytics team are translating. These expanded data-sets will be made available to School leadership teams through the Dashboards in a phased manner throughout 2023.

## Advocating Diversity and Inclusion in STEMM Schools

This year, the STEMM Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Group (DIAG) welcomed Chrystal Zhang (Women Researchers Network), Taghrid Istivan (School of Science), Leanne Zilka (School of Architecture and Urban Design), Kylie Quinn (School of Health and Biomedical Sciences), Robbie van Dijk (College of Vocational Education), Liam Freeman (College of Vocational Education), and Farshid Rahmani (School of Property, Construction and Project Management).

Advocates valued the sharing of information and knowledge at the DIAG meetings. They continued in this vein to gather information from across their Schools to identify diversity and inclusion concerns and opportunities as well as share their initiatives and plans with the Group.

## STEMM Diversity and Inclusion Advocate Highlights for 2022

.. established a working group within the School which has been working well – they are a good team; conversations are good and easy. Now trying to understand where they sit in RMIT and what resources are available to them as they map out the network.

## STEMM Diversity and Inclusion Advocate Highlights for 2022

Activity to celebrate cultural diversity where staff came together for a morning tea and participated in a visual map with pins identifying their places of origin.

To support them in advancing their initiatives for 2023, an in-house workshop to empower the advocates in influencing key stakeholder groups was organized and facilitated by RMIT's Organisational Development team. Advocates were coached to consider who they need to influence to accomplish plans in 2023 and what they might need to do to implement them across the board.

The session explored how they could use their personal communication styles to influence. Members had the opportunity to explore their own communication styles and were introduced to other communication styles including how to recognize, and influence and manage them. Initial feedback about the workshop has been very positive.

We also take this opportunity to thank Nicola Willand for being an Advocate for the School of Property Construction and Project Management for almost two years.





## Communications Strategies

In late 2022, we reviewed our communication platforms considering the needs of our readers and finetuning our communications strategy in consultation with communications experts in STEM College.

We transitioned out the Athena SWAN Bevy Newsletter and shared our Athena SWAN, gender equity and diversity and inclusion news, opportunities and key updates with dedicated updates in College-level newsletters. This elevates our focus and brings our news into the strategic and operational College workings. It also increases our readership levels and consolidates how our readers receive news.

We also continued to share news with the broader University community through RMIT Life. We spotlighted the trailblazing women working in STEM areas with two features, Women in Physics and Women in Maths, as well as the amazing work that our Athena SWAN Representatives across the University have been involved in.

We reviewed how readers use Athena SWAN pages on the RMIT website and there are plans underway to

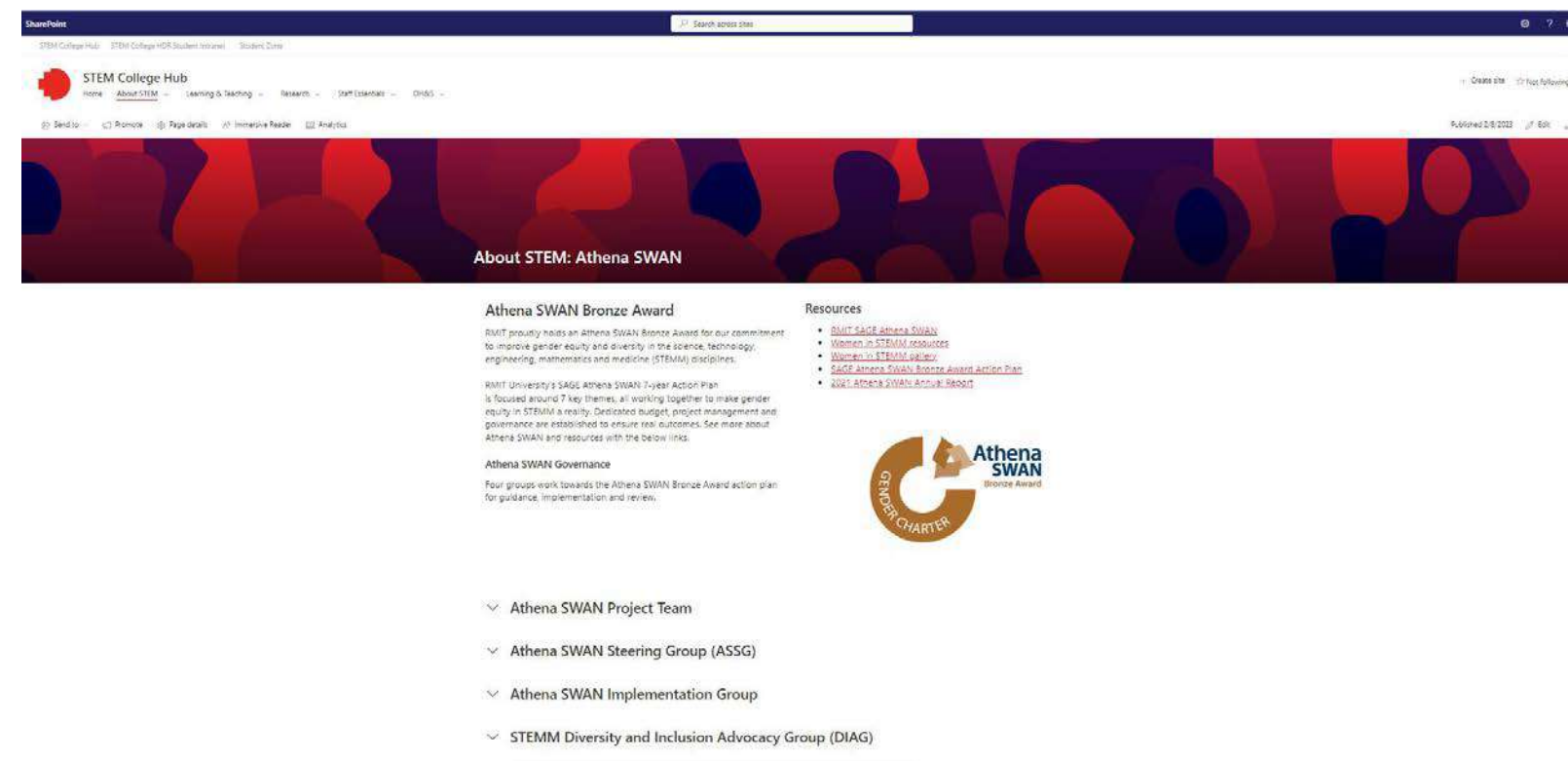
- consolidate the number of current pages to give readers a better navigation experience so they can find useful information easily, and
- feature current Women in STEM Student Ambassadors to resonate with our readers.

## Women in STEMM Gallery

The inspiring internal features on Women in Physics and Maths are being adapted to the [Women in STEMM Gallery](#) on the RMIT website, and there are plans to feature more disciplines here. The Women in STEMM Gallery aligns itself to our Athena SWAN Action Plan, to create a visual representation of our female leaders and researchers at RMIT.

## STEM College Sharepoint Hub

This internal-facing platform holds information relating to Athena SWAN and diversity and inclusion news, activities and updates for staff. It has been given a facelift and staff can easily navigate the page to access information. The page is currently informational. To increase engagement with our staff, content will expand to include a collection of resources, news feed and useful links and forms.







# Building the pipeline

## Inspiring and attracting future female talent

Objective: Increase the proportion of STEMM females from studentship to academia and encourage more females to seek career opportunities in STEMM

## Women in STEM Student Engagement and Outreach

Student engagement and outreach is an essential part of the Athena SWAN strategy where we build the pipeline and ensure an embedded focus for under-represented groups in our work with external industry partners, community groups and high schools. Presently this is restricted to STEMM disciplines with a focus on low socio-economic backgrounds and culturally diverse women. It has resulted in sponsored tertiary education access scholarships and cadetships for school leavers and career changing women in STEMM (MYOB, BGIS), industry supported outreach activities and programs (Toyota Community Trust, TAFE Services Fund, Boeing, Victorian Surveying Taskforce, Fulton Hogan) including casual employment of RMIT students as Women in STEM ambassadors.

In 2022, the Women in STEM project team and student ambassadors led over 1,200 student engagement opportunities as well as assisting other RMIT outreach and recruitment activities across the University, including: Santos Science Experience, Open Day panels, Victorian Careers Show, TradeFit Expo, Melbourne Grand Prix, I Belong in Computer Science and IT, Deadly Day of STEM and Regional Workshops at Bendigo Flight School.



## Women in IT

IT continued to be a strong area of focus for Women in STEM Outreach in 2022. The Women in STEM project team developed a new workshop using design thinking principles to explore the hardware and coding elements of Micro:bits.

RMIT STEM College continued their partnership with MYOB as the education provider of the DevelopHer program designed to redress gender imbalance in the technology industry. The program offers a paid full-time internship to women seeking a career in software development. MYOB DevelopHer participants study RMIT's innovative Programming Bootcamp to Studio model focused on interactive, hands-on experiential learning and receive supportive coaching sessions from RMIT and MYOB. On successful completion of the course, participants received a Graduate Certificate of Application Development, as well as full-time employment at MYOB as a Graduate Developer. In 2022, DevelopHer expanded into MYOB's New Zealand office.



An expanded partnership with Apple will bring coding education to even more students, giving those from diverse and under-represented groups the opportunity to learn about App Development, spark a passion for technology, and grow coding opportunities for even more learners. Apple, in collaboration with RMIT and the University of Technology in Sydney (UTS) launched two new Apple Foundation programs that will provide four-week courses on the fundamentals of Swift coding.

## Future STEM Leaders

The flagship Women in STEM outreach project in 2022 was the Future STEM Leaders (FSL) program which has multiple touchpoints for lasting student engagement. Participation is for years 7-10 students and in 2022 this included leadership development for 92 Year 9 and 10 women with industry experts and RMIT Women in STEM Ambassadors (current university students).

The Year 9 and 10 STEM Leaders then guided over 360 younger students of all genders in practical STEM workshops.



# Women in STEM Engagement and Outreach Snapshots

**31,268**

attendees across recruitment activities including:

- Tradefit Expo
- Melbourne Careers Expo
- Victorian Careers Show
- RMIT Open Day

**1,233**

interactions across various outreach and recruitment activities including:

- Future STEM Leaders
- I Belong in Computer Science & IT
- Santos Science Experience
- Tech and Trades Experience Day
- Deadly Day of STEM
- Regional workshops in Bendigo Flight School

## International expansion

The DevelopHer program, a partnership with MYOB for paid internship to support women seeking a career change to software development, expanded to MYOB's New Zealand office. The program was offered online to these participants.

## \$1m grant award

Awarded a Federal WISE (Women in STEM & Entrepreneurship) grant of \$1million, in collaboration with the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Adelaide, for a nationwide initiative focused on female student engagement in STEM.

## Exploring uncommon ground

Women in STEM Ambassadors facilitated four in person workshops on campus for 100 Year 9 students from Balcombe Grammar School. These workshops explored IT and aimed to increase student confidence in STEM, provide visible role models and share the RMIT City Campus with prospective students.



## Women in Surveying

There are significant skill shortages in Australia's surveying workforce and in 2021 only 5% of the Australian surveying workforce were women (The Surveyor's Trust, 2022). We have partnered with the Victorian Surveying Taskforce to build a diverse pipeline in surveying.

In 2022, RMIT Surveying and Geospatial Science academics, students, industry partners, the Surveying Taskforce and Women in STEM project team developed a new hands-on workshop exploring the technology and applications of surveying which was rolled out across outreach programs. Student feedback has been very positive with highlights including using equipment like total stations which they have seen frequently on streets and construction sites. Plans are in place to extend our focus on surveying in 2023 alongside other disciplines which are also less visible and less understood in STEM.

## Women in STEM Student Ambassadors

The Women in STEM Outreach project team continued to grow in 2022 with an industry-funded Project Officer position and 28 new and 12 continuing Women in STEM Student Ambassadors. Ambassadors are studying across both Vocational Education and Higher Education in a wide range of disciplines including electrical engineering, construction, lab technologies, aviation, information technology and space science. The Ambassadors took part in induction and training sessions to build their skills as leaders and role models within the RMIT Women in STEM student community and for women considering entering STEM either from high school or as a career change.

Meet Raihana Rashid, a Civil and Infrastructure Engineering student and one of our amazing College of Vocational Education Women in STEM Student Ambassadors.

She is of the Hazara community, one of Afghanistan's most persecuted and vulnerable groups. She became a refugee in Pakistan due to the first Taliban rule over Afghanistan in 1998. While completing her studies in Pakistan, she worked as Chief Secretary with the Hazara Student Federation. She is currently working as Engineering Intern with the North East Link Program in Melbourne.

After arriving in Australia, Raihana was determined to forge her path. In the last 5 years since her arrival, she completed a Certificate III in English as an Additional Language, the VCE, an Advanced Diploma of Civil Engineering Design, and is currently completing her final year of a Bachelor of Civil and Infrastructure Engineering with Honours at RMIT University.

### Raihana Rashid RMIT Women in STEM Student Ambassador

When I joined as a Women in STEM Student Ambassador, I wouldn't talk to the person sitting next to me. Through the training and participation in the Future STEM Leaders (FSL) program, I've found my voice and confidence in myself. Now you can't get me to stop talking! I talk on panels, lead workshops, share my STEM journey, have been coming up with new ideas for the FSL program, and throughout this program I have built my network with engineering industry experts.







## Inclusive Hiring Practices

In 2022, RMIT further embedded Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARtO) in Academic Recruitment and the use of Special Measures for women, trans and gender-diverse, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with a disability, including sharing best practice nationally.

RMIT continued to develop a consistent ARtO employee experience with phased implementation, and adaptations for Academic Promotion and Recruitment. Key future considerations include further education for those applying ARtO to help increase uptake and reinforcing the cultural change required for everyone to feel safe in applying ARtO. We presented our model of best practice and implementation at the 2022 SAGE Diversity Interventions Conference as well as an invited presentation to the Athena SWAN Working Group at The University of Southern Queensland.

## Women in STEM Vocational Education Student Community

Activities for the College of Vocational Education Women in STEM community continued in 2022 with regular opportunities for women studying in STEM areas to connect and develop professionally and personally.

Regular lunchtime sessions took place on topics such as budgeting, superannuation (in collaboration with UniSuper) and running a business. To finish the year the Women in STEM VE Conference hosted activities, panels and keynote speakers connecting both current students, staff and alumni.

## HDR Women in STEM Scholarships

In 2022, the STEM College utilised gender equality measures to ensure diversity in the award of Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) scholarships and in our HDR student cohort. This included practices to recognise the systemic disadvantage experienced by women in STEM fields where they are under-represented, being included in rationale as decision points, and the prioritization of female academic supervisors and HDR female applicants supervised by women. Procedural changes ensured all large scale external HDR funding had supervisory teams that included either an Early Career Researcher and/or a female academic.

## Women in STEMM Pre-doctoral/Teaching Fellowships - RMIT Vietnam

The Women in STEMM Pre-doctoral/Teaching Fellowships initiative was designed to increase offshore HDR student participation and build the pipeline of female STEMM academic staff at RMIT Vietnam.

PhD candidates are enrolled with RMIT Melbourne and follow Melbourne HDR process and hurdles, whilst employed by RMIT Vietnam. The candidates are co-supervised between RMIT Vietnam and RMIT Melbourne.

Round 1 was successfully completed with two new appointments in School of Science, Engineering and Technology (SSET) by mid-2022 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) (1) and Food Biotechnology (1) and a third potential appointee in AI, pending English requirements. Three additional PhD candidates were also identified through the Women in STEMM selection processes and offered scholarships. Permission and funding are also secured for Round 2 of the Fellowships (2023).

## Recognition of Diversity and Inclusion Work

The annual RMIT Operations Awards are an opportunity to recognise staff in the Operations portfolio who embody the RMIT values and have made a significant contribution to our RMIT community.

In 2022, the Operations group embraced a new and innovative way of working and delivered exceptional experiences for our staff and students. The RMIT Talent team within the Operations Portfolio won the 2022 Master of Inclusion Award for embracing differences, building a sense of belonging and in conclusion, embracing inclusion.

The Talent team were also a finalist in the category of Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion at the 2022 Internal Talent Awards (ITA) and a finalist in the 2022 Seek STAR Awards for the Best Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative.

### Current Student Conference Participant

The conference [was] informative and impressive. I met fantastic women who shared their ideas and experience in STEM. They are friendly in providing advice to help other women grow. I felt supported in this group.





## Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellowships

The RMIT Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellowships (VCRF) program is known for supporting outstanding researchers to undertake applied research that creates positive impact for society, the economy and the environment.

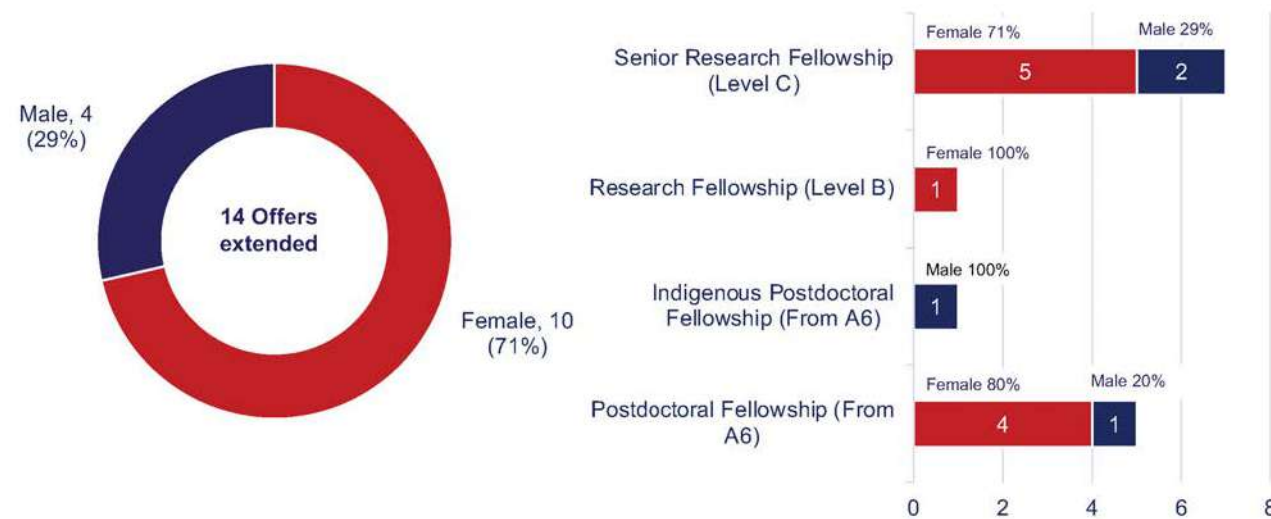
In the 2022 recruitment round, we received a total of 815 applications. To address the under representation of women in STEMM for Senior Research Fellowships and Research Fellowships positions, Special Measures were taken in Schools where female representation was below 40% at the identified academic levels. In the 2022 recruitment round, these Special Measures of female-only appointments were applied to the School of Engineering (Academic levels B and C), and School of Computing Technologies (Academic level C).

The VCRF commitment to inclusion through Special Measures Recruitment has seen the following offers made in 2022 for commencement in 2023. Out of 14 Fellowship offers made:

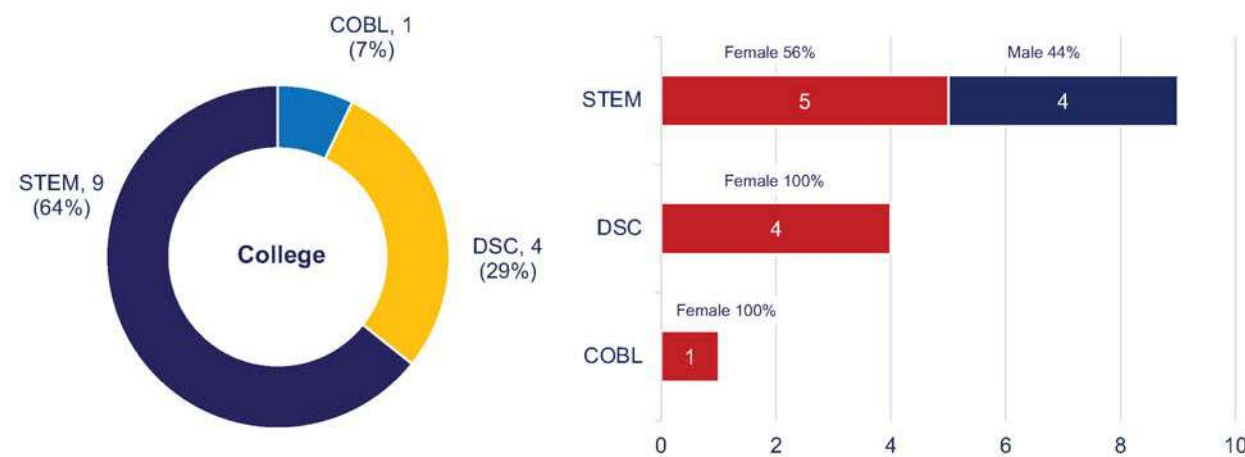
- 71% were made to female candidates across the scheme
- 75% of Research Fellowships (Academic level B) and Senior Research Fellowships (Academic level C) offers were made to female candidates
- 56% were made to female candidates in the STEMM disciplines
- 60% of Research Fellowships (Academic level B) and Senior Research Fellowships (Academic level C) offers were made to female candidates in STEMM disciplines

We continue to apply Special Measures to the Indigenous Research Fellowships round where only Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples are eligible to apply. One Indigenous Postdoctoral Fellowship had been offered in 2022 for commencement in 2023.

### 2022 VCRF Offers (as at 8 Feb 2023) for 2023 commencement



### College Distribution: 2022 VCRF Offers (as at 8 Feb 2023) for 2023 commencement







# Fulfillment and progression

## Nurturing female talent in STEMM

Objective: Increase proportion of STEMM females in senior and leadership roles: "If I can see it; I can be it"

## Academic Promotions

The University is deeply proud of its academic talent and aims to create the best possible environment for both quality teaching and sector-leading research. RMIT's Academic Promotion process is guided by the Academic Promotion Framework which encompasses three domains of practice: Education, Engagement and Research. The process is structured to ensure diversity and inclusion in the workforce and to address unequal gender and cultural representation in academia. Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARtO) was considered through specific requests as well as an understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 during 2020 and 2021. Reasons for activating ARtO ranged from career interruptions, carer responsibilities, to the nature of the discipline and COVID-19 impacts. In 2022, 63% of applicants activated ARtO compared with 55% in 2021. There was an 81% success rate for applicants who activated ARtO in 2022.

In 2022, we also saw the greatest number of successful academic promotions with 111 academics promoted. There was an 85% success rate for women and a 76% success rate for men - a 10% and 4% increase, respectively. Promotions spanned across all Higher Education Colleges extending to two Schools in RMIT Vietnam. It is notable that the success rate was higher than the RMIT overall average of 79% for applicants who identified as having carer responsibilities (86%) and dependent children (85%). There was a 76% success rate for staff who identified as culturally and/or linguistically diverse.

Hear from two leading women in STEMM, who were recently promoted, share their experiences with us.

### Rita Zhang, Associate Professor

A/Prof. Rita Zhang was promoted from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor in 2022 in the School of Property, Construction and Project Management.

Rita fully participated in the application development program organised by the RMIT Academic Promotions Team. "This program was helpful to me in terms of interpreting the promotion criteria, seeing examples of how to address the criteria provided by previous successful applicants, and learning techniques to gather useful data (particularly research data) as evidence for impact."

Rita also received support from School colleagues and the Associate Dean. "It can be useful for a candidate to discuss with their Dean, Associate Dean or other Senior Academics to understand what are the most extraordinary things that they see in the candidate. Sometimes you are not even aware how great you are in certain aspects till someone who knows well about you points that out."

She suggested that future candidates identify mentors. "Mentors should include those who share similar disciplinary backgrounds with a candidate as well as those who are from outside of the candidate's discipline... who can suggest whether the contribution and impact depicted are still perceived as significant from an external perspective".



**Associate Professor Rita Zhang**  
**School of Property, Construction and Project Management, College of Design and Social Context**

Being promoted means that all my commitment and dedication to excellent research, high quality teaching, and active engagement have been recognised and that my contribution to improving RMIT's reputation in research and teaching has been valued. It also demonstrates my capabilities and provides me with greater confidence to further progress my academic career and create higher impacts through my research, teaching and engagement practices.



### Professor Samantha Richardson, Associate Dean

Prof. Samantha Richardson, Associate Dean, Higher Degrees by Research for Research & Innovation, Science and Health who was recently promoted to Level E. She candidly shares with us her journey to this point, what the process was like for her and what being promoted means to her personally.

#### Tell us about your journey so far.

After finishing a PhD at University of Melbourne (1995), I had consecutive ARC fellowships and grants and ran a lab there for 8 years, graduating 3 PhD candidates and numerous Honours students. My research direction then changed from evolution to neural stem cell research (keeping thyroid hormones as the central theme) and I moved to the Museum Natural d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, where baby #1 was born (2006). Thereafter I moved to RMIT and baby #2 was born (2008). A Belgian colleague commented "Every time you move institutions, you have a baby", so I will remain at RMIT until I retire!

From 2007 until 2009, I was Research Only at RMIT (School of Medical Sciences - then School of Health & Biomedical Sciences) and from 2010 until 2019 I taught 1st to 3rd Year into 9 undergraduate programs (including coordinating a course with 800 students) and Research Methods into HDR programs. During this time I had various HDR leadership positions which I thoroughly enjoyed! In December 2019 I moved to the School of Science as the Associate Dean for Higher Degrees by Research.

Three months later we went into COVID lockdown. The AD HDR gig was for 3 years, the first 2.3 of which were in lockdown/campus closure. This was not what I had anticipated and my role was very "reactive" to the local situations rather than the proactive intentions I had during the job interview. I have been re-appointed as AD HDR in the School of Science for the next 3 years and I plan to support HDR candidates and their supervisors to the best of my ability.

#### What does being promoted mean to you?

Honestly? Confusion! Like everyone, I have had ups and downs in my life and a few curved balls from left field. I was ambitious and competitive when I was more junior but "life" can change your priorities – especially bringing up kids and losing people close to you. I was Associate Professor for more than 10 years and was happy there. I only applied for promotion because two people that I have enormous respect for pushed me. Specifically, what does it mean to me? Humbled that people thought I was worthy of promotion.



#### Professor Samantha Richardson Associate Dean, Higher Degrees by Research, Research and Innovation, Science and Health

I want to be a role model for others (e.g. it is possible to be a sole parent bringing up two kids and have career progression in a supportive university environment); I want to support HDR candidates and their supervisors by influencing policy at the School, College and University levels; I want to have impact by enabling others.

#### Did you receive supports from RMIT in the Academic Promotion process, if so what were these?

The colleagues who insisted I apply for promotion gave me invaluable advice. They gave me feedback on strategy, structure, content and drafts of the application. I made a list of about 20 potential referees and discussed this with many people to reach a final list of 6. I attended information sessions and workshops at least one year in advance of applying, so I could get an idea of what was required and thinking time. I did the Canvas module but it just cemented what I knew (which gave me more confidence). I had a Boost mentor who was a really nice and interesting person but whose research area had no relationship to mine but I enjoyed meeting him and chatting to him. In retrospect, the only thing we had in common was that neither of us expected to be promoted first time around but we were!

#### What is your advice for future candidates?

Start preparing early i.e. two years in advance. Attend info sessions two years before you intend to apply. Talk to your line manager two or three years in advance and ask them where they think your weak points are and how you can work with them to fill those holes. Find trusted supportive colleagues who are likely to give you their honest opinion about weaknesses in your application and how to address them.

Think of it like an ARC grant application: submit it expecting failure the first time and to take on board the criticism, then again apply after having had time to address the criticism. I found applying for promotion very confronting – if you tell yourself it is a dry run for in 2 years' time, it takes some of the pressure off.

#### Career Advancement for Women in College of Business and Law

The Career Advancement for Women Program (CAWP) in the College of Business and Law (CoBL) is a developmental program for personal and professional growth targeted for women across all academic levels. The aim of CAWP is to inspire, encourage and support women in COBL to reach their full career potential through a series of workshops that assist in long term career planning. Specifically, the program assists in increasing self-awareness of strengths

and developmental needs that are required to achieve long term career goals as an academic whilst strengthening the dynamic community of women in COBL.

In 2022, workshop topics included: career planning to assist in defining career values and goals, career building with a focus on your career evidence portfolio, and a workshop on building your support network with exploration on mentors, peer support and visibility.

#### Associate Professor Angel Zhong Head of Department - Finance, School of Economics, Finance and Marketing, College of Business and Law

The COBL CAWP Program helped us to identify our strengths, weaknesses and potential as a female academic. It is a really powerful way to gain confidence in myself and my own journey. It provides us with a platform to learn, grow, and identify common problems we all face as female academics. It's also an incredible opportunity to work with motivated and intelligent women from a variety of disciplines, which brings fresh perspective to the way you approach your career.





# Engaging moments of transition

## in-time and flexible support mechanisms

Objective: Support gender equality in caring responsibilities and career progression for all carers improving management of career disruptions and transitions

## Parents and Carers Programs at RMIT

Over 35% of RMIT staff identify that they have parental or caring responsibilities. RMIT continues to support our parent and carer community.

In 2022, the first year of implementation, RMIT promoted expansion of leave entitlements where the eligibility period to access primary parental leave was removed, and partner leave was extended from 2 to 4 weeks.

As staff return to campus, RMIT continually promotes diverse flexible working options and channels to support staff wellbeing. RMIT's Childcare facilities have also been supporting our parental community.

Our supports and network building include:

- regular Keep-in-Touch sessions and Transitioning-to and from Parental Leave sessions, that are available to all staff across all campuses.
- a sponsored Parental Resilience Program which provided team coaching opportunities on a range of work life balance areas for carers and parents.
- our Win-Win Parenting program, launched in 2022 - nearly 300 staff registered to watch live webinars, catch-up on replays online, and download a range of resources including podcasts, handouts and articles. There were over 780 engagements with the program and it will run again in 2023.

Leya Hockman, Manager of Staff Wellbeing, said the program was designed to help RMIT staff better manage the balance between work and family life.

### Leya Hockman Manager, Staff Wellbeing

The webinars are a great opportunity for anyone involved in caring for a child or young person, whether it's their own son or daughter, a grandchild or stepchild, to support healthy family relationships – regardless of age and stage. They offer practical strategies that can help make things a bit easier at home and reduce the stress of juggling family and career.

During the review of RMIT's Diversity and Inclusion Framework in 2022, consultation reinforced the need to continue to support carer arrangements, particularly for eldercare and staff who are carers for family members with a disability, injury or illness. This continues to be a focus in the preparation of our Parent and Carer Cygnet, our second submission, in 2023.

## Career Reignite

The Career Reignite Program is designed to better support our research academic staff who experience career interruption(s) that impact their ability to access research opportunities. In 2022, a second tranche of merit-based funding was awarded by the Research & Innovation (R&I)Portfolio, bringing the total number of awardees with 2022 Career Reignite funding support to 22 (20 female and 2 male; 55% early career researchers; 35% mid-career researchers). Of those who received funding:

- 64% requested support for personnel e.g. research assistance and relief from other duties)
- 32% requested support for pilot studies and research collaboration

Interim progress reports received from this cohort highlighted the impact the funding had made to the progression of research and opportunities, including: the completion of book manuscripts; open access publications; database establishment; book launches; invitations to collaborate internationally; industry partner discussions; enhanced multidisciplinary partner collaborations; patent scoping; preliminary research trials; results leveraging external grants. Once final reports are received from our awardees, a comprehensive end of year report on the program will be delivered in Q1, 2023.

In 2023, it is anticipated that expanded financial support will be available to those with eligible research career interruption(s), with opportunities to be broadened via a new partnership approach between the R&I Portfolio and STEM College.

A Post Implementation Review of the first year of Career Reignite funding and associated outputs/outcomes will be completed to ensure the program's design continues to be optimised to create maximum impact for both staff and RMIT.





# Culture and wellbeing

## An inclusive, respectful and compassionate workplace

Objective: Grow RMIT's inclusive culture supporting diversity and gender equity through enterprise-wide action and local leadership

## Annual Staff Survey

Towards the end of 2022, all RMIT staff were invited to complete the annual Staff Survey to measure what is working well, what areas we can improve, and help drive action and initiatives to make RMIT an even better place to work.

60% of continuing and fixed-term staff responded to the annual staff survey, and 69% of casual staff also shared their views. This was an overall employee engagement index of 64% - a 3% improvement on our 2021 survey results.

Survey results indicated that, despite improvements across the board, academic (56%) and VE teaching (53%) cohorts continue to be less engaged than professional staff (68%). Engagement also varied across RMIT locations, with both RMIT Vietnam and RMIT Europe engagement levels at 77% compared to RMIT Australia at 61%.

Flexible working is a standout strength across RMIT with 84% respondents being satisfied with current offerings. The University also scored high in inclusion and diversity, safety and wellness, and many of our managers are meeting the expectation of being positive role models. Whilst it speaks to the general positive behaviours in the University, there were some areas where this was not the case and would require action.

Opportunity exists in the following areas:

- to respond in a genuine and robust way to survey feedback - only 28% of respondents believe we take action on these results.
- in teaching and research and in learning and career development.
- workload - while the response improved 7% since 2021, this issue requires continued attention.

RMIT's leadership team will be focused on action planning and translating this to meaningful change over the coming months.

**84% respondents**

satisfied with flexible working and its current offerings

**60% respondents**

were continuing and fixed term staff

**7% improvement**

from 2021 survey results in response relating to workload issues

**Flexible working**

standout strength across RMIT

**28% respondents**

believe we respond and take action on feedback received in survey



## Awards and Recognition

### STEM College Staff Awards

The 2022 RMIT STEM College Staff Awards recognised and celebrated the many exceptional individuals across the STEM college who have made an outstanding contribution through their professional and academic roles.

Congratulations to Professor Kate Fox, Associate Dean of Higher Degrees by Research, School of Engineering, who was awarded the STEM College Athena SWAN Award.

Kate is the Associate Dean of Higher Degrees by Research (Engineering) and a Biomedical Engineer who has always been interested in how technology can help others, from implant technology that allows a blind person to see or a bone to heal, to ways we can take engineering solutions to the patient. As a result, she has been rewarded with a number of accolades including being named one of Science Technology Australia's Superstars of STEM - a program aimed to promote women and girls in science, a Young Tall Poppy Science Award, one of Engineers Australia's Most Innovative Engineers, and most recently, a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Research Impact.

Professor Kay Latham, Dean, STEMM Diversity and Inclusion described Kate, "Apart from her unquestionable talent in STEMM, Kate is a warm and welcoming person, who goes out of her way to ensure everyone feels at ease and included. A true role model for all academics, and an absolute inspiration for current and upcoming women and girls in STEMM".

### College of Vocational Education Staff Awards

Nicole Fetchet leads the Women in STEM program in the College of Vocational Education (VE) with passion and energy and has built a reputation as a creative, collaborative, and thoughtful contributor to the broader Women in STEM and gender equity work at RMIT. Her ability to build meaningful programs of work and to deliver the most impact on a shoestring budget is a testament to her innovative and imaginative thinking, winning her the Imagination Award at the 2022 College of Vocational Education Staff Awards.

Nicole is an ambassador for VE and STEM in her own right, stridently and vehemently acting to reshape perceptions of vocational education and vocational careers both across RMIT and externally - having represented RMIT at careers expos and in schools to prospective students throughout 2022.



Nicole Fetchet, Women in STEM Engagement Coordinator, College of Vocational Education with Mish Eastman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, College of Vocational Education

### RMIT Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Excellence

Each year, the RMIT Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Excellence provide an opportunity to recognise RMIT staff who have demonstrated outstanding leadership or have made a significant contribution to our community.

Dr Ronny Andrade Parra received the Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Award for Inclusion. This award recognises Ronny's passion for inclusion and accessibility for all. His impactful work within digital accessibility, national accessible procurement guidelines and professional development sessions has shifted



Dr. Ronny Andrade Parra, Digital Accessibility Practice Lead, Customer Experience and recipient of the RMIT Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Award for Inclusion

RMIT as a leader in the digital accessibility space at a national level.

As a Digital Accessibility, Practice Lead with RMIT's Customer Experience, he supports the delivery of accessible digital assets. His work spans across the entire product lifecycle; from design to implementation to use. Ronny's work addresses systemic barriers to digital access in the context of higher education. He also ran a series of professional development sessions focusing on accessible design, web development, and content creation.

Ronny is a Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies, and has lived experience of low vision. Under Ronny's guidance, RMIT became the first Victorian university to achieve zero accessibility errors on its homepage and now has a 'front door' that is inclusive of all.



Professor Kerryn Butler-Henderson, Director, RMIT Digital Health Hub and recipient of the RMIT Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Award for Passion

Professor Kerryn Butler-Henderson was awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Award for Passion. This award recognises Kerryn's commitment to the Promotion for Academics Tenured in Health Science (PATHS) for women and admirable support for female academics in the School of Health and Biomedical Sciences.

Kerryn is the Director of RMIT Digital Health Hub. She is a well-respected digital health academic and leader in transdisciplinary research and training, working across the sector to bring together teams to address industry-informed problems or to curate interprofessional education opportunities.

Kerryn mentors women and published about the challenges in this space and brings this experience to PATHS. Kerryn's leadership in digital health has transformed RMIT's positioning in digital health and health technology nationally. PATHS is now being implemented in several universities in Australia and New Zealand.

### Professor Kate Fox Associate Dean of Higher Degrees by Research, School of Engineering, STEM College

Being recognised with the Athena SWAN award is humbling. Ensuring that there are as many faces and voices in the room is something that I naturally want to do. Promoting the female voice in a room is not always straightforward and can be at times awkward but it is something I genuinely believe in. I do not think I have done anything particularly out of the ordinary this year but to use my voice within my leadership role to ensure that equity is always at the forefront of any conversation.







## The Big Industry Challenge: Gender Equity

The Big Industry Challenge (BIC), run in partnership with Common Purpose, gave over 170 RMIT students the opportunity to connect with leading companies and organisations and solve a complex gender equity challenge facing industry.

Using immersive and investigative learning techniques, the program gave participants the opportunity to develop skills and capabilities by

- better understanding different cultures, students learnt to become Empathetic.
- working in diverse teams with peers across Schools and Colleges, students learnt to become Agile.
- building trust and solving complex problems, students learnt to become Influential.
- suspending assumptions, students learnt to live with ambiguity and become more Open.

The event saw 17 industry contributors, including Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Sally Capp, Microsoft, the American Chamber of Commerce, and Drummond Street Services, providing students with tangible insights into workplaces across sectors of Melbourne.

High participation rates were evident from the STEMM Schools: Engineering (18%); Computing Technologies (13%); Science (12%); Economics (10%).

The program was well received with a strong retention rate of 87% (150 graduates).

All impact scores (on a scale of 1 to 6) met the target of 5 and above. Of the 4 key skills and competencies, the highest score related to Agile—the ability to work with difference (5.24), indicating that the importance of working and thriving in diversity was brought through in the program design.

Participants also reported an increase in their ability to work more effectively with people who are different to them (5.27) and in culturally diverse situations (5.25).

This was the first installment of the BIC, co-developed by RMIT Industry & Global Experiences with Common Purpose and will return in 2023 with a different theme in the Melbourne and Ho Chi Minh City campuses.

### BIC Participant

I definitely feel better prepared for the more [culturally] diverse situations as the program allowed me to view experience from different perspectives and values.

### BIC Participant

Handy to examine gender diversity more directly than simply reading about it.

### BIC Participant

I had not spent lots of time considering this issue, so I appreciated the chance to hear the lived experiences of the panel on Day 1 and the organisational challenge on Day 2.



## Celebrating Diversity in STEM Schools

Approximately 50 staff from the Schools of Engineering and Computing Technologies came together for a morning tea on 9 June 2022 to recognise and celebrate cultural diversity. The event was the brainchild of the School of Engineering Diversity and Inclusion Advocate, Prof. Mark Easton, who identified the need to recognize cultural significance in the diverse Schools.

Dr Damiano Spina, the Reconciliation Facilitator for the School of Computing Technologies, opened the event with a meaningful Acknowledgement of Country. It was followed by a short speech by Dist. Prof. Adrian Mouritz, Dean School of Engineering, who spoke about the 49 different countries represented by the Schools of Engineering and Computing Technologies staff and how the diversity of the group has led to innovation in the Schools.

These 49 countries were picked out on an interactive map of the world with pins identifying where staff were born. The map was displayed on a large screen at the event and staff were able to view the birth location of colleagues. They chatted and connected with each other about their different cultures and practices they grew up with and formed a better understanding of each other's heritage. In keeping with the theme of the event, the food catered also represented different parts of the world.



## Addressing Gender-based Violence

Following the publication of the Change the Course Report in 2017 and subsequent introduction of the national campaign Respect. Now. Always., RMIT strengthened its commitment to preventing sexual violence among its community, and to responding better to those who experienced it. Significant progress has been made since 2017, and 2022 marks the end of the second Vice-Chancellor's Workplan for Addressing Gender-based Violence. Over the course of 2022, many items on the 2021-2022 agenda were finalised, including the acceptance of policy and procedures that support the strong governance of respectful behaviour. These include the Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harm policy suite; the Child Safety policy suite; the Family and Domestic Violence Procedure; and the Staff and Student Personal Relationship Procedure. Crucially, these policies and procedures were developed through a victim-centric, trauma-informed lens.

The evolution of how we handle complaints of sexual harm also continued in 2022. The respect area received an increase in resourcing to enable a more comprehensive and mature prevention and response program. A specialised response mechanism for investigation and case management of sexual harm will also be operationalised in 2023.

New systems and processes were designed to ensure victim-survivors can access the appropriate support at the right time. In 2022, the Safer Community team also finalised and piloted the Sexual Harm Risk Assessment tool. We continued with our commitment to a Restorative Engagement Program, providing a pathway for students and former students who have experienced sexual harm and feel aggrieved about the University's failure to protect them and/or respond appropriately.

Our learning and capability development program has been significantly strengthened by the finalisation of our capability framework outlining the skills, knowledge and behaviours that we want our staff and students to demonstrate. Notably, in 2022 our Respectful Research Training (RRT) program achieved record numbers. This program helps higher degree by research supervisors and candidates combat sexual harassment, gender bias and discrimination in research training programs. Ninety-one per cent of the supervisory population have now completed this program.

Targeted and broad communications campaigns and events were implemented to help create a culture of respect at RMIT and ensure members of our community know where to turn to for help should they experience sexual harm. This will include the relaunch of the visual branding of Safer Community, positioning it as the 'go to' for staff and students concerned about or experiencing inappropriate behaviour.

Programs like the Gender Equity and Justice – Community, Teaching and Learning Project, which works with men to challenge the societal conditions that allow gender-based violence to exist, aims to tackle the root causes of sexual harm. In 2022, this project led to a series of student engagement pieces, including the highly successful gender justice barbershops.

We put together a Progress Report of our achievements in the respect space over the period spanning 2017-2022. A Strategic Action Plan for 2023-2028 was also developed to guide our direction in addressing gender-based violence at RMIT over the coming years.



## Recognising and Responding to Sexual Violence - A New Vocational Education Offering

In 2022, RMIT began offering a nationally accredited Course in Recognising and Responding to Sexual Violence, exploring the sociological drivers of sexual violence, its prevalence, and impacts on individuals and society. This course complements the suite of other RMIT offerings, such as the Course in Gender Equity and Course in Identifying and Responding to Family Violence Risk.

Professionals share their knowledge and experiences and help students prepare for responses to disclosures of sexual violence – developing their skills to identify the indicators and effects of sexual violence, and to determine and address their recovery needs and preferences.

RMIT's College of Vocational Education Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Mish Eastman said the new course builds on RMIT's commitment to creating a culture where everyone is safe, respected and included – engaging with community and the sector to drive meaningful change.

The Course in Recognising and Responding to Sexual Violence is an initiative under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022, funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). The course is owned by the Department of Forensic Medicine of Monash University, and RMIT's College of Vocational Education delivers the course.





# Encouraging our intersectional communities

## Continue to drive change and improve support

Objective: Embed inclusive culture and practices with tailored supports for RMIT's intersectional communities: DGSS, CALD, people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

## First Nations Focus

Dhumbah Goorowa, RMIT's second Reconciliation Plan and a bridge to the Knowledge with Action 2031 University strategy, concluded at the end of 2021. It created a foundational framework in terms of policy, processes, investment, and culture that has guided and deepened our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' self-determination and sovereignty across RMIT. There were a number of highlights and outcomes achieved during this period.

**Highlights**

- Bundjil Statement adopted by RMIT** as a foundational acknowledgement of our commitment to work respectfully and lawfully on Kulin country
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Future Workforce Strategy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan** fully implemented
- Bundjil Statement included in the Policy Governance Framework** and informed a new RMIT Code of Conduct
- Reconciliation Advisors** appointed in each College
- Ngulu Reconciliation Committees** established across Colleges, Portfolios and entities
- Reconciliation Capability Development** Framework created
- 'On Country'** student reconciliation initiative launched
- Reconciliation: Racism and Cultural Safety** staff modules live
- Community (Industry) Indigenous Engagement Framework** developed
- Trade Routes 2022** (First Nations Global Growth Program) launched
- Expansion of reconciliation** across the RMIT Group
- Indigenous Perspectives** in the Curriculum Framework developed

Our strategic focus is shifting from reconciliation in a progressive move into the future. Instead of a Reconciliation Plan, RMIT will work to translate our learnings and passion into authentic behaviours, relationships and activities - what we call Responsible Practice.

This transition reflects growth in the university's maturity in this space and the reconciliation journey we have been on over the last six years.

In reframing our commitment to reconciliation as we transition to Responsible Practice, it is important to acknowledge that:

- Reconciliation continues to be a social motivator for individuals and teams to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Responsible Practice is the consolidation of the achievements and lessons we have learnt through the completion of our Reconciliation Plan, Dhumbah Goorowa

- Responsible Practice is focused on pragmatic outcomes across RMIT business with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Responsible Practice is achieved through promoting behaviours, deepening relationships and ensuring

Responsible Practice will be focused on five Indigenous Commitments embedded throughout RMIT's Knowledge with Action 2031 strategy. These are

- Reconciliation to Responsible Practice
- Indigenous Students
- Indigenous Knowledges (Research, Learning and Teaching)
- Community Engagement
- Indigenous Staff

## Indigenous Women in STEM

RMIT Graduate Caley Manzie is a proud Noongar woman, passionate athlete and the first person to be selected to give graduates a student address at the 2022 RMIT Graduation Ceremony.

Caley recently completed her Bachelor of Science (Geospatial Science) (Honours) and is now an Indigenous Outreach Coordinator with Indigenous Education and Engagement at the Ngarara Willim Centre. Caley, the first in her family to attend university, almost did not enrol.

"RMIT has changed my perception of university and education. During high school, I didn't want to go to university," explained Caley.

She also talked about how the highs (and COVID lows) of her time at university have been life-changing for her.

### Caley Manzie Indigenous Outreach Coordinator, Indigenous Education and Engagement

During my first year, I had so much support from the Ngarara Willim Centre and all the other services that RMIT provides, like clubs and societies. It really allowed me to become involved in university life. It also allowed my voice to be heard, and I can take all these skills that I've learnt at university into the workforce.





Caley Manzie, RMIT Graduate in Bachelor of Science (Geospatial Science) (Honours) and Indigenous Outreach Coordinator, Ngarara Willim Centre

It is also very fitting that Caley is now part of the team at Ngarara Willim developing programs for us to build the pipeline to engage women into STEM courses and careers at RMIT – both in attracting Year 10-12 First Nations women into RMIT, particularly STEM courses, as well as supporting First Nations RMIT female students in their courses and eventually career paths into STEM.

### Capability Development in First Nations Cultures

The STEM College Reconciliation project team also launched a pilot in-person workshop, Building Your Cultural Competency.

Supporting our commitment to capability development and embedding what we have learnt and experienced during our Reconciliation journey and translating it into authentic and daily behaviours and relationships, a workshop was developed by RMIT University's First Nations staff for STEM staff interested in increasing their cultural fitness in First Nations cultures and protocols and gaining skills in creating a workplace that prioritises Responsible Practice.

The workshop offered participants an opportunity to hear stories from RMIT First Nations facilitators, understand the history of the land, First Nations culture and protocols and also create personal and meaningful Acknowledgements of Country.

The two workshops reached almost 70% capacity, with more expressing their interest for other dates. A workshop will be held on the Bundoora campus in early 2023 and there are plans to incorporate this into the induction program for new STEM staff.

### Cultural Inclusion and Racial Equity

RMIT continues its commitment to improving the experience of staff and students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Our community of staff and students observed various events during the year including the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with a panel discussion focusing on structural racism and what it means to be anti-racist.

We also continue to have a strong focus on programs of work, partnerships and community building and awareness for cultural inclusion and racial equity.

### Building international student belonging, employability and community

In 2022, RMIT received the State Government's International Education Resilience Fund (IERF), a grant to address the impacts of COVID-19 on international students. The project delivered:

- initiatives to enhance employability including tailored career tools, resources and workshops, personalised career counselling, co-delivery of skills-based sessions, company tours and an International Student Career Fair with industry partners.
- initiatives to facilitate social connection & belonging including Melbourne International Student Week.
- a Mental Health Peer Worker Program and a Strengths Coaching Program.
- proactive outreach to onshore & offshore students delivered by international student casuals.
- The project successfully achieved the following:
  - More than 2400 students attended employability events and the team worked with over 60 industry partners in co-delivery of sessions and events.
  - Students reported an increased awareness of their strengths (87%) and confidence in using them (74%), as well as an increased awareness of RMIT services and navigating university life (88%).
- Overall, across the breadth of deliverables, the project increased students' sense of belonging, their connection to Melbourne, their English skills and helped settle them into life at RMIT.

### Partnership with the Equal Employment Opportunity Network Victoria

RMIT partnered with the Equal Employment Opportunity Network Victoria (EEON) to run 7 events throughout 2022, many with a focus on race, racism and racial equity.

As a key community organisation, RMIT's partnership with EEON has been ongoing and provides personal development opportunities for staff and students across multiple areas. Other EEON sessions through 2022 included a focus on:

- LGBTQ+ in the workplace with a focus on Gender Diversity
- Age Discrimination
- Accessibility
- Anti-Racism for Racial Equity

At the EEON Biennial Inclusion and Diversity Summit, hosted at RMIT's Capitol Theatre, discussions were held on wide-ranging topics including racial equity, menopause, domestic and gendered violence.

There was great attendance from the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity community and

state government. Glenn Singleton, creator of Courageous Conversations - a program designed to enable challenging conversations about racism, delivered an interactive and impactful workshop.

A group of staff were also selected to participate in Courageous Conversations training. This offering will be revisited in 2023 to explore opportunities for key stakeholders and leaders to take part in the training as professional development.

### Access and scholarships for students from asylum seeker backgrounds

In 2022, we provided 34 students from asylum seeker backgrounds with fee-waiver access, cash living allowance scholarships, student services and career development, including industry experience. Between 2018 and 2021, the program assisted 88 student participants and 32 graduates. RMIT was recently recognized for our work in supporting students from asylum seeker backgrounds in the 2022 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence, receiving a high commendation under the Vocational Education and Training (accredited training) category.





## Disability and Accessibility

The University continues to lead the education sector with its strong focus on making RMIT a more accessible place to work and learn. In 2022 we were re-accredited as a Disability Confident Recruiter, in recognition of our commitment to support accessibility in every stage of the employee lifecycle. RMIT also supports participation of staff and students in the Australian Network on Disability, PACE Mentoring Program and Internships.

We also had our community talking, thinking and learning about digital access and inclusion by turning Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) into a week of events showcasing digital access and inclusion at RMIT, including:

- RUSU and RMIT Present: Lunch and Learn - Improve your digital Accessibility: Apple & Microsoft teamed up to provide free digital accessibility support for students
- ADECT and RMIT: What's next for Digital Accessibility? RMIT in conjunction with ADCET presented a cross-institutional discussion along with panelists from La Trobe University and Deakin University on where we've come from, harnessing the COVID disruption and embedding digital equity.

More than 500 attendees learned how we embed digital accessibility in processes to remove barriers for a first-rate experience when accessing digital information and services.

We also organized a series of workshops, focused on the basics of accessibility, and a new workshop dedicated to Neurodiversity. Over 400 RMIT staff participated in a training opportunity aimed to create greater awareness and build capacity to support people with disabilities. We also piloted a leader focused workshop – Disability Awareness: Inclusive and Equitable Leaders, with the aim of upskilling managers in accessibility, and disability 101.

RMIT's first Disability and Neurodivergent Staff Network was also established for all staff with lived experience of disability and neurodiversity to connect with and support each other.

Network founder and leader, Library Business Partner, Lenny de Vries, says the network will be a safe space where members can also explore best practice and create increased visibility. It will also provide a voice which will contribute to a disability and neurodiversity-inclusive workplace.

### Lenny de Vries Network founder and Library Business Partner

In my lived experience of having a disability and living with chronic pain, really there is no better support than talking to peers.

### Chaminda Ranasinghe Chief Experience Officer and Executive Accessibility Champion

We value the richness of diversity among staff and recognise the contribution being made already by those working with disability and neurodiversity – which is why we are proud to support the new RMIT Disability and Neurodiversity Staff Network.

Other highlights included:

- The Library, Equity and Inclusion team and RUSU partnered to pilot Neurodiverse Study Sessions. These sessions removed environmental and learning barriers experienced by neurodivergent students. The sessions were well attended with positive impact being shared. Due to the success of these sessions, they will be continued in 2023.
- Over 3000 students accessed individualised Equitable Learning Plans - advice, services and adjustments to ensure their equitable participation and support their success in their studies.
- RMIT became the first Victorian university to be independently assessed as having zero accessibility errors on its homepage.
- Dr Ronny Andrade Parra, RMIT's Digital Accessibility Lead participated in creating national standards for accessible ICT procurement in higher education. An accessibility schedule was developed to aid in the procurement of accessible ICT platforms at RMIT.

## Diverse Genders, Sexes and Sexualities

2022 saw RMIT participate in many initiatives and activities to uplift the Diverse Genders, Sexes and Sexualities (DGSS) community both within and outside of RMIT. We continue to work collaboratively across the university with key stakeholders, including the elected RUSU Queer Officers, the DGSS Working Group, LGBTQIA+ students and staff, and community partners.

RMIT achieved Platinum Employer status in 2022 from Pride in Diversity, Australia's peak body for employer LGBTQIA+ inclusion. This recognition acknowledges the highest levels of performance in the Australian Workplace Equality Index over a sustained period and formally recognises our leadership in forming Australia's first professional network for researchers who identify as LGBTIQ+ or who research in the fields of gender and sexuality.

We participated in Midsumma Pride March and Carnival and held our first in-person Pride Week in over 2 years, with 20+ events held across campuses both domestically and internationally.

RMIT also received Silver Tier recognition in the annual Pride in Sport benchmarking index, alongside delivering a Sport Pride Party for students and staff which encouraged LGBTQIA+ participation in community sport at RMIT, featuring stalls from community sporting organisations.

We delivered 18.5 hours of Ally Network training to 188 staff, and the network membership reached over 500 members. At the annual

Pride In Practice Conference, three LGBTQIA+ identifying RMIT students joined staff to discuss What Do LGBTQIA+ Graduates Look for When Entering the Workforce?. This popular session provided the students with industry experience in public speaking, as well as the opportunity to grow their professional networks.

LGBTQIA+ staff and students also shared their voice and lived experience with the RMIT community during LGBTQIA+ in STEM Day, Transgender Day of Visibility, Non-Binary People's Day, and Bi+ Visibility Day in internal communication channels. We also continued to raise awareness by marking significant days, including Trans Day of Visibility, Trans Awareness Week, and Intersex Awareness Day.

Major steps forward were made in ensuring students can be recognised by their preferred name. Following a scoping exercise into current systems, system developments were made to allow students to register a preferred name and for the name to flow through to and display in selected RMIT systems. This sector leading practice will continue into 2023 where we will look into areas for review and improvement.

We fostered partnerships with the Melbourne Bisexual Network to run three community focused events, and engaged with IHRA (Intersex Human Rights Australia), Minus18 and Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council, through our IDEA Framework consultation process. These connections strengthen our relationship with the community, setting us up for future collaboration and engagement.







# Strengthening foundations

## Future proofing SAGE Athena SWAN through good governance and leadership

Objective: Continue embedding the SAGE Athena SWAN Charter by effectively managing, implementing and monitoring the Athena SWAN Action Plan ensuring all actions are appropriately sequenced, resourced and embraced over the seven years and beyond building on foundations for future Departmental Awards

## Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) Framework

2022 saw consultation begin for the development of RMIT's new Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) Framework. This framework will act as RMIT's Diversity and Inclusion plan, taking the university through to 2031, across three horizons.

Students and staff voices were critical in shaping the IDEA Framework. From June through September, consultation was held with the RMIT community and external organisations who partner with RMIT, with over 170 staff and 220 students participating through various methods of engagement, such as in person and online listening groups, online surveys, one-on-one conversations and roving polls.

These deep discussions presented a number of key themes. Below is a summary of top themes university wide:

- Importance of role models and capability at all levels, when it comes to equity, diversity and inclusion for all staff and students
- Consistency of experience at RMIT i.e., flexible working
- Getting the moments that matter correct, such as onboarding and career progression
- Internal mobility and personal development opportunities
- Silos across the university persist, creating barriers to collaboration
- Strong call out for the rebuilding of community, both in physical and digital landscapes
- Barriers in accessing information and services
- Need for RMIT to respond effectively to inappropriate behavior, and have a clear complaints process
- Mental Health and Wellbeing, along with the needs of neurodiverse staff and students.

A draft version of the framework was shared with the RMIT community, with feedback and iterations actioned before the framework was endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor's Executives in December 2022. The IDEA Framework will be formally launched in Q2 (April), 2023.

## Gender Equity Action Plan (GEAP)

Our Gender Equity Action Plan (GEAP) launched in June 2022 in response to new legislative requirements under the Victorian Gender Equality Act. The commitment outlines shared objectives and targeted strategies across all of RMIT's portfolios and Colleges.

The 2022- 2025 plan defines six action areas that will progress gender equity based on the Athena SWAN Bronze Action Plan areas of focus. By adopting and implementing the GEAP, RMIT demonstrates how it values the richness of diversity among staff and recognizes the University's responsibility for transformative actions.

## A Dedicated Student Gender Equity Action Plan

In 2022 consultation and development of a dedicated Student Gender Equity Action Plan took place. The 2022 – 2025 Gender Equality Action Plan recognized students are as much a part of our community as staff and the need to create a dedicated student action plan that builds upon the existing foundation of work to advance gender equity.

To guide the Student Gender Equity Action Plan, an advisory group was established which included student representatives, academics engaged in gender equity teaching and research, and professional staff engaged in gender equity strategies and programs. A review of existing actions and initiatives was conducted to identify gaps and areas for improvement or expansion. We were able to use existing data and work completed to identify trends in access, retention and success by gender and compare this to national averages, literature and research.

Consultation with the RMIT community was grounded in principles of inclusion and accessibility. Consultation included listening groups, roving polls, online surveys, and 1:1 conversations. Targeted consultation was conducted with student groups including women in STEM in vocational education, women in engineering and women in IT and computer science clubs. A draft of the Action Plan will be circulated in early 2023 for feedback.



## Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA)

In 2022 we received the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation for the fifth consecutive year.

This national citation, held by 120 Australian employers, certifies our commitment to driving progress to make our workplace equal. To gain the citation RMIT's compliance reporting is a transparent and detailed analysis of our workforce composition and gender pay gap, as well as the programs, policies and procedures in place for areas such as flexible working, supports for carers, sex-based harassment and discrimination and family or domestic violence. The citation spans across RMIT group with separate reports for RMIT University, RMIT Online and RMIT Training.

## Gender Pay Gap

RMIT narrowed its gender pay gap to 7.1% in 2022 down from 10% in 2017, however it is trending upwards. There has been an increase of 0.9% in the last 12 months. The current gap of 7.1% is well below the sector benchmark of 9.7% (from 17 similar educational institutions in the 2020/21 period). Auditing and review remains critical to inform continued action and close the gap.

RMIT Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Alec Cameron said, "RMIT's commitment to equality of opportunity is underpinned by a commitment to respect and fairness for all members of our community.

### Professor Alec Cameron RMIT Vice-Chancellor and President

We will continue to be rigorous in addressing any remaining systems, policies or attitudes that could sustain disparities so we can keep closing the gap.

The most significant cause of RMIT's pay gap is the gender imbalance across some classification levels for example in STEMM disciplines. In STEMM, the gender pay gap was 9% in 2021 but lowered to 7.2% in 2022. Similarly, we have seen positive changes in leader classification levels. In 2022, 43% of our leaders were women, an increase of almost 10 percentage points from 33.9% in 2016.

## Athena SWAN Action Plan and Implementation

The Athena SWAN Action Plan and implementation has contributed to RMIT's recent public awards and recognition in Diversity and Inclusion:

- Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Employer of Choice Citation
- Platinum employer in LGBTIQ+ inclusion
- Re-accredited as a Disability Confidence Recruiter through the Australian Network on Disability
- Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence for our support services for students who are people seeking asylum
- Finalist for Best Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative in the SEEK Talent Acquisition Recognition Awards



### Professor Kate Fox

Associate Dean, Higher Degrees by  
Research, School of Engineering

Recipient of 2022 STEM College  
Athena SWAN Award





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