

Report on GEAR Forums – November 2021

GEAR Forums provide an opportunity for the GEAR team to update women in the JCU community on JCU's actions towards gender equity, and to provide a space where women are welcome to raise and discuss equity issues that are important to them, and share their views and experiences. Forums are scheduled quarterly during 2021. GEAR Forums are confidential, with the GEAR Coordinators producing a de-identified report that summarises the kinds of issues discussed across the Forums. GEAR Forum reports are used to inform the ongoing work of JCU in achieving gender equity.

On the 23rd and 24th November, approximately 40 JCU women joined two GEAR Forums. Each Forum began with a brief update on the actions currently in progress, and then broke up into smaller breakout groups to talk through whatever issues women wanted to raise. Below we give a brief summary of the discussion at the Forum.

Update to GEAR Forum from Coordinators

Completed & Ongoing Actions

- The Workforce Diversity Dashboards that informed the 2020 Athena Swan Bronze Award submission have been updated to include data from the 2020 calendar year, and the two academic Divisions are working with PPA and the HR Systems team to integrate these dashboards into regular work.
- Both academic Divisions are developing a consistent (but locally adaptable) means of keeping track of who does outreach work, and who participates in committees at the College and Division level. This can indicate any gendered patterns that may exist within Colleges and Divisions, but also makes it possible to better recognise the staff who conduct a lot of this often invisible work.
- The JCU Women in Promotions workshop was recently delivered by Professor Sarah Larkins, and following feedback from women who have previously attended, focused on more interactive and workshop-style activities.
- Two Equity & Diversity guides are now available on the GEAR webpage – the [Guide for Meetings, Conferences and Workshops](#) suggests best practice for organizing and chairing meetings, and the [Guide for Training Development](#) intends to support any staff who develop and/or deliver training at any level in the institution. We hope staff find these useful.

Actions in Progress

- CSE has made progress with advertising women-only positions, and has a proposal to increase attractiveness of open positions for women applicants.
- PDP forms will soon be updated to indicate that performance expectations are pro-rated relative to opportunity – so staff with periods of part-time work or significant leave have a proportional expectation of outputs. Further, both academic Divisions report that they are on track to include long-term casual staff in the PDP process, should they choose to opt in, by the start of 2022 at the latest.
- With Enterprise Bargaining underway, we encourage staff to pay attention to two items from the Gender Equity Action Plan. The first is around simplifying the parental leave clause, to ensure it is clear and interpreted the same across all parts of the university, and for JCU to consider the costs and benefits of extending paid partner leave. The second is to extend eligibility for fixed-term, teaching-specialist staff to apply for conversion to ongoing positions. JCU management have not yet presented their log of claims but we encourage all staff to take advantage of opportunities to provide feedback when they are available.

GEAR Forums in 2022

- The Forums that were held across 2021 included more than 200 participants – some of these were women who attended multiple sessions across the year.
- In 2022 we intend to hold face-to-face sessions, alternating between the two main JCU campuses, with a remote attendance option in every quarter as well.

Forum Discussion Summary

JCU Respect

- Women asked questions about the completion rates of the JCU Respect modules. The completion rates amongst staff are very high, and amongst students it is more of a challenge. There was some discussion of other strategies to encourage students to complete this important training.
- The Respectful Relationships workshops delivered to HDR students were noted as a positive, but there was a suggestion to offer in person workshops, perhaps in targeted areas where it is most needed.
- There was also a suggestion that Honours students should be included in Respectful Relationships workshops, given they work closely with an academic supervisor in a manner similar to HDR students.
- While the policies and procedures for responding to incidents was noted as very effective, some women raised the difficulty of dealing with underlying issues of sexism, bullying, and harassment in their work areas. When there is no specific incident to report, it is harder to address directly.

Normal Working Hours

- As it is the time of year for end-of-year meetings, planning days, and celebrations, we heard from some women who were unable to fully participate in out-of-hours events due to caring responsibilities, and inadequate remote attendance options.

Targeted Recruitment

- Discussion about the women-only recruitment in CSE reported some frustrations from current staff that positions targeted for women were unable to be filled. While this demonstrates that these women-only positions are still being recruited based on merit, ongoing vacancies present a challenge for current staff. Some suggestions were raised for alternative recruitment strategies.
- There was a question about spousal hires as a recruitment strategy. JCU does not currently have a clearly articulated spousal hire strategy, though it does happen informally in some situations. The suggestion was to include this in Enterprise Bargaining discussions.
- Some women in CSE felt that while the need for this targeted recruitment has been well communicated to staff, there is still work to be done in communicating to HDR students – many of whom are looking for academic work.

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