

## Report on GEAR Forums – December 2023

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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. GEAR Forums are confidential, with the GEAR Coordinator 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 11 December 2023, approximately 18 JCU women joined one GEAR Forum, which was hosted by GEAR member, Dr Connor McShane. The majority of the attendees were employed as ongoing (10 out of 18), full-time (15 out of 18), and in a technical and profession role (11 out of 18). Half the attendees were attending the forum for the first time.. The forum began with an update on the GEAR team, and from the Academic Leads of the Cygnet projects. There was then space for open discussion to talk through whatever issues women wanted to raise. Below is a summary of the discussion at the Forum.

### **Update to the GEAR Forum from the GEAR team**

- The GEAR team's October 2024 meeting featured a presentation by Associate Professor Melissa Crowe and Dr Diana Mendez on the award-winning health professions Doctoral Studies program supporting mothers, with 128 graduates since 2011, involving small cohorts, mentorship, and achieving positive outcomes. (see [MOMA Changemaker Award](#)). The presentation included recommendations for retaining mothers in staff or student roles which included raising awareness, extending childcare hours, funding for conference travel with children, child-friendly conferences, support for HDR scholarship holders with dependents, and avoiding seminar times during school drop-off/pick-up. A JCU [Guide for Meetings, Conferences and Workshops](#) is available on GEAR website. The Director of HR is exploring further ways to support institutional standard meeting hours, 9:30 am – 2:30 pm
- The GEAR team discussed support for individuals with caring responsibilities attending conferences, considering a potential scheme, with ongoing evaluation and discussion considering resource constraints.
- Professor Stephen Naylor presented recent promotions round, highlighting a focus on impact and evidence and less on esteem in women's applications.
- Director HR discussed WGEA paygap reporting, aiming to identify meaningful data for actual gaps and necessary interventions.
- GEAR team addressed a query about air conditioning temperatures, noting individuals can submit maintenance requests for adjustments and highlighting the potential for energy cost savings.
- In 2024, JCU plans to launch three Cygnet projects focusing on flexible work, recruitment and selection, and addressing sexual harassment or assault.

### **Update to GEAR Forum from Academic Lead, Promotions Cygnet Application, Professor Stewart Lockie**

- The Cygnet application will use insights into women's experiences in the promotion process gained through focus groups in 2024 to consider the impact of JCU's changes to the promotions process on women. Promotions was identified in JCU's Bronze SAGE application as an area requiring review.

### **Update to GEAR Forum from Academic Lead, CSE Leadership and Culture Cygnet Application, Associate Professor Karen Joyce**

- Karen leads the Cygnet application for Science and Engineering in Culture and Leadership, and Chairs the College's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Committee to contribute information into Cygnet, which focuses on auditing culture and leadership with a gender lens. Assessing the college's gender dynamics over the past few years is crucial, however obtaining relevant information, such as workload and pay gap data, has been challenging, hindering the ability to demonstrate some changes.
- While striving for a March draft and a May deadline, there's a possibility of postponement, pending cooperation to receive requisite data.

### **Forum Discussion Summary**

- Attendees raised the importance of having female seniority and leadership. It was suggested a senior female to be part of more regular discussions on the GEAR Committee to advocate for and amplify the voice of this Committee.
- A forum participant noted the tendency for some male staff members to prioritise research, and hesitancy when suggesting an increased focus on teaching. On the other hand, female colleagues often demonstrate flexibility and consistently go beyond expectations at the detriment of other areas such as research and engagement requirements.
- Forum discussion reflected on the research conducted in the early stages of the Athena SWAN process that highlighted differences in how females perceive their ability, willingness, or confidence to assert themselves noting it could be beneficial to explore initiatives that empower confidence and create a sense of support.

### **The Forum noted groups who are working on gender equality**

- IDEA group in CBLG – contact A/Prof Taha Chaiechi
- CSE Equity group - contact A/Prof Karen Joyce
- Women in Marine Science Group – Instagram [jcu\\_wss](#)
- WOMEEESA group – Women in Earth and Environmental Science (Australia) – contact Dr Melanie Finch
- TWIST – Townsville Women in Science and Technology – (TWIST on Facebook).
- WISTEM – JCU Teams channel and lunch meetings
- JCU Women's Collective – Facebook page.

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<https://www.jcu.edu.au/gender-equity-action-and-research>