



Women in STEM Decadal Plan

Royal Australian Chemical Institute
Response

16 October 2019

Overview

The Royal Australian Chemical Institute (RACI) is the professional body for the chemical sciences in Australia. We represent over 4,000 members ranging from students to professional chemists in academia, education, government and industry.

RACI was founded in 1917 and granted a Royal Charter in 1932. RACI acts both as the qualifying body in Australia for professional chemists, and as a learned society promoting the science and practice of chemistry.

RACI supports chemists working in industry, universities, research institutions, TAFE institutions and high schools.

We have 14 divisions, 1 national group and 8 branches. 28% of our current members are women, with women representing 46% of our student and associate members and 17% of our fellows.

The major challenges in Chemistry within the gender diversity space are in the retention and progression of women. In Australia, areas of particular concern are low representation in more senior levels, hiring and promotion processes, and bias in manuscript and award refereeing within academia.

Leadership

RACI's vision is to be the voice of chemical sciences in Australia.

The RACI exists to improve the quality of life through leadership in the field of chemical sciences.

We will achieve this by:

- Supporting innovative research.
- Building community awareness on the role of chemical sciences.
- Inspiring and securing future generations of practitioners.
- Being the conduit between industry, government and education by creating meaningful connections and collaborations on a national and global level.
- Providing advocacy for the importance of chemical sciences.
- Facilitating meaningful careers for our members and the industry.

The RACI was part of the 2014 Women in the Science Research Workforce: Identifying and Sustaining the Diversity Advantage.

In 2016 the RACI Equity, Inclusion and Diversity (EDI) Committee was formed to provide a forum for developing advice to the Board and CEO on all matters of significance related to EDI issues that impact on service

provision, outcomes and the reputation of the Institute.

The RACI Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Committee:

1. Provides a senior forum for the identification and consideration of equity issues, intended to enhance equity and reduce any inequitable and discriminatory practices that may exist within the Organisation.
2. Advises on equity aspects warranting attention in the Institute's strategic, functional and operational plans and develops broad position statements to assist in this regard.
3. Advises on the equity implications of RACI policies and practices and on RACI responses to policy initiatives.
4. Provides an annual report to the Board outlining the progress made by the Organisation related to EDI.
5. Addresses other equity matters as directed by the Board.



In a similar time period, RACI has developed an **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Diversity Policy** to promote inclusivity and transparency in order to improve diversity across all categories of membership, committees and employees. This policy aims to encourage inclusion and diversity in the following four areas through positive action:

- Encourage mentorship – offer opportunities to support and encourage all members and employees of our organisation to develop their professional skills, networks and careers.
- Improve recognition – work towards balance for underrepresented groups including women in RACI awards, conference invitations and membership of committees and of the organisation as a whole.
- Maintain diversity awareness and education – broaden the knowledge and understanding of inclusion and diversity within the RACI and broader community.
- Promote accountability – monitor and demonstrate change in a transparent manner in all areas of our organisation.

RACI has committed to targets at all RACI-sponsored conferences. To receive endorsement by the Board, these conferences must have as a minimum:

1. 30% women plenaries, keynotes and invited speakers.
2. 40% women session chairs.
3. 30% women in conference organising committees.

The Board, which oversees and governs RACI operations, currently has equal gender representation.

Future activities planned to promote gender equity by leaders

Our general practices designed to increase diversity include:

- Encouraging individual differences to be valued at all levels of the RACI, particularly in the leadership roles of our organisation.
- Generating awareness of diversity, inclusivity, accessibility and transparency issues in our organisation and the wider community, including the promotion of the RACI Inclusion and Diversity Policy to all members and staff.
- Developing targets around diversity to be embedded across all RACI activities.
- Ensuring activities and targets to improve diversity, inclusivity, accessibility and transparency are initiated, led and monitored by the RACI Executive and Board.

Our goals to increase diversity at conferences include:

- Exceeding the above-mentioned gender diversity targets for RACI-sponsored conferences in 2020.
- Extending the existing policy to also include RACI-affiliated conferences.

We are committed to improvements in our internal processes to facilitate more accurate data capture, collation, and reporting.

Our goals to more appropriately address intersectionality include:

- Revising policies and procedures to allow for the participation and involvement of other traditionally underrepresented groups within the RACI's membership to be evaluated and determined.

Evaluation

We are committed to regularly evaluating and reporting on progress towards achieving diversity and inclusivity goals across the activities of the organisation as a whole. These reports are made available to members and the general public .

This includes the percentage of women:

- attending and invited and selected for speaking roles at RACI conferences.
- at different levels of membership and in leadership roles at Board, Branch and Divisional levels.
- nominees/applicants and awardees in the annual RACI national awards.

Moving forward, we are considering the best ways to encourage and celebrate inclusion and diversity practices within the RACI Branches and Divisions, including the collation and promotion of good practice such as the use of pronoun stickers at one division's recent RACI conference.

Workplace culture

Over the past two years, RACI has developed and implemented an anti-harassment policy at all RACI-supported conferences.

RACI is also committed to the continuation and expansion of Women in Chemistry symposia in major RACI national conferences, including in future Division meetings.

In recent years, there has been the **formation of state-based Women in Chemistry (WinC) committees** to support the local Chemistry community. The RACI National Office provides advertising, administrative support and initial start-up funds to the Women in Chemistry

committees.

Future activities planned to develop more inclusive practices include:

1) Updated code of conduct, currently under review.

2) Online repository of data and good practice resources.

The centrepiece of our future activities in this space is the development of an online repository of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion-related documents and materials, particularly good practice resources, which will support chemistry departments and institutions Australia-wide. The website will also contain relevant policy and strategy documents, conference reporting forms and awards committee guidelines as well as contact details of EDI officers/contacts at Australian universities.

3) New Policy to Improve Award Committee Diversity

Award committees need to reflect a diversity of backgrounds, knowledge, experience and abilities, and RACI is committed to a new policy to achieve this. Our new policy requires that awards committees have, preferentially, a 50/50 gender balance or a minimum of 25/75 gender balance to be quorate.

This should improve recognition, help reduce unconscious bias in decision making and work towards balance for underrepresented groups including women in RACI membership of committees.

Visibility

Awards

The **Margaret Sheil Leadership Award** was established in 2017 to recognise and honour the trailblazing contributions of Professor Margaret Sheil, the first Australian female Professor of Chemistry. The aim of the award is to recognise an outstanding female leader working in a chemistry-related field including academia, teaching, and the public or private sector, who has helped to inspire and mentor junior female chemists and/or help to provide a more equitable work place.

The **Rita Cornforth Lectureship** was established in 2017 to recognise and honour the pioneering contributions of Lady Rita Cornforth, the wife and research collaborator of Nobel Laureate Sir John Warcup Cornforth. The aim of the award is to provide an outstanding female early career chemist with an opportunity to achieve broader recognition of their career achievements to date, and help establish collaborations and networks that will further assist them in establishing an independent career. The award recognises an outstanding contribution to chemical research in any sphere, including industry, the public sector and academia.

Both awards support a lecture tour for the respective awardees within Australia with the aim of inspiring the next generation of female scientists. The recipients of both awards are also invited to deliver keynote lectures at relevant RACI-endorsed conferences.

Social media

RACI is active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, with audiences over these platforms between 43-66% women. Representation of diverse groups is a priority issue for social media posting, with a number of initiatives in this space.

- Monthly member spotlight (which are posted across social media as well) aims to highlight a diverse group of our members.
- RACI social media curates a “women in #OzChem” Twitter list, and there are some volunteer-run Twitter accounts for our RACI women in chemistry groups: VIC, NSW and SA.
- With the support of the RACI VIC Women in Chemistry group, the RACI social media team are promoting the use of the **#SupportWinC** hashtag on Twitter.

In posting content, we promote diversity by:

- using diverse stock images (where they depict people) in all posts.
- On Twitter, we aim to share content from a diverse range of people within our community and try to avoid boosting the same voices.
- On Facebook, we remove offensive comments and block offenders from our page.

Looking forward, we want to increase the use of the #SupportWinC hashtag and the number of women in the “women in #OzChem” Twitter list.



Education

Statistics from the Women in STEM Decadal Plan shows that girls account for 49% of all year 12 Chemistry enrolments, with university enrolments in Chemistry at 42% women. Women account for 65% of TAFE chemistry-related enrolments.

In this context, initiatives within RACI education groups have therefore historically focused on promotion of Chemistry to students of all genders, with little attention to gender issues. State-based RACI chemistry education groups support high school teachers by running events and providing teaching resources. The key events are:

1. The RACI Australian National Chemistry Quiz with over 94,000 students from 24 countries entering in 2018.
2. Titration competition and crystal-growing competition across Australia.
3. Annual Youth Lecture series which operate throughout Australia, aiming to inspire school-age students with interactive, engaging and educational experiences.

Over the next twelve months, we will assess our existing activities for gender representation, considering participation numbers and scores in the RACI-run Australian National Chemistry Quiz (ANCQ), titration competition and crystal growing competition. In particular, we will look to update 1994 research that showed boys had much higher scores than girls in the ANCQ (doi: [10.1002/tea.3660310806](https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.3660310806)). Further, the representation of women in RACI-provided resources will be audited to ensure a significant number of different women in senior roles feature prominently.

RACI includes high school and TAFE teachers in our membership; we will work with this membership to identify the best way that RACI can support and promote the Women in STEM decadal plan in their workplaces.

In the tertiary sector, RACI accredits tertiary education chemistry degrees alongside supporting the Australian chemistry education research community. Over the next year, we will increase the gender diversity of the accreditation board to at least 30% women.

Industry Action

Statistics show that 38% of RACI members work in industry, with 26% women in RACI's industry-linked membership. To represent this member population, one of four new members in the RACI Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee are from industry. Working with these new members, over the next twelve months we will evaluate how best to support gender diversity within companies. A key part of this will be the collation of good practice recommendations with the new RACI website, which will be particularly valuable for small and medium enterprises.

raci.org.au

