

## ABOUT AINSE

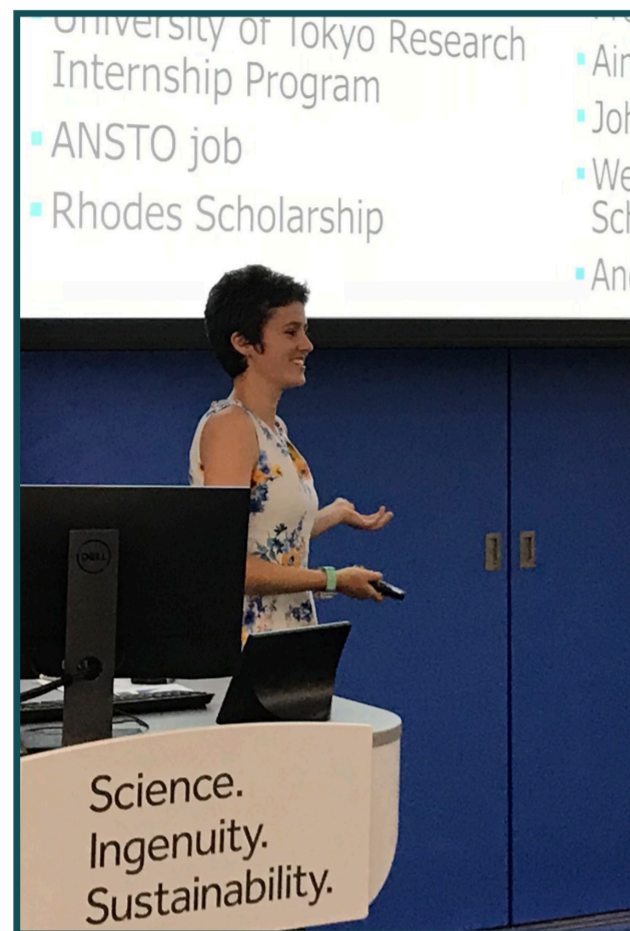
For over 60 years, the Australian Institute of Nuclear Science and Engineering (AINSE Ltd.) has played an integral role in enhancing the capabilities of Australia and New Zealand in nuclear science, engineering and related research fields by facilitating world-class research and education.

AINSE's 43 member organisations, comprised of one industry partner, two research institutions, and 40 universities form across Australia and New Zealand, benefit from a range of AINSE programs and services that aim to foster scientific advancement and promote an effective collaboration between AINSE members and ANSTO, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation.

AINSE member benefits include scholarships for honours students, postgraduate students and Early Career Researchers, domestic and international conference support, and access to intensive undergraduate education schools. In particular, students from each AINSE member institution are able to attend our principal program in support of gender equity, the annual Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship (WISE) School.

AINSE is a member of Science and Technology Australia and is proud to work alongside Women in Nuclear Australia in supporting inclusive working environments for our supported scholars.

AINSE is committed to gender equity through all our programs and schools. AINSE Managing Director Michelle Durant attended the launch of the Women in STEM Decadal Plan in 2019 and the Pathways to Equity in STEM symposium, beginning a journey of continuous evaluation of our activities and the means by which they can be brought into closer alignment with the six opportunities outlined in the Decadal Plan.



## MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

Since 2017, AINSE has coordinated an annual Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship (WISE) School each December in Sydney.

The most recent AINSE WISE School invited 60 first-year undergraduate women from 35 member universities across Australia and New Zealand to travel to ANSTO's Lucas Heights campus for an intensive four-day program. Over the course of the school, students engaged in networking and social activities, met high-profile women with established careers across a diverse range of STEM fields, and participated in panel discussions and tours of ANSTO's landmark research infrastructure.

A key component of the WISE School is an ongoing mentorship program involving the WISE students, past WISE alumni, and staff members from ANSTO and AINSE. A networking dinner held on the final night of the school allowed mentors and mentees to meet and discuss the challenges



and opportunities present in STEM careers generally, and in the fields of nuclear science and engineering specifically. These conversations then continued in a series of structured and unstructured online discussions, including two scheduled videoconferences, throughout the following year.

AINSE gratefully acknowledges ANSTO's ongoing support of the WISE School through funding support and the generous time given by ANSTO Mentors. In 2017, AINSE received grant funding from the Australian Government's Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship program under the National Innovation and Science Agenda. In 2018 and 2019, AINSE received funding from the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer.

## KEY LEARNINGS TO DATE

The three cohorts of AINSE WISE School students and their mentors have provided invaluable feedback regarding the effective implementation of the AINSE WISE School and accompanying Mentorship program. Our key learnings to date regarding this program include:

- Early face-to-face contact with mentors is a highly effective means of overcoming initial barriers in establishing open mentee-mentor relationships. In particular, students at an early undergraduate level can often feel reluctant to initiate contact with a mentor in a significantly more senior position. Initial face-to-face contact in a relaxed setting increased active participation in the subsequent mentorship sessions.
- The establishing of both intergenerational and intragenerational networks of women in STEM was singled out by students as a singularly valuable aspect of the program. In particular, it was reported to provide a robust support structure for students throughout their undergraduate studies, through both an avenue by which to seek advice and the confidence-building provided by enhancing the visibility of established and accomplished professionals in STEM.
- Exposure of participants to women in established STEM careers also increased awareness of available opportunities at an undergraduate level and facilitated access to these opportunities. In particular, one participant from the 2018 program has returned to ANSTO in 2020 in order to collaborate on an ongoing international research project.

For more information, please contact AINSE or visit [ainse.edu.au/wise/](http://ainse.edu.au/wise/).

