

Australian Institute of Marine Science

Institutional Context

1. Background

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) is Australia's tropical marine research agency. It was established under the [Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972](#) (AIMS Act), which outlines the performance of AIMS' functions and the exercise of its powers.

AIMS is a corporate Commonwealth entity and as such the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* applies to the Institute.

AIMS is accountable to the Minister for the Environment and Water and is governed by a [Council](#) that reports to the Minister. The Council sets AIMS' strategic direction and research strategies and oversees management of the Institute. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for managing the affairs of the Institute. The Minister outlines how AIMS will exercise its functions in a Statement of Expectations.

2. Mission, values and Strategy

AIMS mission and values are defined in our AIMS Strategy 2030, which sharpens our focus on delivering impact to Australia. It was published in 2023, and it guides our research and investment in tropical marine science to inform decision-making for government and industry to 2030. It builds and updates from the previous Strategy 2025 that was launched in 2018. Therefore, for the context of this cygnet, both strategies apply within the timeframe of data collection.

In Strategy 2030 we present *the way we work* to highlight AIMS values that we want to promote and include in everything we do. Our values are:

Safety: care for ourselves and others in all we do.

Collaboration: together we create impact.

Innovation: vision and creativity to solve big challenges.

Integrity: always transparent, ethical and objective.

Passion: energy that inspires excellence.

Respect: treat everyone with dignity, value diversity, support others.

Environment: minimise our footprint.

AIMS Strategy 2030 guides our research and investments within AIMS and signals our strategic intent in the public domain. It recognises changes over the years and provides impacts we want to achieve to accomplish our *mission*: to provide the research and knowledge of Australia's tropical marine estate required to support growth in its sustainable use, effective environmental management and protection of its unique ecosystems. In achieving this mission, AIMS seeks to improve tropical marine health, create national benefits and protect coral reefs from climate change.

3. Impact of AIMS work

AIMS applies science-based solutions to the key challenges facing those who live and work in the waters of northern Australia. We are uniquely placed to provide the expert advice and R&D solutions required to help preserve our marine estate. We bring to every problem our world-class research infrastructure, long-term science knowledge and vast experience of northern Australian waters.

3.1 Indigenous Partnerships

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and AIMS are building strong and productive relationships in marine science. Natural synergies exist between AIMS' research and the management and protection of sea country by Traditional Owners on the coasts and continental shelf of northern Australia. We partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, learning from each other through two-way knowledge sharing of the marine environment, to ensure its future for all.

For more information about AIMS impact: [Our impact | AIMS](#)

4. Organisational Structure

The CEO is supported by the AIMS Leadership Team (ALT), which comprises of key management staff with responsibility across the organisation for research, strategic and corporate activities.

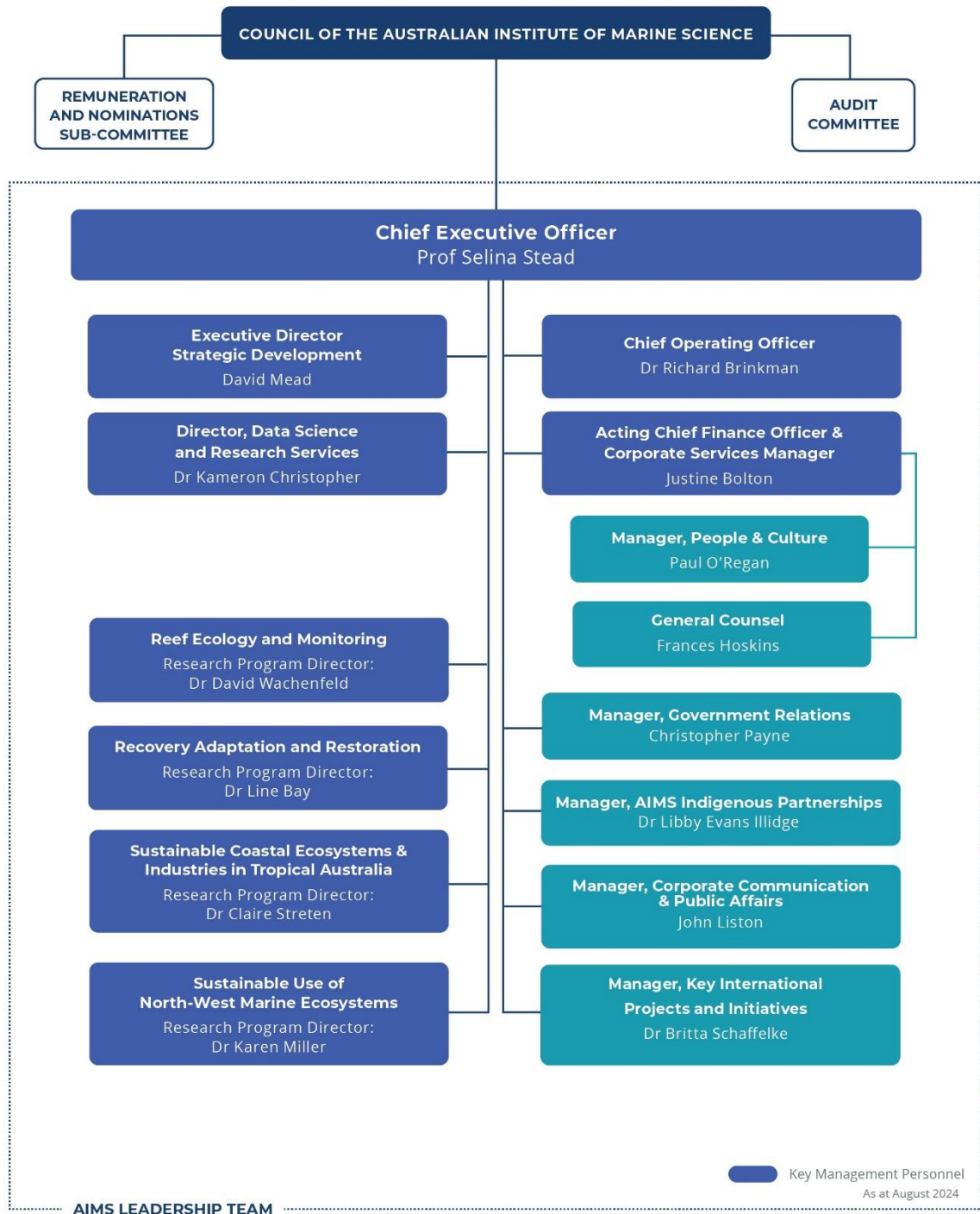


Figure 1: AIMS Organisational Structure. *Disclaimer: this organisational structure is at the time the data was considered; it is not the current one.

5. Site Locations

AIMS headquarters was established in 1972 near Townsville, alongside the Great Barrier Reef. Today, AIMS has research facilities in Perth and Darwin and conducts research across northern Australia. We also have an office located in Canberra.

The distance between AIMS' sites creates challenges in ensuring equity and diversity initiatives. Different locations have different demographics, lifestyles and issues to consider. Perth is a major urban hub and the AIMS office there is co-located with the University of Western Australia and CSIRO. Darwin is co-located with the Charles Darwin University and the Australian National University at the Arafura Timor Research Facility (ATRF) but is smaller and culturally different to Perth. Canberra is the seat of Australia's Federal Government, with AIMS having a very small number of employees based in a stand-alone commercial office space. AIMS headquarters in Townsville is in a major regional hub in north Queensland, but the site itself is considered remote, being 50km from the Townsville city centre. Over the years, Townsville has remained the largest AIMS site and headquarters for major facilities, such as the National Sea Simulator and AIMS Vessel Facility. Distributed sites across three time zones means that electronic communication is typical at AIMS. Video conferences, teleconferences and Microsoft Teams are EDGE's primary communication tools and widely used within AIMS.

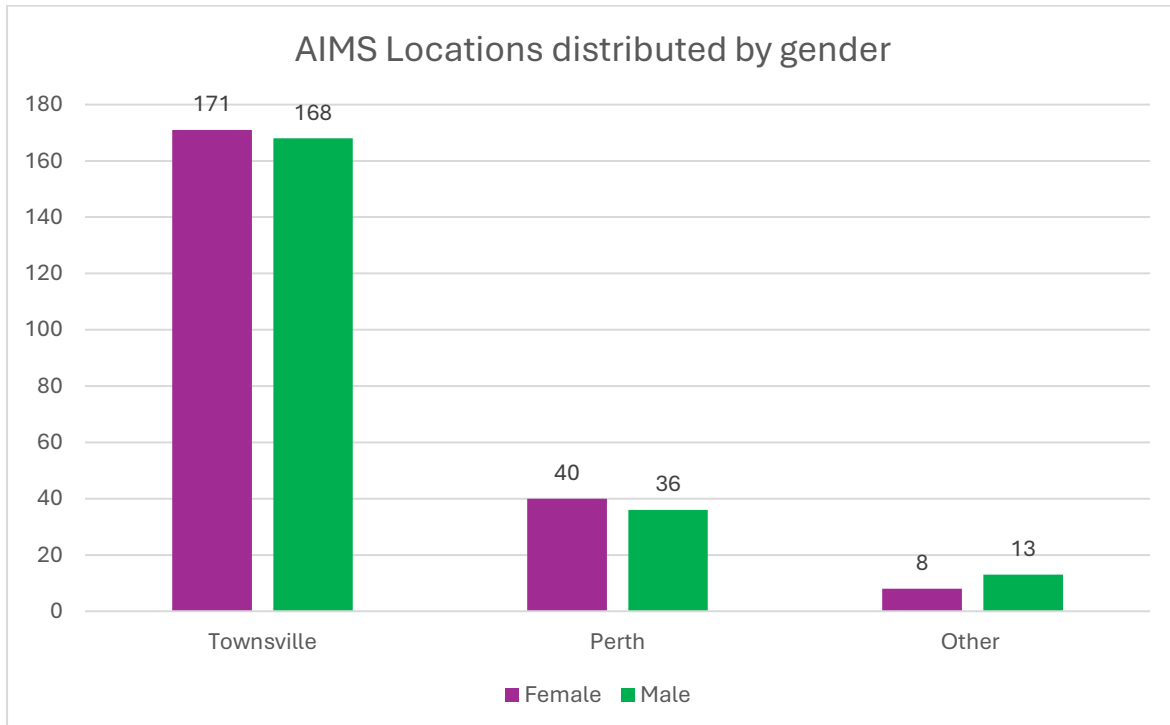


Figure 2: AIMS locations distributed by gender.

6. Staff Profile

At the time of developing this cygnet, AIMS staff is generally gender balanced (217 male employees and 219 female employees). Majority of staff concentrates in the STEMM sector, in which a gender gap is observed with more male STEMM staff than female STEMM staff. The opposite is observed within non-STEMM staff.

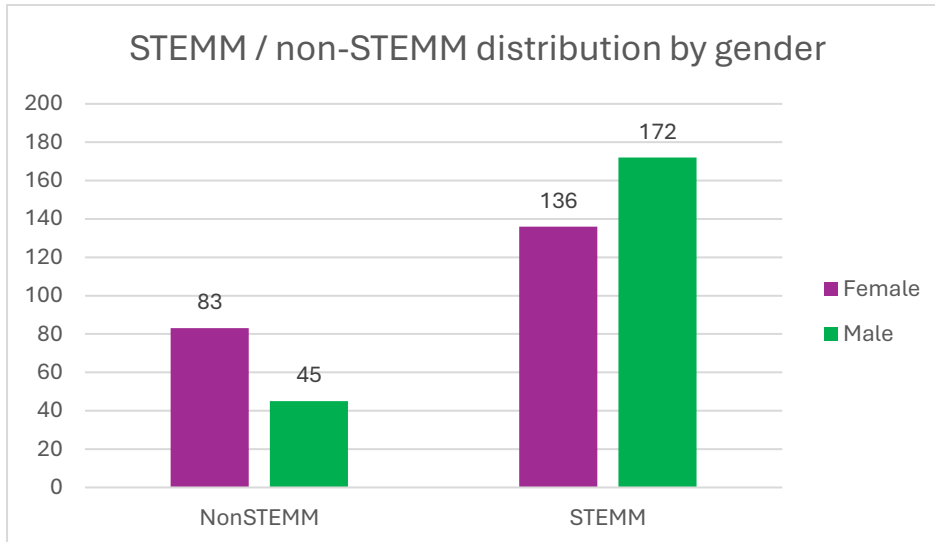


Figure 3: AIMS staff by STEMM / non-STEMM and gender.

In addition, AIMS staff is classified in Australian Institute of Marine Science Office (AOF) levels that goes from AOF Level 1 to AOF level 8. Figures below show these distributions.

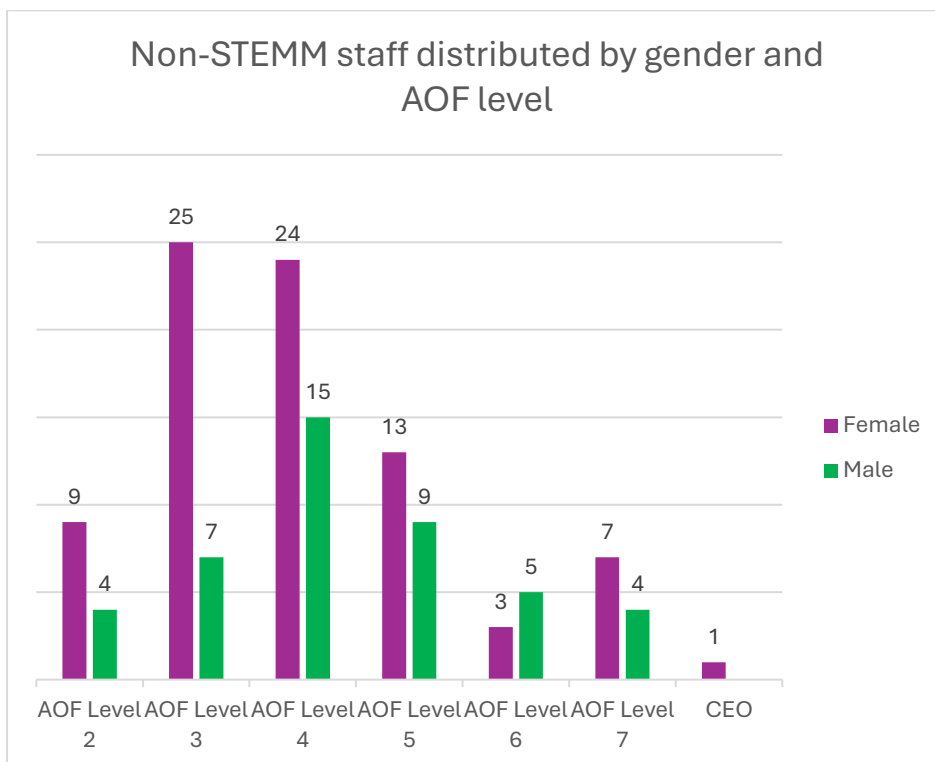


Figure 4: Non-STEMM staff distributed by gender and AOF Level

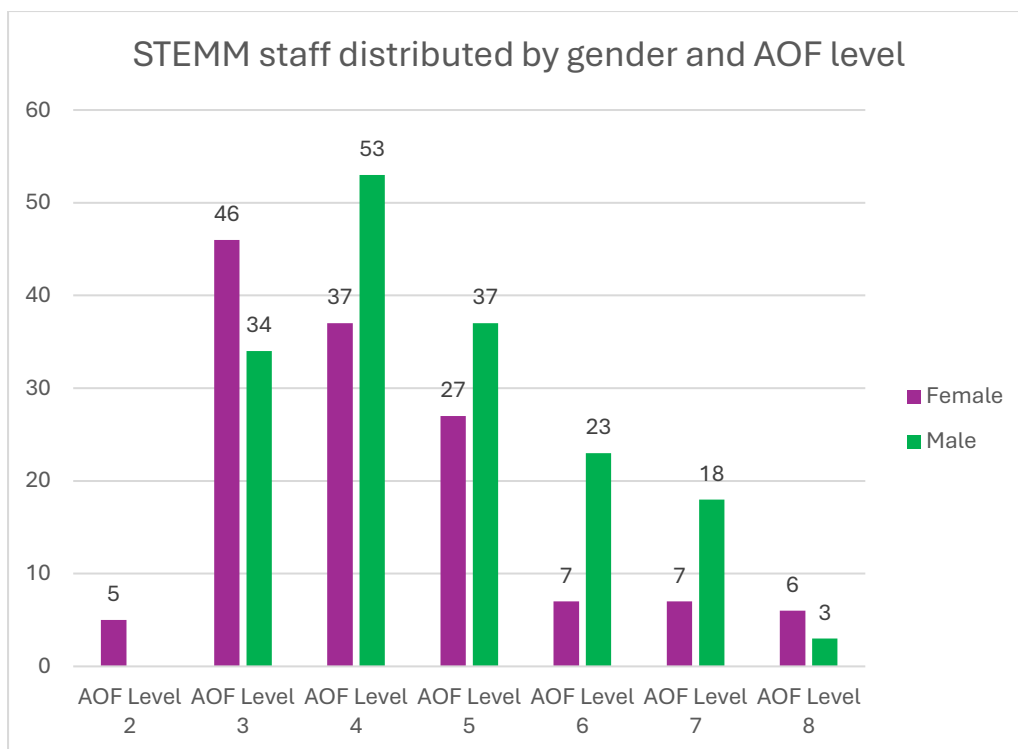


Figure 5: STEMM staff distributed by gender and AOF Level

7. SAGE and EDGE journey at AIMS

The EDGE (Equity, Diversity and Gender Equality) Working Group was founded in 2017, replacing the AIMS Women Group, as part of the Athena Swan Application initiative, with the purpose of bringing together all staff interested in making progress on gender equity, increasing diversity and raising awareness of related issues across the organisation.

EDGE is a consultative group of employees and students across AIMS who develop and deliver initiatives that support the SAGE Action Plan on our accreditation pathway, and promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging in the workplace.

EDGE also makes recommendations to our leadership team on the development of workplace strategies which strive to:

- raise awareness of the principles and benefits of diversity, equity and inclusiveness at AIMS.
- identify and eliminate discrimination and promote equity and inclusiveness through diversity minutes at all-staff webinars, development of initiatives that promote diversity, equity and inclusion, sharing and communicating information to support staff understanding and engagement with diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, progression of the SAGE Bronze Award actions, and more.

- foster a workplace culture where there is respect for the past, realism for the present and optimism for the future; and
- acknowledge and appreciate diversity and the unique capabilities of every individual in the AIMS workforce.

EDGE supports several events annually as part of these initiatives including Harmony Day, International Women's Day, Women and Girls in Science, International Day Against LGBTQIA+ Discrimination (IDAHOBIT), Wear it Purple Day, and more.

In 2020, [AIMS was awarded the SAGE Accreditation Bronze Award](#), which recognises AIMS' commitment to improving gender equity, diversity, and inclusion. Since then, EDGE has worked with various AIMS teams to implement impactful initiatives to improve diversity, equity and inclusion.

For the last few years, we have been working on our Action Plan presented in our Bronze Application, and we've been collecting data to gather input from our employees as well as data on other topics to analyse and make informed decisions based on our organisation's realities and experiences.

8. Additional contextual factors affecting progress on gender equity, diversity and inclusion

The Australian Institute of Marine Science is a small but dynamic research institution. Equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives are led and supported by the People and Culture team and EDGE sub-group.

The EDGE Working group and sub-group are composed entirely of staff who volunteer their time on top of their busy day-to-day roles.

While members of EDGE are passionate and committed to the goals of the SAGE Athena Swan program, their expertise does not traditionally include gender equity, strategic initiatives to enhance diversity, nor even inclusion-focused data collection and analysis. These factors are relevant to our institutional context and to our capacity to develop and deliver strategic change. They also have an impact on the preparation of our SAGE Athena Swan applications.