



SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

Name of Institution	Australian Institute of Marine Science
Date of Application	30/06/2025
Contact for Application	Josefa Poblete Campos
Email	edge@aims.gov.au

Australian Institute of Marine Science

SAGE CYGNET #3

Inclusive Recruitment

		Barrier
[Mandatory] Institution-wide barrier	Cyg1	Flexible Work
[Mandatory] Sub-group barrier	Cyg2	Representation and inclusion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples
Sub-group barrier	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Equity and diversity in recruitment process
[Please select] Institution-wide/Sub-group barrier		
[Please select] Institution-wide/Sub-group barrier		

Note on Language: The Australian Institute of Marine Science recognises the non-binary nature of gender. We acknowledge that the terms 'male' and 'female' refer to biological sex. However, due to system limitations and availability of data, for the purpose of this application, some gendered data has been reported as 'male' or 'female', as historical data has been collected and reported in this manner. We also acknowledge that this binary assumption may not fully represent all the identities of the persons included in these datasets and we recognise the importance of intersectionality when collecting data.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science also acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are two distinct racial groups within the term "Indigenous Australians". For the purposes of this document, "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" or "Indigenous" person means any person who is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent who is recognised and accepted as such by other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples and who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This document includes the use of the term 'non-Indigenous' to refer to those who do not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Institute of Marine Science acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

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Glossary

AIMS – Australian Institute of Marine Science

EDGE – Equity, Diversity and Gender Equality Working Group at AIMS

AOF – AIMS Officer

ALT – AIMS Leadership Team

P&C – People and Culture

FY – Financial Year

FWA – Flexible Working Arrangements

TOIL – Time Off in Lieu

RWA – Remote Work Arrangements

IFA – Individual Flexibility Arrangements

9-day a fortnight – Full time employees (Indefinite, Fixed-Term or Temporary) at AIMS generally work nine (9) days a fortnight, having 1 day off as 'Stand Down Day' per fortnight.

SDD – Stand Down Day

IP – Indigenous Partnerships

EAP – Employee Assistance Program

RRAP – Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program

1. KEY BARRIER

AIMS being a science-focused research Institute faces a systemic challenge to recruit women in a male dominated field.

The key barrier identified for this Cygnet is the need for equity and diversity in recruitment process. Specifically, this Cygnet aims to address barriers to the attraction and selection of women into STEMM positions, as well as the lack of intersectionality and inclusion of other demographics when considering strategies for the recruitment process.

This is essential not only to address any gender imbalance in hiring, but also in promoting a gender balance in AIMS overall staff composition.

Key barrier: Barriers to attract and recruit women into STEMM roles.

Sub-barrier: Inclusion of intersectionality and other demographics to ensure a diverse recruitment process.

The purpose of the strategies mentioned in this Cygnet was to improve the diversity in AIMS workforce composition as well as promote a diverse and inclusive recruitment process.

2. EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

2.1 Findings in the Bronze Award

During the Bronze self-assessment process, the recruitment and selection process was reviewed, including applicants' data, interviewed applicants and appointed applicants. The main barriers identified were in data gathering and possible biases in non-STEMM recruitment decisions. In addition, further action to review advertising processes was recommended, as detailed below.

2.2 Barriers to Attraction

2.2.1 Advertising

No mention of AIMS commitment to diversity and inclusion was included in the advertising process prior 2020. Advertising also did not include any reference to Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) available at that time or reference to our Indigenous Partnership (IP) inclusion in AIMS Strategies.

In the Bronze application, the Equity, Diversity and Gender Equality Working Group at AIMS (EDGE) recommended to '*Review and update Careers at AIMS website content to increase information available regarding (flexible) working arrangements at AIMS to attract more female applicants and applicants with diverse backgrounds*' (Action #30 from the AIMS Bronze Application), as no information was available and/or accessible (see Case Study #1: 2018 Advertisement to recruit a Science Leader position).

Case Study #1: 2018 Advertisement to recruit a Science Leader position

Science Leader

- Strategic research leadership role
- Lead our Northern Australia research activities
- Attractive salary and entitlements

About AIMS

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) is Australia's tropical marine research agency.

Our research into some of Australia's iconic marine ecosystems guides their management and that of similar systems around the world. We do marine science that has practical benefit to the real world, providing high quality, large-scale and long-term research that is used by governments, industry and the wider community to make informed decisions about the Great Barrier Reef, North-West Shelf and Arafura and Timor Seas.

AIMS researchers at our locations in Townsville, Darwin and Perth have access to the best tools and equipment like the National Sea Simulator, cutting edge laboratories and our fleet of research vessels.

About this Opportunity

A rare opportunity exists for a senior scientist to lead and develop a team of experienced researchers and technicians at our refurbished Arafura-Timor Research Facility in Darwin.

This role will drive the growth and expansion of AIMS' world leading research in Northern Australia and contribute to our business development and engagement with community, industry, government and other research entities in the region. Additionally, this role will manage the operational aspects of our Darwin facility including financial, human resource and logistical arrangements.

A highly competitive remuneration and benefits package, comprising a salary range of \$134,435 - \$171,429, 15.4% superannuation, 9 day fortnight and generous leave entitlements will be offered to the successful applicant. This appointment will be for an initial period of 5 years, with an option for renewal. Relocation assistance will be provided.

About You

You will be an innovative leader, with experience in managing multi-disciplinary scientific teams and be able to demonstrate:

- Postdoctoral qualifications and experience relevant to marine and coastal ecosystem research;
- Significant research experience supported by a strong publication record and demonstrated research impact;
- Proven skills in resource management including financial and people; and
- Business development skills, including the ability to actively engage and collaborate with key stakeholders.

Next Step

Enhance your career and apply now. Download the application information from our website www.aims.gov.au/employment. Position enquiries can be directed to Dr Richard Brinkman, r.brinkman@aims.gov.au.

The 2018 case study presents an outdated advertisement that lacks a clear structure and fails to include clear references to our FWA. Furthermore, it did not demonstrate a commitment to Equity, Diversity or Inclusion, focusing solely on the role and skills required.

2.2.2 Applicant Survey: collection of diversity data

At the time of the Bronze self-assessment process prior to 2020, no tool was available to collect diversity data or intersectional demographics. Therefore, understanding and conclusions on barriers to attracting different candidates was limited. During the self-assessment process, data was manually collected as recruitment activity was relatively low, so it was possible to do so. Data was only collected for applicants, interviewed and appointees' gender, as well as STEMM vs non-STEMM campaigns. This had limitations in terms of intersectional data such as gender diversity and other demographics like disabilities, non-English speaking background, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and other identities.

2.3 The recruitment process

2.3.1 Application, Interviewing and Appointment

Finding from the Bronze application indicated: *“Female applicants, interviewees, and appointments made up about one third of applicant pool from July 2015-June 2018 (Table10), and interview rates for STEMM/non-STEMM female applicants were comparable to total female applicants, and increased across time for STEMM roles (Figure10). Lower female applicant rates may be influenced by systemic issues, including existing gender disparity in specific research areas, but may also be influenced by existing processes, including unconscious bias and recruitment strategies.”*

Recruitment stage	All campaigns		STEMM campaigns		Non-STEMM campaigns	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Applicants (2015-2016)	32%	68%	29%	71%	44%	10%
Applicants (2016-2017)	31%	69%	41%	59%	36%	58%
Applicants (2017-2018)	35%	65%	37%	63%	26%	63%
Applicants average	35%	65%	34%	66%	35%	65%
Interviewed (2015-2016)	35%	65%	27%	73%	50%	0%
Interviewed (2016-2017)	36%	64%	37%	63%	35%	46%
Interviewed (2017-2018)	41%	59%	45%	55%	27%	50%
Interviewed average	38%	62%	38%	62%	38%	63%
Appointees (2015-2016)	26% (6)	70% (16)	27% (4)	67% (10)	25% (2)	75% (6)
Appointees (2016-2017)	47% (8)	53% (9)	44% (4)	56% (5)	50% (4)	50% (4)
Appointees (2017-2018)	42% (15)	53% (19)	48% (14)	45% (13)	14% (1)	86% (6)
Applicants appointed	37%*	59%*	41%*	54%*	29%	71%

Figure 1: AIMS recruitment and selection campaign applicants, interviewed applicants, and appointed applicants by gender during the Bronze self-assessment

*In 3 of 54 STEMM recruitment and selection campaigns, no applicant was hired. As such, male and female appointments do not add up to 100 percent. Unfortunately, numbers for applicants and interviewed persons are no longer available as there have been changes in staff, so data was not found.

Figure 1 shows that men dominated STEMM campaigns in every part of the process (applications, interviews and appointment), demonstrating a barrier towards women for STEMM positions. In addition, it was concluded from the Bronze application that *“It is difficult to identify systemic issues in non-STEMM recruitment due to low overall appointments, but unconscious bias may influence non-STEMM recruitment decisions.”*

3. PROGRESS (ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS)

3.1 Advertising changes

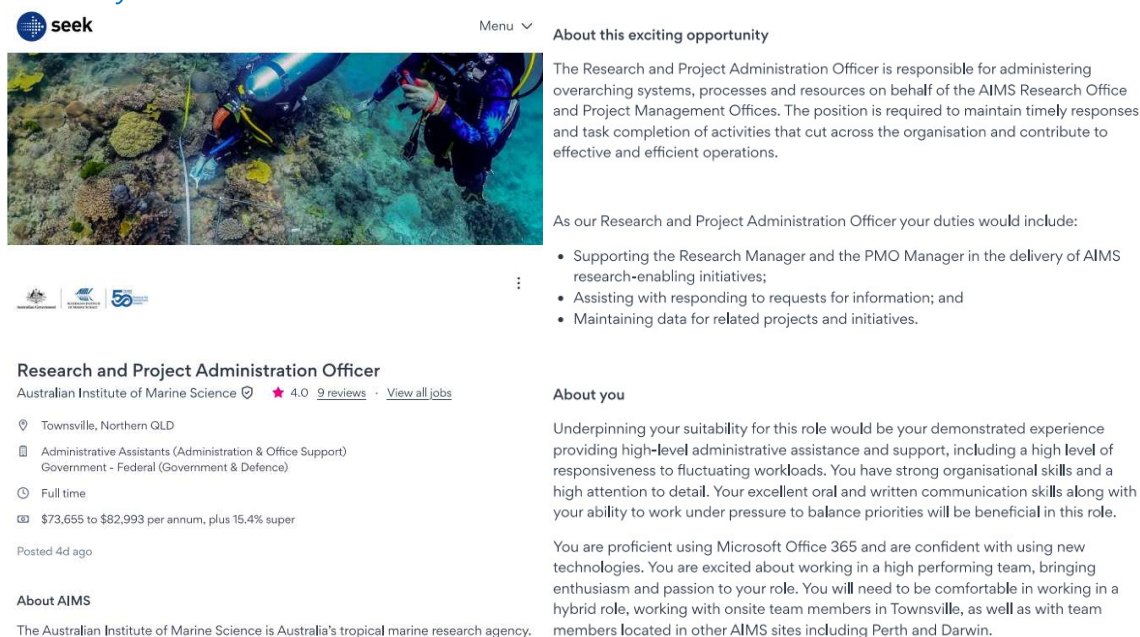
Since 2024, AIMS has intentionally improved the way we advertise positions to reflect our commitment to improving gender equity, diversity and inclusion in STEMM disciplines, including the benefits of working at AIMS, such as flexible work arrangements (FWA), 9-day fortnight work, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Fitness Passport program, among others to promote an inclusive culture.

In particular:

- From Position Description development and advertisement all the way through to appointment documentation, we use inclusive and non-gendered language.
- When advertising, we clearly articulate the role, avoiding jargon.
- We include an Acknowledgement of Country at the bottom of job ads (website), included in our Careers at AIMS page, as well as external advertising through Seek, LinkedIn, etc.
- Job ads and Candidate Information Packs include wording about flexible ways of working and our diversity aspirations, including our commitment to the SAGE Athena Swan program.
- Every ad published on external websites links to AIMS Careers page, which has also been updated and is detailed in the section below.

This action was not initially planned as part of the Bronze Award commitments; however, over time it became evident that recruitment and advertising practices presented a barrier to progress and required review. The introduction of new recruitment systems provided an ideal opportunity to update and strengthen these processes. These improvements have modernised our approach, ensuring that all advertising and related documentation now reflect AIMS's commitment to gender equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Case Study #2: Seek advertisement 2025



The screenshot shows a job advertisement on the Seek website. At the top left is the Seek logo. Below it is a large image of two divers underwater. To the right of the image is the job title 'Research and Project Administration Officer' and a brief description of the role. Below the image are logos for the Australian Government, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, and the 50th anniversary of the Australian Institute of Marine Science. The job details section includes the location 'Townsville, Northern QLD', the job type 'Administrative Assistants (Administration & Office Support)', the salary range '\$73,655 to \$82,993 per annum, plus 15.4% super', and the posting date 'Posted 4d ago'. The 'About you' section describes the requirements for the role, including experience with administrative assistance, communication skills, and proficiency with Microsoft Office 365.

seek Menu About this exciting opportunity

The Research and Project Administration Officer is responsible for administering overarching systems, processes and resources on behalf of the AIMS Research Office and Project Management Offices. The position is required to maintain timely responses and task completion of activities that cut across the organisation and contribute to effective and efficient operations.

As our Research and Project Administration Officer your duties would include:

- Supporting the Research Manager and the PMO Manager in the delivery of AIMS research-enabling initiatives;
- Assisting with responding to requests for information; and
- Maintaining data for related projects and initiatives.

Research and Project Administration Officer
Australian Institute of Marine Science 4.0 9 reviews · [View all jobs](#)

📍 Townsville, Northern QLD
🏢 Administrative Assistants (Administration & Office Support)
Government - Federal (Government & Defence)
🕒 Full time
💰 \$73,655 to \$82,993 per annum, plus 15.4% super
Posted 4d ago

About AIMS
The Australian Institute of Marine Science is Australia's tropical marine research agency.

About you
Underpinning your suitability for this role would be your demonstrated experience providing high-level administrative assistance and support, including a high level of responsiveness to fluctuating workloads. You have strong organisational skills and a high attention to detail. Your excellent oral and written communication skills along with your ability to work under pressure to balance priorities will be beneficial in this role.
You are proficient using Microsoft Office 365 and are confident with using new technologies. You are excited about working in a high performing team, bringing enthusiasm and passion to your role. You will need to be comfortable in working in a hybrid role, working with onsite team members in Townsville, as well as with team members located in other AIMS sites including Perth and Darwin.

Apply now and join a world leading organisation with attractive working conditions. In line with our [Enterprise Agreement](#), the successful candidate will be rewarded with:

- AIMS AOF Level 3 (3.1 – 3.5) salary (\$73,655 to \$82,993 per annum) plus 15.4% superannuation

-
- Full-time, 6-month Temporary (Labour hire) opportunity to 14 October 2025
 - Located in Townsville (Qld)
 - 9-day fortnight, enjoy a long weekend each fortnight
 - Flexible Work Arrangements considered including hybrid working (where suitable)
 - Generous and supportive leave entitlements
 - Access to Commuter car fleet arrangements to travel to site (in Townsville only)
 - Employee Assistance Program

Discover more about [Working at AIMS | AIMS](#).

Please note:

Non-Australian Citizens must hold an appropriate Visa with working entitlements that allows paid employment with AIMS from commencement and for the full term of the appointment, depending on the relevant [Department of Home Affairs](#) current policies.

Applications close: FRIDAY, 18 APRIL 2025 (11.45PM, AEST).

Next Step

Further information about this exciting and challenging opportunity is outlined in the Candidate Information Pack which is available to download from our website

AIMS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's first scientists. We pay our deepest respects to Elders past, present and future, and the custodians of the land and sea Country on which we work.

Case Study #3: Candidate Information Pack 2024

About this opportunity

As our Research Development Advisor, you would be responsible for developing early career researchers, developing and implementing research policy and procedures for AIMS, as well as ensuring compliance with contemporary national research guidelines to benefit AIMS and its researchers. A large component of this role includes supporting supervisors of research students and postdoctoral fellows which includes maintaining systems and tools so that AIMS is fully aware of our ECR research portfolio for resourcing purposes.

In this role, you will identify training and mentoring gaps and develop solutions for filling those gaps, ensure AIMS research Policies and Procedures are fit-for-purpose and that they are implemented across the organisation and provide high-level grantsmanship advice to researchers applying for externally competitive funding.

About you

Underpinning your suitability for this role is your tertiary qualification in a relevant discipline, along with considerable experience working with large cohorts of early career researchers. You have a demonstrated understanding of research policies and procedures as well as strong organisational skills. You are able to provide clear and concise written and verbal advice and information thanks to your excellent oral and written communication skills.

NB: Non-Australian Citizens must hold an appropriate Visa with working entitlements that allows paid employment with AIMS from commencement and for the term of the appointment, depending on the [Department of Home Affairs](#) current policies.

Apply now and join a world leading organisation with attractive working conditions which are detailed in our [Enterprise Agreement](#). Discover more about [Working at AIMS | AIMS](#). The successful candidate for this exciting opportunity will be rewarded with:

- AIMS AOF Level 5 salary (\$117,806 to \$129,148 per annum) plus 15.4% superannuation
- Full-time, Permanent opportunity
- Located in Townsville (Qld)
- 9-day fortnight, enjoy a long weekend each fortnight
- Flexible Work Arrangements considered including hybrid working (where suitable)
- Generous and supportive leave entitlements
- Access to Commuter car fleet arrangements to travel to site (in Townsville only)
- Salary Sacrifice opportunities
- Access to Fitness Passport program, offering discounted membership to selected gyms
- Employee Assistance Program
- Relocation assistance available

About the Team & our Locations

About Data Science & Research Services Program's Research Office Team

The Research Office provides strategic support to AIMS' research programs and is a primary conduit between management, research and other functions.

Our Research Office supports the delivery of Research Program activities through collaboration and strategic engagement with internal and external stakeholders regarding AIMS' science activities. Additionally, the team supports planning by Research Program Directors and Team Leaders, reporting processes, student administration and management, and research QA/QC within the organisation.

The underpinning driver of the Research Office is to support AIMS Strategic objectives by assisting with the facilitation of science impact delivery to address national research priorities and stakeholder needs. As AIMS' science continues to expand, both in terms of size and field or discipline, the scope of compliance with various regulatory bodies is also increasing.

The Research Office oversees numerous processes specific to the AIMS Research Community, including but not limited to:

- Reporting (e.g. Council, Annual Report, Corporate)
- Research performance metrics monitoring, reporting and analysis
- Internal funding schemes
- Our publication portfolio Research integrity and regulatory (Permitting) approvals
- HDR and ECR Researcher Development

About our Locations

Our [headquarters near Townsville](#), North Queensland, is an international landmark in tropical marine science and home to the [National Sea Simulator \(SeaSim\)](#). Located at Cape Ferguson, about 50km from Townsville's CBD, it is adjacent to the centre of the Great Barrier Reef and surrounded by a 207-hectare national park and marine reserve. The area is free from development, is biosecure and has access to clean seawater and a protected harbour.

Our two other offices, in [Perth](#), Western Australia (located in the Indian Ocean Marine Research Centre (IOMRC)), and [Darwin](#), Northern Territory (15 minutes' drive from the city centre), provide direct links for research partners and clients in these regions. A liaison office in Canberra facilitates AIMS' work with government ministers and departments.

Over time, particularly throughout 2024, the evolution of our advertising is evident in the case studies above. These examples reflect the inclusion of and Acknowledgement of Country at the conclusion of all advertisements, along with comprehensive details about our FWA and employee benefits. Case study #3 illustrates our commitment to advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion through our participation in the Athena Swan program.

3.1.1. AIMS external website: Careers page

This is the main advertising source, which was last updated in August 2024 to include AIMS commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, as well as the 'Working at AIMS' experience

(see Case Study #4), with the purpose of attracting various candidates and those who face systemic challenges feel confident to apply.

Case Study #4: Careers Page (as of Aug 2024) – new look

Home > Careers

Careers

Working at AIMS

Recruitment process


Equity, diversity and inclusion

Internships

AIMS is a world leader in tropical marine science and conducts research supporting environmental sustainability and economic growth in Australia's tropical oceans.

Our highly skilled and innovative science staff and valued support staff use state-of-the-art infrastructure, alongside strong national and international collaborative relationships to help to build Australia's national marine science capability.


Together we can meet the challenges facing our marine estate.



Career opportunities

Search current vacancies or subscribe to be notified of new opportunities


[View jobs](#) →



Why work at AIMS?

Fostering excellence and innovation in a diverse and collaborative environment


[Read more](#) →



Recruitment process

A guide to AIMS' recruitment processes

[Read more](#) →



Equity, diversity and inclusion at AIMS

Our commitment to achieving a diverse and inclusive workplace

[Read more](#) →

Equity, diversity and inclusion


MS

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AIMS appreciates the value inherent in a diverse workforce. Employees who belong to a wide range of demographic groups can use their varying backgrounds, experiences and skills to help deliver innovative and creative science excellence while allowing staff to reach their full potential.

We are committed to maintaining a workplace where social identities such as age, gender, orientation, disability status, race, and more have no impact on an individual's opportunity to succeed and thrive.



Working at AIMS

[Read more](#) →

10 Feb 2025

AIMS' flexible work practices recognised

[Read more](#) →

AIMS' Gender Equity

Learn more about AIMS efforts to reach gender equity, diversity and inclusion.

[Read the article](#) →

Benefits and well-being

AIMS actively promotes initiatives and benefits to support work/life balance and an equitable and inclusive workplace culture. Maintaining a positive work/life balance is important and at AIMS we care about employee experience and positive organisational culture. AIMS is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) employer and support our people through benefits and attractive working conditions including:

- **Nine-day fortnight** – enjoy a long weekend each fortnight (that's about 26 days annually);
- **Flexible work arrangements** considered including – hybrid working (where suitable), part-time work, job-sharing, Individual Flexible Arrangements (where suitable), and purchased leave program;
- Generous and supportive **leave entitlements** including 25 working days of Annual Leave (pro-rata) and up to 21 days of paid Personal/Carers leave (pro-rata), Maternity and Parental leave, Long Service leave, Compassionate leave, Cultural leave, Defence leave, and Family & Domestic Violence leave;
- **Paid Parental leave** (conditions apply);
- Generous **Superannuation** - employer contribution of 15.4%;
- Options for flexible Remuneration **Salary Packaging**;
- Confidential access to an **Employee Assistance Program** for staff and their families
- Easy access to **mental health and wellbeing programs**
- **Learning and Professional Development** opportunities;
- **Social clubs** in Townsville and Perth offices;
- Opportunities for **free flu vaccinations and skin checks**;
- Access to the **Fitness Passport Program**;
- **Commuter Car Fleet** option (Townsville only - pickup boundaries apply).
- **Onsite gym** access at the Townsville and Perth facilities, as well as **in-house café**; and
- Accessible **parent facilities** in Townsville and on-campus at UWA (Perth office).

The AIMS Enterprise Agreement 2024-2027 contains more information on the range of benefits enjoyed by AIMS staff.

[AIMS ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT 2024-2027](#)

11

The AIMS Equity, Diversity, and Gender Equality (EDGE) Working Group

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

EDGE was formed to make 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.

Indigenous Partnerships

AIMS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the Traditional Owners of the places where AIMS works, both on land and in the sea country of tropical Australia and pay our respects to the elders; past, present, and future; and their continuing culture, beliefs, and spiritual relationships and connection to the land and sea.

The development of [AIMS' Indigenous Partnerships Plan \(IPP\)](#) is a roadmap for AIMS to achieve genuine marine science partnerships with Traditional Owners. We recognise that greater research impact and value can be created, and new insights gained when our science is interwoven with the knowledge, intuition, capacity, and capability of this country's original marine scientists – the Traditional Owners of sea Country.



IMAGE: K. GREEN

AIMS is dedicated to promoting marine science and related careers to Indigenous people through measured improvements in recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff.

We are:

- introducing and promoting marine science and STEM related careers at AIMS to young Indigenous people through work experience placements and participation in immersive programs such as [Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in Marine Science \(ATSIMS\)](#), Aboriginal Summer School for Excellence in Technology and Science, and junior rangers;
- promoting Indigenous training and capacity building within individual science projects, as well as broadly across the organisation to increase/improve cultural competency;
- using Indigenous networks to actively encourage applicants to all advertised job vacancies, including Indigenous-identified positions; and
- professional development and career progression for all Indigenous staff.

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.

Since 2020, EDGE has worked with various AIMS teams to implement impactful initiatives to improve diversity, equity and inclusion.

This has included:

- the development of an Inclusive Language Guide,
- review of gendered language in published documentation,
- implementation of toolkits to provide additional information and guidance on key processes within AIMS including leave, Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA), and offboarding.

AIMS regularly reports to the [Workplace Gender Equality Agency](#). Our [Employer Statement](#) includes our actions to address gender pay gaps.

Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE)

The [Science in Australia Gender Equity \(SAGE\)](#) initiative was piloted in Australia in 2015 to support initiatives promoting gender equity, diversity and inclusion in STEM in the Australian higher education and research sector. The program provides an accreditation framework for driving organisational change towards gender equity, diversity and inclusion, whilst also breaking down barriers and supporting the attraction, retention, and progression of women, trans and gender diverse people.

In 2020, [AIMS was awarded the SAGE Accreditation Bronze Award](#), which recognises AIMS' commitment to improving gender equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The updated design of our external website, as shown above, offers a detailed insight into the AIMS employee experience, enabling prospective applicants to understand what to expect both during the recruitment process and while working at AIMS. This enhancement reflects our commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment, where everyone feels safe and supported even before they apply. Additionally, the Indigenous Partnerships section aims to actively welcome applications from Indigenous Peoples and making them feel part of the AIMS community. Our efforts reinforce our dedication to building a diverse AIMS community, ensuring that those who tend to be systemically marginalised are encouraged to apply.

3.2 Applicant survey (between 2021-2024)

In 2020, an applicant survey was introduced to allow AIMS to gather diversity statistics, as well as gain valuable insights into how candidates learn of AIMS opportunities. This was included in the action plan from the Bronze Award as a tool to measure and improve our understanding of diversity of applicants for new positions. The survey collected voluntary data on the list below and helped to inform recruitment and advertising motivations, demographics and to better inform how to attract candidates from a diverse pool.

All applicants are invited to complete this survey after the vacancy closing date. Completion of the survey is voluntary, and individual data is treated confidentially and is de-identified. Responses to this survey do not form part of the application for the position (collected in a separate system via a different link) and panels members do not have access to this data, so it is not part of the decision-making process.

Data available from this survey is from 2021 until 2024 (we were unable to find previous data as after reporting on it, this data was deleted from the platform for privacy and security purposes). In August 2024, with the implementation of the Big Red Sky (BRS) system (a new e-recruitment system), this survey became part of the application form. Since August 2024 AIMS has a truer picture of diversity statistics as all applicant responses are now being gathered vs an approximate rate of 75% during the voluntary survey from 2021 to 2024 which will be detailed in sections below. This percentage is an estimate based on the numbers of the last recruitment form submitted and last applicant form submitted. Due to unavailable data, a more precise calculation was not possible.

Data collected in this survey includes:

- What attracted you to this role? (open text answer)
- Gender: selections including Male or Man, Female or Woman, Non-Binary, prefer not to say and prefer to self-describe my gender identity (with open text option)
- Age: selections including 15-30, 31-45, 46-60, 61+ or prefer not to say.
- Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin?
- Are you of Australian South Sea Islander Origin?
- Do you identify as living with a disability?
- Do you identify as being from a non-English speaking background?

Since the implementation of this survey, we have been reporting on this data to our Council, along with comments for the reporting period and comparisons to previous periods if relevant.

One challenge encountered with the implementation of this survey (for the 2021-2024 period) was that, in order for the diversity data to be unavailable for panel members, this survey was separate from the actual application. Therefore, results of this survey don't show an accurate picture of applicants, as many did not respond to this survey. Further information on how we address this challenge is provided in section 3.4 below.

3.3 Targeted appointments for Indigenous Partnerships team

The Indigenous Partnerships Program (IPP) was created in 2016, and with that, the need for targeted recruitment emerged not only to increase Indigenous representation but also to develop the key targets in AIMS Strategy and the action plan. For this, a new strategy and recruitment advertising were developed to attract more applicants who identified as being of Indigenous origin, utilising a range of media to communicate our commitment to increasing the participation of Indigenous staff. The strategy included adding in 2024 an Indigenous Partnerships section in our Careers' external website (as highlighted above), so applicants can learn more about our program. In addition to this, targeted appointments were advertised to create and develop the IP team. These appointments were not exclusively for Indigenous staff, as at the beginning of our actions taking place it was not a requirement, so some members of the IP team do not identify as Indigenous. Some of the main appointments advertised for the IP team were Indigenous Partnerships Officer and Indigenous Partnerships Coordinator, as well as some targeted appointments outside of the IP team like Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (RRAP) Experimental Research Technician – Indigenous and Aquaculture Assistant – Indigenous, among others. All of these positions have been identified and targeted positions since 2022 for Indigenous Peoples. This was not an action from the Bronze Award: however, the importance of Indigenous inclusion was observed through the development of the IP team and Program, which were reported on in AIMS' second Cygnet.

3.4 Big Red Sky Implementation in Aug 2024

The recent implementation of BRS as our new e-recruitment system has significantly improved our processes and enhanced user experiences, not only for applicants but also for panels members and the People and Culture (P&C) team. This was not a planned action from the Bronze Award but was an improvement that offered an opportunity to improve the way we do things at AIMS.

The most relevant improvement, for the purpose of this Cygnet, is the changes to the way we collect recruitment data. Data collection was an action from the Bronze Award, but over the years we found further challenges to the way we were collecting data with the applicant survey data being separated from the application. This is why a new process was developed.

3.4.1 Changes to applicant survey and diversity data collection

By incorporating the previous applicant survey directly into the application form, we now gather more comprehensive and accurate data, including diverse gender options, while maintaining the survey's voluntary nature (as applicants can select the option of 'Prefer not to disclose' at any time for all questions). This is now an integrated part of the process to better understand our applicant pool and further improve how we attract and retain staff. This streamlined approach provides immediate access to valuable applicant information.

Data is de-identified and panel members cannot access this data; it is only available to select members from the P&C team. This means the data is not part of any decision made during shortlisting or interview selection to reduce as much bias as possible. Any potential bias would be of someone's name in their application or resume or after conducting face-to-face or online interviews.

In this new approach, most questions are the same as the ones from the Applicant survey to the exception of 'What attracted you to this role?' question that is no longer available.

3.4.2 Panel members

Even though there is no specific process or targeted actions to ensure the composition of the Selection Panel is gender balanced and/or inclusive, the recruitment team ensures that there is at least 1 woman within the panel members prior giving them access to the system. The Recruitment procedure is under review and will include a section to ensure not only gender diversity but also different backgrounds and experiences.

3.5 Training for panel members: unconscious bias

The Recruitment Lead developed a training module in Aug 2024 to equip participants with the essential skills needed to identify, evaluate and select highly skilled talent for AIMS. This training included helping to identify and remove unconscious bias from recruitment and selection processes, targeted specifically for those who participate in recruitment panels.

This training is mandatory for all panel members leading or participating in recruitment activity and is also available online in our Learning Management System (LMS) to everyone who would like to complete it. The eLearning modules include strategies to:

- identify and overcome unconscious bias
- planning and leading an effective recruitment process
- identifying and managing conflicts of interest
- attract and source highly skilled candidates (social media engagement, late applications, visa sponsorship)
- recruitment assessment tools (shortlisting, interviews, work samples, job simulations), including guidance on interview questions and etiquette
- legal boundaries to ensure fair and legally compliant selection process
- importance of conducting background checks (reference checks, qualifications verification, pre-employment medicals, right to work in Australia)
- candidate care, how to ensure a positive experience for all applicants
- guidance on preparing for new starter onboarding and orientation, including probationary period

This training is regularly updated by the Recruitment team based on latest best practice information, changes to processes and feedback received from participants. As of April 2025, 115 users have undertaken the course to better understand the hiring process and their responsibilities when participating as a recruitment panel member.

This action was proposed in the Bronze Award for all staff involved in recruitment activities to reduce any potential bias in the decision-making process.

3.6 Social media

A series of posts in social media have been developed not only to promote the inclusion of women in STEMM fields, but also to highlight AIMS diverse workforce in this area. Some of these posts include, but are not limited to, International Women's Day, Women leadership, International Women and Girls in Science Day, Indigenous women in Science, International Women in Engineering Day, among other stories to highlight women in science careers.

The below case studies show AIMS efforts to promote women in STEMM fields, including experiences from Indigenous women and women from non-English speaking backgrounds, both achievements and challenges. This intends to acknowledge the systemic barriers that exist towards women in STEMM and show AIMS commitment in this area, so women feel confident to apply and work at AIMS, it aims for everyone to feel included and represented.

Case Study #5: Indigenous women in Science at AIMS: Meet Jamiga-Marie: Woppaburra woman training for a future in aquaculture.



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AIMS aquaculture trainee and Woppaburra woman Jamiga-Marie Cummins returned to sea Country for [coral spawning as part of the Woppaburra Coral Project](#).
 Jamiga was one of two aquaculture assistants supported by the Project, who trained in the [National Sea Simulator](#) at AIMS in Townsville. She brought her training to coral spawning in Woppaburra sea Country, on and around Konomie (North Keppel Island), about 15km off the coast of Yeppoon on the southern Great Barrier Reef. Over 40 people were involved in the largest single science and engagement field event in our 50-year history. Jamiga assisted the science team to maintain mobile aquaria systems, larval rearing, settlement and seeding methods. She also joined other Woppaburra Traditional Custodians to share knowledge of marine life, coral spawning, and help with training.
 Here is Jamiga's experience.

What inspired you to apply for the aquaculture trainee program?

I was living in Brisbane and wanted a change in scenery. Aquaculture was completely unknown to me. I said to myself, when was the last time I learnt something new?

The opportunity would also take me closer to home, to sea Country. I saw it as a first step in upskilling Traditional Owners to heal and monitor sea Country.

What part of the trainee program have you enjoyed the most?

Learning about [corals](#), their biology and the environmental simulations that we control to house them.

Understanding the severe sensitivities corals have that affect their survival. Learning about the research depths was intriguing and the incredible adaptation experiments, such as around heat tolerance. Coral hybridisation between parent colonies is one of the most fascinating things I have observed. Coral spawning is quite beautiful to witness, even more so taking part in the unusual methods to manipulate spawning. I learnt how to manipulate environmental cues to trick them to [spawn six-months ahead](#), or behind, their natural spawning window.

What is your connection to Woppaburra sea Country?

My connection to Woppaburra sea Country is via my grandmother, so my dad's mother, who was born on the beach of Konomie (North Keppel) Island. My great grandmother is Konomie.

Growing up Dad was taught about his father's side, men's traditional business and didn't know much about his mum's side. But as she got older and after the handback of Konomie Island and Woppa (Great Keppel) Island, my dad encouraged me to learn more about my grandmother. The handback, which was in the mid-2000s became an opportunity for everyone in my family to learn, "What is Woppaburra?" A lot of knowledge was completed for us. Prior to this, I had no connection with Woppaburra.



JAMIGA-MARIE COLLECTS CORAL EGGS ON THE BEACH OF KONOMIE, AS PART OF CORAL SPAWNING ON WOPPABURRA SEA COUNTRY ACTIVITIES. IMAGE: G. MOLINARO

Why is engagement with Traditional Custodians important in the Woppaburra Coral Project?

The big picture would be that this type of opportunity and exchange with AIMS, builds a positive relationship and it gives the Woppaburra people an opportunity to look after their own Country. In future, we may be able to do our own spawning and settling of coral larvae, and to help in the reproduction on the reefs surrounding the islands. It merges the science with the knowledge of the Traditional Custodians.

What future career path / activities are you hoping to pursue because of your experience with AIMS and the Woppaburra Coral Project?

At the end of the traineeship I should have enough experience and skills for a technician position in the National Sea Simulator. I learn faster via hands-on learning. The more experience I have here, the easier it will be for me to complete a formal degree.

Before this, I was always afraid of the ocean. I was really scared of it. It did give me a sense of calm, but always from a distance. Now I have been thrown into ocean life and I don't want to leave it so soon. There's so much more to explore, to understand and to learn.

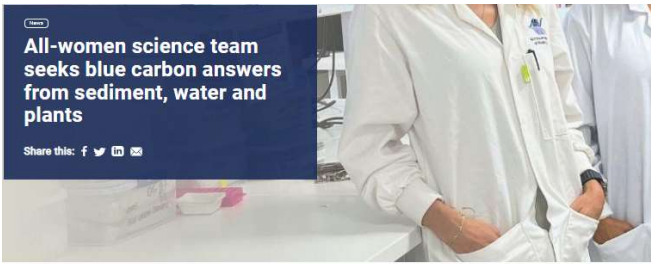


MS JAMIGA-MARIE TENDS TO CORALS ONBOARD THE FLOATING LAB AS PART OF CORAL SPAWNING ON WOPPABURRA SEA COUNTRY. IMAGE: J. HURFORD

Woppaburra Coral Project partners AIMS and BHP are helping build the skills for the future by supporting Indigenous-identified husbandry technicians.

This program is part of the [Australian Coral Reef Resilience Initiative](#), a partnership between AIMS, BHP and [Woppaburra Traditional Custodians](#).

Case Study #6: Women and non-English speaking background(s) representation at AIMS: All-women science team seeks blue carbon answers from sediment, water and plants



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- Archived publications
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11 February 2025

Celebrating International Women and Girls in Science Day, February 11, 2025

An all-women science team is playing a key role in investigating how much carbon is buried across the Northwest Shelf of Western Australia and how it could be used to help reduce the severity of climate change.

When marine plants photosynthesise, they take carbon dioxide out of the air and the water. Blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrass meadows can durably store that carbon for long periods of time, helping to provide a buffer against the effects of climate change by locking the carbon away from the atmosphere.

The soil carbon profiling team is part of the \$20 million [Blue Carbon Seascapes Project](#), jointly funded by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) and BHP. This project is measuring how much carbon is flowing into sediment sinks along the coast and in the deep ocean, how long it is stored there, and how we can best protect and enhance this natural process.

11 Feb 2025

Inspiring women and girls in science

[Read more](#) →

Blue Carbon Seascapes

[Read more](#) →

Equity, diversity and inclusion at AIMS

[Read more](#) →



Women in STEM

The [Department of Industry, Science and Resources' STEM Equity Monitor](#) found while the numbers of women enrolling in university STEM courses and working in STEM has increased, women only represented 15% of people working in STEM jobs.

A recent survey of AIMS staff found women made up about half of those who identified as working in STEM jobs at AIMS.

Dr Davis said the first time the team was in the lab together was a powerful moment.

"I had this bizarre realisation—I'm surrounded by women for the first time in my career," she said.



"Everyone has worked seamlessly together to reach our common goal, and it's been incredible to be a part of."

Inspiring the next-gen women and girls in science!

Hear from Blue Carbon lab team members Dr Kay Davis, Dr Cecilia Pascelli, Dr Martina Zucchi and Julieta Nazareth Gamboa Cutz on their thoughts on working in STEM - their inspiration, reality, and advice for future women and girls in STEM!

[Feature story - Inspiring women and girls in science](#)

It's like magic, but with a lot of hard work. That moment of accomplishment is incredibly satisfying!

What is the worst part of your job?

As someone from a less privileged cultural, racial, and gender background, I've often felt the weight of having to justify my place in science.

I have been fortunate to meet incredible people who have encouraged me and are willing to make a difference. I believe in the power of diversity and humanity to transform science, bringing new perspectives and care for our blue planet and all who inhabit it.

What advice would you give your younger self about getting into science?

How did you get into science? What attracted you?

Being naturally introverted, science became a way for me to expand my imagination, explore nature and connect with the world in a meaningful way.

It fuels my curiosity, keeps me questioning, and challenges me to seek answers to things I don't understand.

What is the best part of your job?

I hope to inspire girls by showing that science is for everyone, no matter who you are. I love knowing that my work can encourage others to dream big and follow their passions.

AIMS social media posts provided in the above case studies reflect strategic effort to address systemic barriers faced by women in STEMM fields, by creating representations of inclusion and achievements of women in STEMM. By highlighting the journeys of Indigenous women

and women from non-English speaking backgrounds, AIMS acknowledges the unique challenges these groups face in accessing and developing within scientific careers. These narratives not only showcase professional accomplishments but also the lived experiences behind them, helping to challenge stereotypes in science.

3.7 Recruitment Practices Survey

To assess the impact of recent recruitment and advertising improvements, AIMS conducted a *Recruitment Practices Survey* with all new starters employed between September 2024 and September 2025. This action aimed to evaluate how inclusive and equitable applicants perceived our recruitment processes to be, and to identify opportunities for further enhancement.

The 12-question survey combined multiple-choice and open-ended items exploring:

- **Diversity demographics**, including gender identity, Indigenous status, and language background;
- **Perceptions of inclusivity**, such as how equitable and welcoming the recruitment process felt, and the inclusiveness of language and imagery used in advertisements;
- **Impact of inclusive messaging**, including whether AIMS's diversity statements influenced candidates' decision to apply;
- **Experience of recruitment and onboarding**, including perceived supports and cultural inclusiveness; and
- **Perceptions of AIMS's commitment** to Indigenous partnerships and the inclusion of women and people from diverse backgrounds in STEMM roles.

Findings from the survey are informing continuous improvement of AIMS's recruitment and onboarding practices.

4. OUTCOMES

4.1 Applicant Survey outcomes

As noted, the Applicant Survey data may not fully represent the recruitment landscape between 2021 and mid-2024, as participation was voluntary and many applicants chose not to complete the survey. The following analysis has been conducted using the best available information, with the understanding that future conclusions may change as more reliable data collection processes are implemented through the new BRS system.

Across this period, AIMS received a total of 2,497 survey responses from 4,668 job applications. These figures were derived from the application tracking system. Previously, survey data were collected through Cognito Forms and downloaded for reporting purposes before being deleted to maintain privacy and data security. While deletion ensured compliance with data management protocols, it has limited our ability to retrospectively analyse full datasets. Only partial records and summary reports were retrievable from shared folders.

Consequently, demographic data—particularly on gender and diversity characteristics—are incomplete for earlier years. From the subset of data available for 2024 (n = 1,996), 46% identified as female or woman (n = 924), 53% as male or man (n = 1,052), and 1% as other genders, including “prefer not to say” or “prefer to self-describe” (n = 10). There were also 10 blank responses, accounting for the difference between the number of responses and the total dataset.

These findings provide an initial baseline for future analysis and continuous improvement under the new BRS system, which will enable more comprehensive and secure collection of applicant demographic and inclusion data.

4.1.1 Overall applications data

Accurate data on the total number of recruitment application forms could not be fully retrieved, as the previous system required regular cleansing and deletion of data due to storage limits and privacy protections. Although data were periodically downloaded for reporting and compliance purposes, complete datasets were not retained.

Between 2020 and 2024, AIMS received approximately 4,668 applications. Based on available data extracted from the new Big Red Sky (BRS) recruitment system for the period August–December 2024, we estimate that overall, 44% of applicants identified as female or woman, 52% as male or man, and 4% as another gender identity (including non-binary, “prefer not to say/disclose,” or “prefer to self-describe”).

From the August to December 2024 BRS sample (n = 1,379):

- Applicants for STEMM positions comprised 35% women (n = 336), 60% men (n = 567), and 5% other gender identities (n = 48).
- Applicants for non-STEMM positions comprised 63% women (n = 270), 35% men (n = 147), and 2% other gender identities (n = 11).

These patterns indicate that while gender representation among women applying for STEMM and non-STEMM roles is becoming more balanced (55% and 45% of women’s total applications respectively), a significant gender gap remains among men, with 79% of male applicants applying for STEMM roles compared to 21% for non-STEMM roles.

Table 1 below provides a breakdown of data from this period. The first section of the table shows the gender composition within each role type, indicating that STEMM positions continue to attract a higher proportion of male applicants, while non-STEMM roles attract more women. The second section reverses this view, showing the distribution of role types within each gender group. This highlights that women are relatively evenly represented across both STEMM and non-STEMM applications, whereas men and applicants of other genders are far more likely to apply for STEMM roles. Together, these perspectives provide a fuller understanding of gender patterns across AIMS recruitment activity.

Big Red Sky applicant's data from August to December 2024			
% based on STEMM or non-STEMM total			
Gender Identity	STEMM	non-STEMM	Total
Female or Woman	35% (n=336)	63% (n=270)	44% (n=606)
Male or Man	60% (n=567)	35% (n=147)	52% (n=714)
Other (incl, Non-Binary, prefer not to say/disclose & prefer to self-describe my gender identity)	5% (n=48)	2% (n=11)	4% (n=59)
Total	100% (n=960)	100% (n=428)	100% (n=1379)
% based on Gender Identity			
Gender Identity	STEMM	non-STEMM	Total
Female or Woman	55% (n=336)	45% (n=270)	100% (n=606)
Male or Man	79% (n=567)	21% (n=147)	100% (n=714)
Other (incl, Non-Binary, prefer not to say/disclose & prefer to self-describe my gender identity)	81% (n=48)	19% (n=11)	100% (n=59)

Table 1: BRS applicants' data (Aug-Dec 2024)

We recognise the limitations of this dataset due to the transition between systems and the partial retention of earlier data. Nevertheless, this sample provides a baseline for ongoing monitoring and comparison in future reporting years. Future analyses will draw on complete datasets from the BRS system, enabling stronger evidence-based insights into gender representation and recruitment patterns across STEMM and non-STEMM roles.

4.1.2 STEMM applications

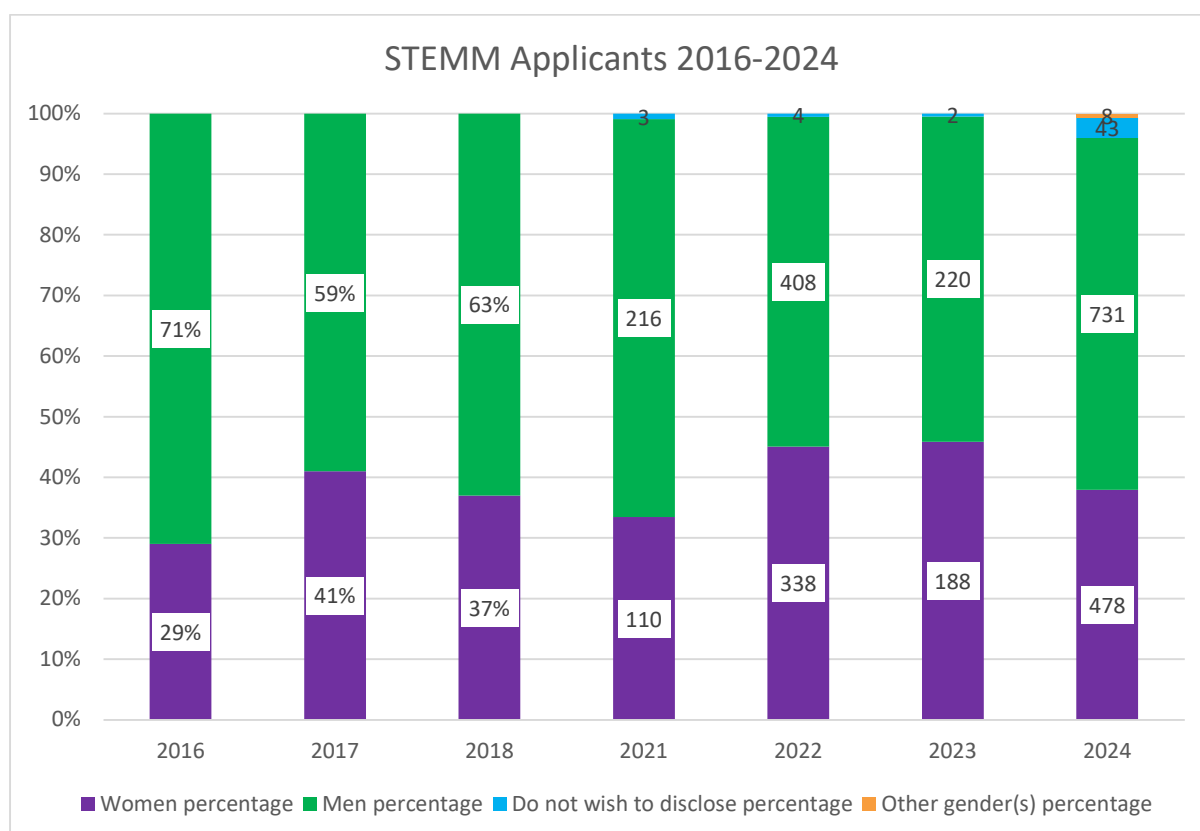


Figure 2: percentage of STEMM applicants between 2016 – 2024

Figure 2 shows that during the Bronze award assessment (2016 – 2018 period), no clear trend was evident in the gender distribution of STEMM applicants, with proportions of men and women relatively balanced. Consequently, few targeted recruitment actions were included in the original Action Plan. By 2021, however, the introduction of the Applicant Survey provided more robust data, revealing a consistent pattern of higher male representation in STEMM applications. This insight prompted the implementation of focused actions to address gender imbalance and enhance the inclusivity of recruitment processes.

Note: raw numbers were unavailable for the 2016-2018 period, hence only the percentages are provided for these years.

In 2022 and 2023, there was an observable increase in the number of women applicants, indicating progress towards gender parity in STEMM applications. However, 2024 data show a decline in this percentage. This may reflect improved accuracy in data collection following the integration of demographic questions into the application process, revealing that earlier figures were likely positively skewed. While progress has been made, these findings highlight the need for continued refinement of recruitment practices to ensure sustained and equitable gender representation (see Further Action 1)

4.1.3 Non-STEMM applications

The figure below shows the number and percentage of applicants who applied to non-STEMM roles between 2016 and 2024, by gender. Note: raw numbers were unavailable for the 2016-2018 period, hence only the percentages are provided for these years.

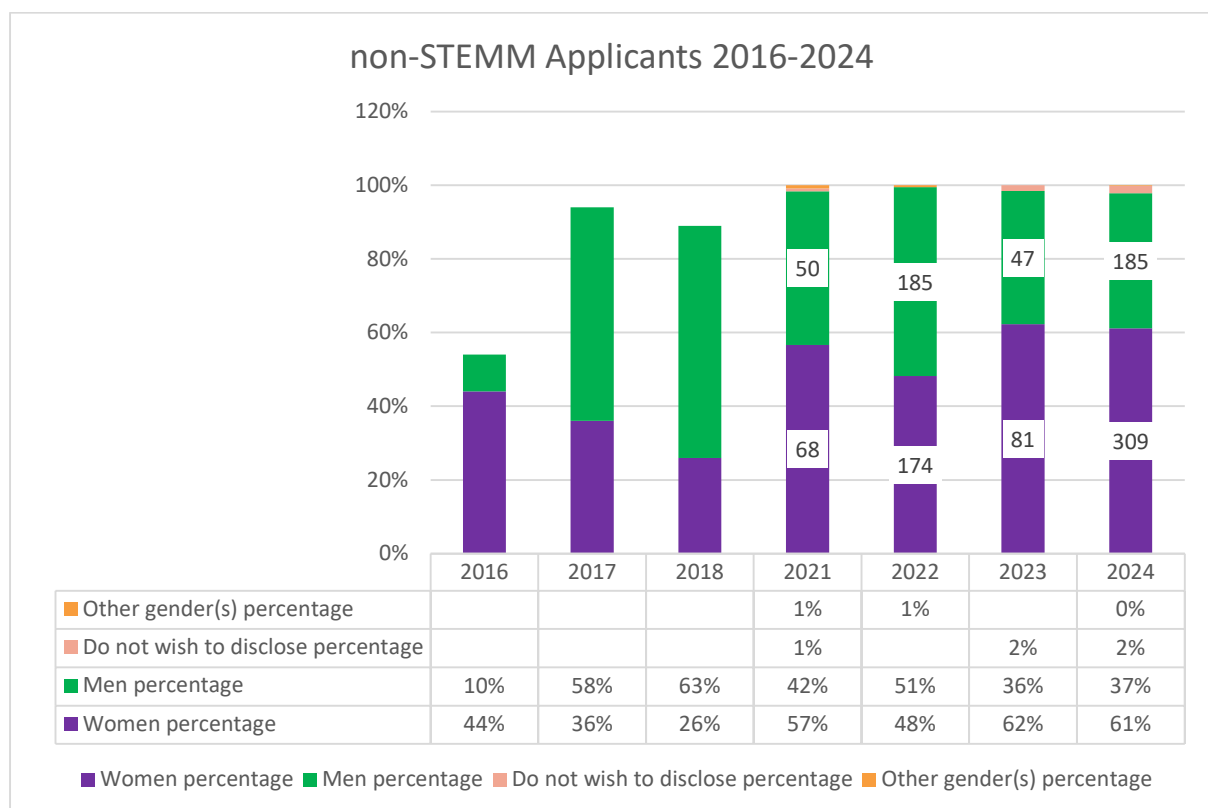


Figure 3: percentage and number (if available) of non-STEMM applicants between 2016-2024

As stated in the Bronze Award, it was hard to identify systemic barriers during the 2016-2018 period, possibly due to the small size of the organisation at that time. It can be observed that

men applicants not only dominated in STEMM fields but also in non-STEMM roles, indicating that more men than women applied to AIMS roles. After our actions and with the implementation of the applicant survey, a closer balance can be observed between 2021 and 2023. However, as mentioned in other sections, this can be positively skewed due to the applicant survey being voluntary. In 2023, there is an imbalance in favour of women, which can be caused by multiple reasons such as data not being accurate due to applicant survey limitations, or a reflection of societal trends (women tend to dominate non-STEMM fields). In 2024, it is clearer that the change in systems reflected more accurately our data, noticing a higher number and percentage of women applicants to non-STEMM roles, which will be addressed in further action 5.

In addition, data for each stage of the recruitment process (i.e. application-interview-appointment) is not available as it has not been collected in previous systems, therefore, this data is not able to suggest whether the panel composition and training actions have reduced bias.

4.1.4 Other demographics – Intersectional data

Graphs for applicants who identify as being of Aboriginal origin or living with a disability or other demographics have not been included due to the low percentage of responses. No clear trend is observed to contribute to the narrative. AIMS will continue to capture and monitor data over time.

4.2 Positions data

4.2.1 STEMM positions data

The below graph shows AIMS STEMM positions over the reporting period, including number of staff in those positions as well as percentage in relation to gender.

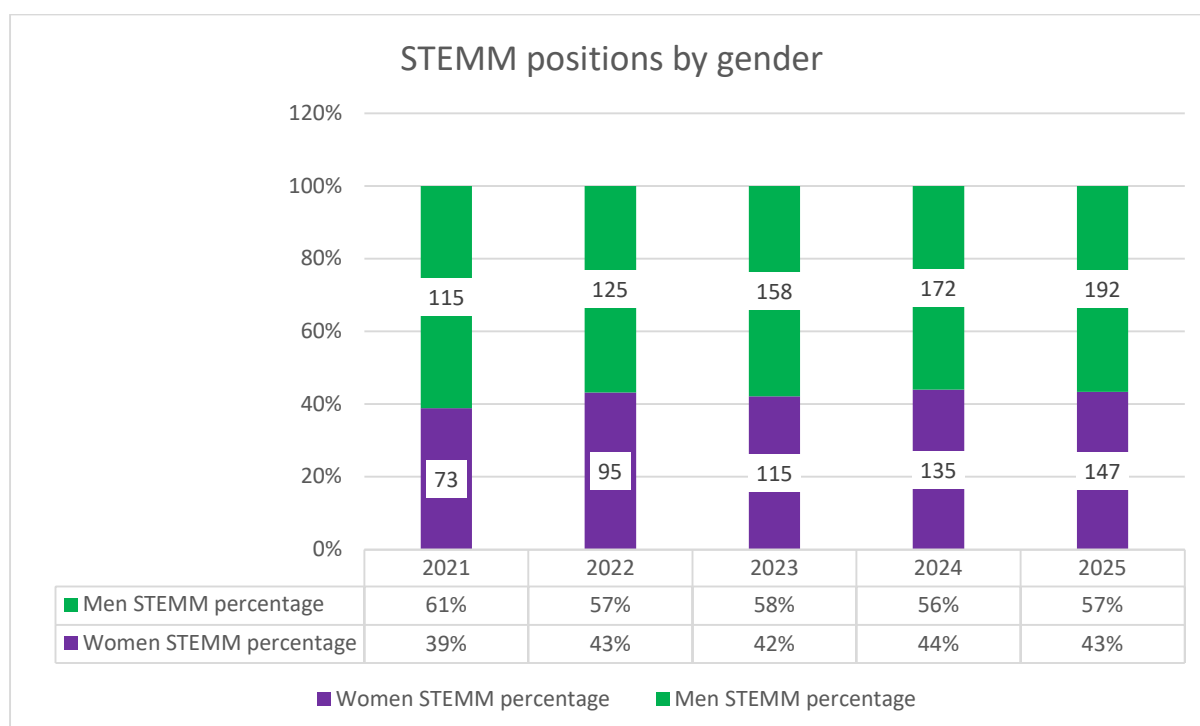


Figure 5: Number and percentage of women and men in STEMM positions 2021-2025. Total STEMM positions 2021= 188, 2022= 220, 2023= 273, 2024= 307, 2025= 339.

A positive outcome is observed with a modest increase in percentage of women in STEMM roles while the percentage of men in STEMM roles remained mostly stabled. This means that as of 2025, the gap between men and women has reduced to 14% (compared to 2021 when this gap was 22%). This outcome suggests the effectiveness of our initiatives and represents modest progress to achieve our objectives. While this progress is encouraging, there is still room for continued improvement to achieve greater gender balance across all STEMM roles at AIMS. It is also important to mention and acknowledge external factors that contribute to this positive outcome, such as changes in society, education, among others and we will need to monitor change over a longer period to make sure positive changes that occurred are due to our actions.

4.2.2 non-STEMM positions data

The below graph shows AIMS non-STEMM positions over the reporting period, including number of staff in those positions as well as percentage in relation to gender.

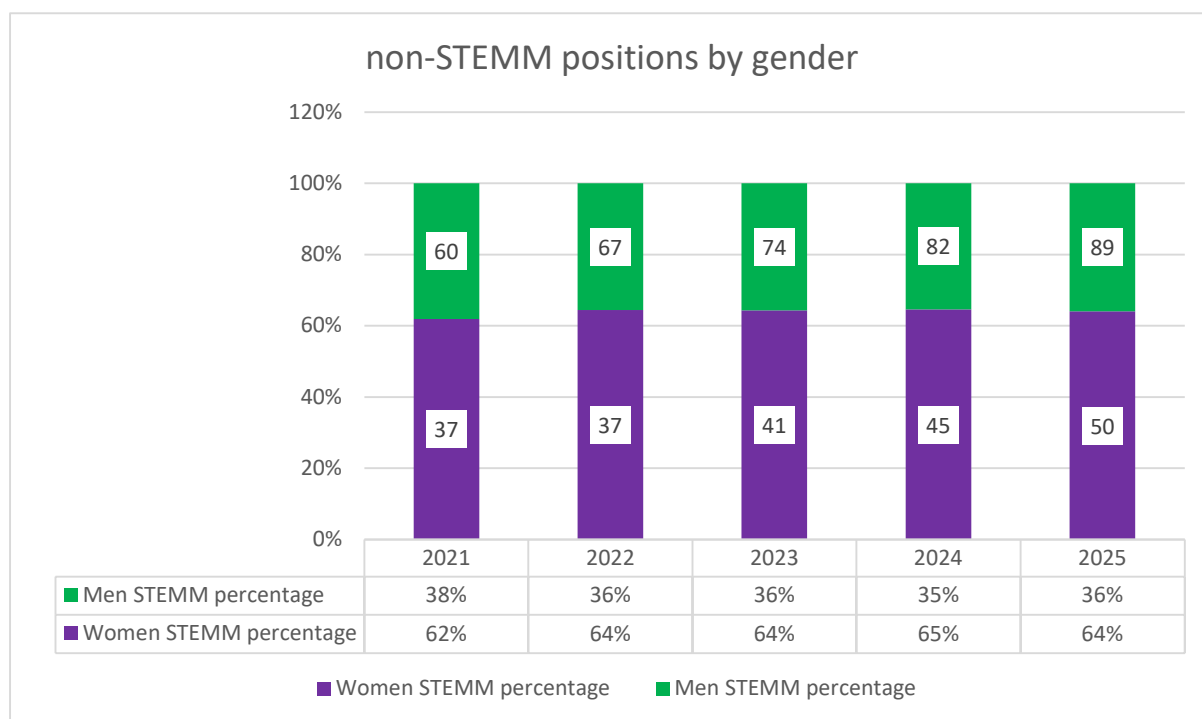


Figure 6: Number and percentage of women and men in non-STEMM positions 2021-2025. Total non-STEMM positions 2021= 97, 2022= 104, 2023= 115, 2024= 127, 2025= 139.

The percentage of non-STEMM positions for both women and men has relatively maintained constant over the years. An increase in the gap between women and men non-STEMM positions can be observed between 2021 and 2025, meaning that there is room for improvement and a need for further monitoring in future surveys and positions data to determine further actions.

4.3 Recruitment Practices survey

To address the issue of some actions being implemented in 2024, and to identify measurable outcomes or impacts, we developed a Recruitment Practices (RP) survey. The RP survey also provided an opportunity to gather any feedback to help identify key areas for improvement.

It was sent to staff who had started work with AIMS in the last 12 months (and were still at AIMS at that time).

The RP Survey achieved a 29% overall response rate, closely aligning with the target of 30%. Response rates were slightly higher among men (33%) than women (26%), providing a useful baseline for evaluating engagement with future surveys and identifying any patterns in participation across gender groups.

Category	Female or Woman	Male or Man	Prefer not to say	Total
New starters surveyed	47	48	1	96
Survey responses received	12	16	0	28
Response rate	26%	33%	–	29% overall

Table 2: Overview of RP Survey demographics

Responses to the multiple-choice questions are in the table below.

	To what extent do you feel our recruitment process was inclusive and equitable?	
	Female or Woman	Male or Man
Very inclusive	3	9
Somewhat inclusive	5	6
Neutral	3	1
Somewhat exclusive		
Very exclusive	1	
	Do you believe AIMS actively supports the inclusion and visibility of women in STEMM roles?	
Strongly agree	2	6
Agree	5	8
Neutral	4	2
Disagree		
Strongly disagree	1	
	How inclusive did you find the language and messaging in our job advertisements (e.g., inclusion statements, tone, imagery)?	
Very inclusive	3	12
Somewhat inclusive	4	2
Neutral	4	2
Somewhat exclusive		
Very exclusive	1	
	How would you rate AIMS commitment to Indigenous Partnerships and engagement during recruitment?	
Excellent	4	9
Good	2	3

Neutral	4	4
Poor	2	
Nout sure		
	Do you feel our workplace culture is inclusive and welcoming to people from diverse backgrounds?	
Strongly agree	5	10
Agree	3	5
Neutral	4	1
Disagree		
Strongly disagree		

Table 3: responses to RP survey in 2025

Across all items in Table 3, men consistently reported higher levels of perceived inclusivity and organisational support than women. This pattern aligns with broader sectoral findings that women often experience subtle or structural barriers during recruitment and induction that men may not perceive.

These results provide valuable direction for AIMS’s ongoing efforts to refine recruitment messaging, ensure gender-responsive processes, and strengthen early engagement and belonging for women entering STEMM roles.

5. IMPACT

5.1 Applicant Survey Analysis

Impact of our actions hasn’t been directly measured, and it is an area that will be further explored for future action (action #2). However, for the purpose of this Cygnet, data to measure impact was collected from the Applicant Survey. Out of 3289 applications, there were 2497 respondents to the Applicant Survey.

Responses to the question ‘What attracted you to this role?’ can be categorised under the following relevant themes:

Theme 1: Organisational reputation and field of expertise

“Personal skills and experience, work that AIMS does and AIMS reputation. With AIMS and their strive to be diverse and inclusive, I dream of representing and inspiring the women & girls of science.” (Woman applicant in 2024)

“Field of expertise; the research topics; opportunities to grow; reputation, support and facilities at AIMS; diversity and inclusiveness at AIMS” (Woman applicant 2023)

The above quotes provide evidence that our actions have had an impact. By promoting stories in our external website for events like International Day of Women and Girls in Science, we are building a strong and inclusive organisational reputation. This have had an impact on applicants who purely apply to AIMS due to this reason, helping to address our systemic barrier and promoting women in STEMM fields.

Theme 2: Inclusive work culture (and benefits)

"The opportunity to move to a country with such rich oceans with the security of having financial stability with a dazzling, challenging and unique job. For having mentioned in the public notice about candidates from other countries, about diversity and inclusion, I felt comfortable for being a Latin American woman for applying. Grateful for the opportunity to be included." (Woman applicant in 2022)

This experience directly shows that our social media efforts of showcasing staff at AIMS from different backgrounds, with different skills and experiences, has provided confidence in women from different backgrounds to apply for the role. This has attracted different demographics and created a diverse recruitment process. It is also complemented with providing a better candidate experience from the advertising process, stating clear benefits and flexibility when working at AIMS, as exhibited below.

"Company culture, 9-day fortnight with additional super, on-site gym." (Woman applicant 2024)

"AIMS's dedication to developing a diverse workforce, encouraging teamwork, and maintaining high standards of behavior greatly aligns with my personal values and career goals." (Woman applicant 2024)

Theme 2.1: Indigenous representation and inclusion

"AIMS's commitment to advancing marine research while fostering Indigenous participation and knowledge exchange is particularly inspiring. The Institute's proactive approach to integrating traditional ecological knowledge with cutting-edge scientific methodologies reflects a forward-thinking perspective that resonates deeply with me. I am eager to contribute to initiatives that not only enhance our understanding of marine ecosystems but also prioritize the conservation and sustainable management of our oceans, aligning perfectly with my career goals." (Woman applicant in 2024)

"I find very interesting the work ethic of involving aboriginal people and their knowledge and heritage in science for reaching a better future." (Woman applicant 2024)

The above experiences show how our commitment and Indigenous Partnership Program has attracted Indigenous women, who feel confident in applying and contributing with Indigenous knowledge of the oceans, helping to address our barrier and increasing the number of Indigenous women in STEMM roles.

Other themes not directly related to the purposes of this Cygnet include, but are not limited to, skills alignment and experience, passion for the Ocean and marine environment, career progression, AIMS mission and values.

In addition, emails received regarding our recruitment process outline the positive experience received by women applicants and appointees:

"I was on an interview panel today where one of the candidates stated that they were really impressed with how organised and efficient AIMS' recruitment process has been for them to this stage. They said 'The communication has been great, and the recruitment process has been so organised. This is so different from other organisations and is a breath of fresh air. It has left me with a great first impression of AIMS'". (Email from Panel member at AIMS, 2025)

This email reflects the changes made to the recruitment process and systems, as it has improved the candidate experience and created a positive environment to start working at AIMS and continue creating an inclusive culture.

5.2 RP Survey Analysis

The RP survey sent out to new starters, as mentioned above, has provided valuable qualitative impact data. Three open-ended questions were analysed and categorised to identify four key themes. Table 4 provides an overview of the questions and respondent demographics.

Question	Total Responses (n)	Female or Woman	Male or Man	Prefer not to say / Other
What specific aspects of the recruitment process made you feel included?	18	7	11	0
What impact (if any) did AIMS' attempt at inclusive language and messaging in job advertisements have on your decision to apply?	18	7	11	0
What benefits or support mechanisms have positively impacted your experience during recruitment or onboarding?	27	11	16	0
Total responses across questions	63	25 (40%)	38(60%)	0

Table 4: survey questions and respondent demographics

Across the three open-ended questions, respondents consistently highlighted the importance of inclusive and respectful recruitment interactions; transparent and communicative processes; visible diversity and inclusive representation, and accessible and flexible working conditions

Question: What specific aspects of the recruitment process made you feel included?

Note: quotes will be provided below as some comments are across various categories.

Theme 1: Panels members & interviewing process (8 mentions)

Staff provided positive feedback on the interviewing process, mentioning specific aspect such an inclusive and welcoming panel, as well as a diversity in panel members. This reflects the work the recruitment team has been doing with requesting at least 1 woman in recruitment panels as well as unconscious bias training to better prepare those who will be participating in recruitment activity such as interviews.

Theme 2: Communication and transparency (6 mentions)

Communication and transparency have been widely mentioned across open-answer questions. Although not directly related to our actions, it shows the recruitment team's commitment and efforts to ensure applicants keep updated with outcomes and requirements, as well as answering any questions applicants may have. In addition, transparency in role descriptions, advertising format and salary information, has positively impacted applicants in their trust not only with applying for a job at AIMS, but also trust during the recruitment process. This could show that our new Candidate Information Pack format has impacted positively in applicants trust and motivation to apply.

Theme 3: Visibility of women and different backgrounds & Welcoming staff (6 mentions)

Responses indicated importance of visibility of women and people from different background and how that impacted in feeling welcomed to the office. AIMS multiculturalism and visibility of that have created a safe environment for applicants to request support without feeling negatively impacted by that during recruitment. This could be a reflection of our actions by promoting different stories of staff in social media and showcasing AIMS commitment to inclusion and that everyone matters.

Theme 4: Advertising process (3 mentions)

Including information in job advertisements about AIMS equity and diversity policies and commitment made applicants feel included and that it was open to anyone with the required specified skills. The job description was valued as something that provided clear requirements and gave the impression of an inclusive process. This directly relates to our advertising changes actions, which were positively received.

Supporting quotes:

"The job description included info about AIMS equity and diversity policies. Despite the need to maintain neutrality for the interviews, the panel members were welcoming and happy to answer questions. When starting in the office, everyone was welcoming, and it is good to visibly see the amount of women and people of different backgrounds in the organisation." (Female or Woman respondent)

"I mentioned in my interview that I am a Muslim and will need longer break on Friday, I got a very positive feedback. Also on the first day I was told I could use the room for prayers. And just by being at AIMS you can see how multicultural it is. So hats off to that." (Male or Man respondent)

"Having a woman in the panel" (Female or Woman respondent)

"a diverse and welcoming panel" (Male or Man respondent)

"Good communication and approach, made sure I was very aware of the process and timeline" (Male or Man respondent)

"Transparent role descriptions, salary info, etc." (Male or Man respondent)

Question: What impact (if any) did AIMS' attempt at inclusive language and messaging in our job advertisements (e.g., inclusion statements, tone, imagery) have on your decision to apply?

Theme 1: No impact (9 mentions)

Most responses for this question stated that inclusive language and messaging in job advertisements had no to little impact in decision to apply. Most respondents that answered this were men, who not necessarily are specifically paying attention at this based on the feedback provided (quote below), making it a trend that inclusion in job advertisements impacted more women than men as a factor to apply.

"I personally did not notice any that I can remember. But I'm a cis white man so I might not have been looking for it as much." (Male or Man respondent)

Theme 2: Communication (inclusive tone, statement reflect inclusive workplace) (4 mentions)

Responses indicated that communication during advertising reflected integrity and that the tone of the advertisements felt inclusive, which reflected efforts for an inclusive work environment. In addition, statements about Indigenous Partnerships as mentioned as a positive impact. This shows that applicants are considering and noticing the changes in advertising and efforts to promote an inclusive workplace.

"Messaging around prioritising Indigenous Engagement and institution goals in that area" (Female or Woman respondent)

Theme 3: Strong impact (3 mentions)

A few responses stated that it had a strong impact, without specifying much how. One response, however, indicated that it had a strong impact as working in an inclusive environment was a priority for the respondent:

"It had some impact. Working in an inclusive environment is important to me so I probably would have had an unconscious bias away from AIMS if there wasn't some indication of inclusion being a priority." (Male or Man respondent)

Theme 4: Organisation reputation (2 mentions)

Lastly, responses regarding organisation reputation reflects how are actions have positively impacted AIMS reputation as an inclusive employer, being an important factor for applicants at the time of applying.

"It was important. When reviewing a job advert, I look at the organisation and their reputation first, to determine if I would be comfortable and interested in working there." (Female or Woman respondent)

Question: what benefits or support mechanisms have positively impacted your experience during recruitment or onboarding?

Theme 1: Communication (6 mentions)

As mentioned in questions above, the communication process during recruitment seems to have a positive impact on applicants and staff. While not directed to specific actions, this reflects the recruitment team's commitment to ensure transparency and fairness during the whole process, as well as providing guidance to panel members on how to do this process, with the purpose of promoting equity and equal treatment to all.

"Constant updates from hiring manager throughout the process." (Female or Woman respondent)

"...a detailed to-do list in an onboarding email" (Female or Woman respondent)

Theme 2: Team and supervisor support (6 mentions)

While not directly related to our actions, respondents indicated feeling supported by their team and supervisors. Our actions indirectly contribute to creating this welcoming and inclusive space as well as providing the necessary information to supervisors when they are onboarding staff.

"Line manager and team support was amazing, and everyone in the office I was introduced to was welcoming." (Female or Woman respondent)

Theme 3: Accessibility to documents and trainings (5 mentions)

It was also mentioned the importance of accessibility to documents as well as trainings (inductions), that allowed applicants to have a clear understanding of the role and what the process would look like, which was possible due to the advertising changes for a more detailed and well explained position description and Candidate Pack.

"Having access to detailed documentation and online training modules early on allowed me to ramp up at my own pace." (Female or Woman respondent)

"Having access to full position description and step by step guide to applying." (Female or Woman respondent)

Theme 4: Flexible Work Arrangements (3 mentions)

Lastly, the inclusion of flexible work arrangement available at AIMS in our job advertisements has positively impacted staff and applicants on the promotion of work life balance, as stated in the quote below.

"Strong emphasis on work-life balance. Flexibility in WFH and leave taking." (Male or Man respondent)

Note: although not related to our actions, 5 respondents mentioned that relocation assistance was appreciated. No detailed comments or feedback on how this assistance had a positive impact was provided, so quotes will not be provided as are not very informative.

6. FURTHER ACTION

Reference	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
1	Women applicants for STEM roles in 2024 significantly decreased	Continue to monitor applicants' data through the new system and investigate if women applicants continue to decrease.	Start investigating in 2027 if trend continues and taking actions if needed	Recruitment team in consultation with EDGE group	CFO	Percentage of women applicants for STEM positions to reach 47% by 2028-2029
2	No strategy to measure impact of our actions	Recruitment team to consult with EDGE and explore ideas on how to collect data to measure impact.	Start exploring ideas by the end of 2026 and start implementing in 2027	Recruitment team in consultation with EDGE group	CFO	Response rate of at least 50%
3	Recruitment strategy for AIMS 'Careers at AIMS' website has not been completed yet.	Recruitment team intends to create videos on the experience of working at AIMS, linked to positions, to further complement	Upload videos in external website by 2027	Recruitment team in consultation with Communication team	CFO	Number of views.

		our actions to making different experiences visible.				
4	No strategy to attract applicants with other underrepresented demographics such as disabilities and neurodiversity.	Investigate other inclusive recruitment practices and how to apply them to AIMS. Create a strategy with actions to follow to create a more diverse and inclusive work environment, specifically to Persons with Disabilities and Neurodiversity.	Start investigation/research by the end of 2025 and have an action plan by 2026	Recruitment team with EDGE group support and consultation	CFO	At least between 5-10% of applicants to identify as living with a disability (current percentage as of 2024 is 2%), after 1-2 years of implementing our actions.
5	Proportion of non-STEMM men applicants significantly decreased in 2024	Explore if unconscious bias or other (external) reasons are also affecting non-STEMM applications (women applicants significantly higher than men applicants)	Start analysis in 2026 gender pay gap analysis	People and culture team	CFO	Increase of men applications at least 7 percentage point based on 2024 baseline data