

The Australasian Women in Emergencies Network: a catalyst for gender equity and resilience

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The establishment and growth of the Australasian Women in Emergencies Network (AWE) marks a significant step towards diversity, equity and resilience across the emergency management and disaster resilience sector.

In 2018, the AWE was established to provide a platform for women to connect in recognition of greater inclusion of women in the male-dominated emergency management and disaster resilience sector. The network has since expanded its reach to include New Zealand and, recently, the Pacific Region.

AWE's overarching goals are to promote, support and recognise the contributions of women to emergency management and

disaster resilience. By providing a platform to network, promote, share information and collaborate, AWE contributes to the sector's overall growth and effectiveness.

Women bring unique skills and strengths to all areas of disaster resilience and emergency management and their insights and expertise help build resilience across Australasia. AWE has almost 2,000 members from a broad range of emergency services organisations,



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AWE founders Katherine Cooney, Bridget Tehan and Amanda Lamont want to recognise the contribution of women in the emergency management sector.

Image: AWE



Almost 60 AWE members met over breakfast at the 2023 Australian Disaster Resilience Conference.

Image: AWE

community and non-for-profit organisations, all levels of government, education institutions, private businesses, volunteers and community members who play a wide range of roles in emergencies and disasters.

AWE's strength lies in the breadth of its membership as well as its networking, collaboration and knowledge sharing that creates a unique community across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Region.

The network's commitment to recognise, promote and support women in the sector is evident in its initiatives including members' local chapters, newsletters, networking events, site tours, speaker events, a mentoring program, scholarships, special-interest groups (e.g. the Women in Emergencies for Climate Action group) and the AWE Excellence Awards. Members also have access to relevant news, job opportunities and sector resources and updates that can enhance their professional development.

AWE established Australasian Women in Emergencies Day to recognise and celebrate women working in emergencies and disaster resilience. It raises the profile of women in the sector and provides a way for organisations to acknowledge the achievements of the women in their organisations and demonstrate their commitment to gender equity.

AWE's values are rooted in diversity, trust, relationships, adaptability and accountability. These values guide its activities and there is a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion, welcoming women in all their intersectional

identities and recognising and respecting individuals with diverse abilities, opinions, genders and ethnicities. AWE also welcomes allies of women and the promotion of environments where everyone, regardless of identity, can contribute to and benefit from its initiatives. The network recognises and acknowledges the ownership, connection and custodianship of all indigenous peoples to their lands.

AWE partners with a range of organisations within the emergency and disaster resilience sector as well as universities, industry organisations, peak bodies, networks, and other gender-focused organisations. This enables the network to leverage other knowledge, share information and collaborate extensively. AWE helps to reshape the landscape of emergency management and disaster resilience by fostering inclusivity, promoting gender equity and recognising the multi-faceted identities of people in the sector. AWE builds resilience across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific and contributes to an equitable and diverse global emergency management community.

Through its initiatives, AWE advances gender equity and resilience and, to measure this, is embarking on an evaluation of its first 5 years to understand its broad contribution. As the network grows, it will be as a testament to the benefits of collaboration and shared knowledge to create safer futures. Looking forward, AWE aims to expand its influence, to drive positive change and to foster cultures of inclusivity and collaboration.