



25 December 2019

Dear AGW Members

This is a condensed update as another year races to an end. December has been a hectic month for me at work with major changes at the university and moving into a new home. On reflection 2019, has also been a pivotal year for AGW.

- We restructured from AFGW to AGW in April 2019 changing from a federated to a national organization.
- Our constitution was revised, approved and accepted nationally.
- We led a delegation of 18 members to the centenary celebration of GWI in Geneva in July 2019.
- Three outstanding young women were offered AGW fellowships.
- Our website has been revised, we continue to update it to make it more friendly for smart phone and tablet use and we have a new domain name – <https://australiangradwomen.org.au/>
- We have established a small group of young members who will assist with social media in 2020.
- Our membership has grown to nearly 100 members in the six months since AGW officially commenced in July 2019.

As I write on Christmas Day, fires are blazing across Australia, Climate Change has become a major global and health issue, the struggle for gender equality continues and most of the world's population wouldn't even dream of the lifestyle we take for granted in Australia.

2019 has been a year of new beginnings for AGW - an organization that is nearly 100 years and we are very grateful for this. We give thanks for all we have - particularly to our global GWI sister friends and national members we send wishes for a very special holiday period.

I conclude by sharing the wonderful awards won by our members who continue to make us proud. I send wishes for Christmas Day to each of you from Perth and wish you the best for the New Year 2020. It is my hope that AGW will flourish and grow in strength in 2020.

Warmest wishes

Professor Jaya Dantas [PhD, MA, FPHAA]

President | Australian Graduate Women

President | Graduate Women Western Australia

Dean International | Faculty of Health Sciences, Curtin University

Web | <http://oasisapps.curtin.edu.au/staff/profile/view/Jaya.Dantas>

Celebrating significant awards for our AGW members in 2019 who have done us proud

Merle Thomson, Registrar of AFGW-NSW received the award of the Order of Australia Medal in the Australia Day Honours List in January 2019



Her citation reads 'For service to the community through a range of organisations'. The award recognises Merle's contribution to the three organisations for which she has worked in administrative roles for nearly 40 years. These organisations reflect her interests and commitments, particularly to equity, health, education and the environment.

Merle has been national registrar and honorary business manager of the Australian Federation of University Women for a total of 15 years. She has also had the roles of registrar and newsletter editor for AFGW-NSW Council. She has represented Australia as a national delegate at Australian Graduate Women international triennial conferences.

Merle's commitment to the environment is especially related to knowledge and conservation of Australian native plants and encouraging their use in horticulture. She joined the Australian Plants Society in the mid-1970s, serving as secretary, newsletter editor and president of the Blue Mountains Group. She is also co-editor of the national journal 'Australian Plants'. At national level Merle has served as secretary 1993-95 and treasurer 2009-2011 and as a NSW delegate to the national council for much of the last 25 years.

The third organisation is Polio NSW where Merle has served on the committee since 1995 holding the position of vice-president from 1997-2011 and secretary since 2012. She has undertaken her roles as a polio survivor since the age of 15 months who has had mobility problems for her entire life. She now has post-polio syndrome which is increasing her mobility limitations and severe general fatigue.

Doreen Todd President of AFGW-NSW and NSW North-Shore branch received the award of the Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June 2019



Her citation reads 'For Service to Women'.

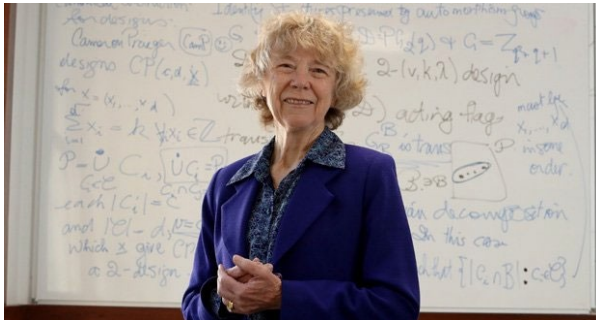
Doreen is currently President of AFGW-NSW and also of AFGW-NSW North Shore Branch. She has been a member of the Central Committee during that time and is ex officio a member of the executive of AFGW.

She has been actively involved in Soroptimist International, an organization to which she has belonged since 1982, and has held executive positions at all levels from club to Region, National and International level.

In 2005 Doreen organized grass roots meetings of women in various regions of New South Wales with the purpose of gathering information to support the Beijing +10 process and has represented that organization as a delegate to the National Council of Women NSW. She has served on the NCW executive from 2002-2018, and at national level has been National Coordinator of the Wellbeing

Standing Committee until 2018. Doreen was also presented with the inaugural NCW of Australia 'Woman of the Year' award in 2018. Since 2008 she has worked with the Community Restorative Committee as a volunteer court support worker, liaising with the Legal Aid Service at Manly Court and assisting clients to navigate the justice system.

Prof Cheryl Praeger: Renowned UWA mathematician wins Prime Minister's Prize for Science and a National STEM honour



If you've ever done your banking on your phone, had an encrypted conversation over the internet or used a search engine, you can thank **Cheryl Praeger** for that. The mathematician who this year took out the **Prime Minister's Prize for Science** has spent four decades researching fundamental mathematics and algorithms that have made modern life easier.

But winning the country's premier award for science was never her goal. All a young Cheryl wanted to do was keep learning mathematics for as long as she could. "What I love about mathematics is the way it explains the world. It makes sense of the world. And as our technology advances and our world changes, the mathematical challenges are there," the University of Western Australia's emeritus professor of mathematics said.

One non-mathematical challenge she's tackled is the shortage of female representation in science and maths. With five of the seven Prime Minister's Prizes for Science awarded to women this year, Praeger hopes it convinces young women a top-tier career in science is possible.

She knows the importance of having visible female role models and mentors first-hand – she met the first female mathematics professor in Australia in the early stages of her career, who inspired her to become the second. "It's absolutely important – sometimes it's a mentoring relationship and other times it's just knowing that the person is there," she said. "For me, I saw women and I thought, 'Okay, there are women in mathematics' so I didn't feel alone."

Prof Shirley Randell AO FIML received the Institute of Managers and Leaders inaugural Sir John Storey Lifetime Leadership Achievement Award



Her citation reads 'For significant and distinguished service over an extended period of time to the management and leadership profession and the community within Australia.' She is pictured here with two other award winners who shared the presentation with her.