

14 July 2023

2023 Queensland Women in STEM Prize winners announced

Four remarkable STEM professionals were rewarded for their outstanding contributions to science at the prestigious 2023 Queensland Women in STEM Prize awards (QWiSP) ceremony last night.

Presented by Queensland Museum Network and the Queensland Government, QWiSP recognises and celebrates women who are making a difference to the world in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM).

Prizes were awarded across three categories by an independent judging panel: Judges' Award, Breaking Barriers Award and Highly Commended with a total of \$15,000 going towards helping support their work.

Dr Sue-Ann Watson, Senior Lecturer at James Cook University and Senior Scientist and Curator of Marine Invertebrates at Museum of Tropical Queensland received the **Judges' Award** for her pivotal role in advancing research on Queensland's marine life during environmental changes.

Dr Watson's research helps to both predict the impacts of environmental change on marine ecosystems and inform the effective protection and management of marine resources to help safeguard a healthy and resilient ocean environment.

Dr Lena Oestreich from The University of Queensland was honoured with the **Breaking Barriers Award** for her work using artificial intelligence (AI) to prevent mental illness. Dr Oestreich's research applies AI to predict who is at risk of developing a mental illness and will benefit from preventative interventions.

The **Highly Commended Awards** were presented to:

- Dr Catherine Kim from QUT for her research into coral rubble, using statistical models and machine learning to assist in maintaining the health of the Great Barrier Reef.
- Dr Jayishni Maharaj from Griffith University, a researcher who is using digital foot models to pave the future for precision healthcare, and a co-founder of the Biomechanics Research Innovation Challenge, a project that aims to increase the participation of girls in STEM subjects.

Queensland Museum Network CEO Dr Jim Thompson said QWiSP is not only a celebration of the exceptional achievements of women in science, but also a reminder of the immense talent that we have here in Queensland.

"The 2023 winners are an outstanding group of individuals from organisations that are making significant contributions to science. We are proud to support these awards that recognise and celebrate the remarkable achievements of women in traditionally male dominated fields," Dr Thompson said.

"We hope these awards inspire future generations to break barriers, pursue their passions, and make their mark in the world of STEM."

Minister for the Arts Leanne Enoch commended this year's Queensland Women in STEM Prize finalists and winners on their inspiring contributions to the science industry and in advancing women's achievements in STEM.

"These exceptional women working in STEM are progressing innovative work and pioneering research that has the potential to deliver significant benefit for Queensland and beyond, while also encouraging girls and young women to pursue a career in science.

"The Queensland Government invests in Queensland Museum and the World Science Festival Queensland to engage the hearts and minds of all Queenslanders in the wonders of science and grow the next generation of innovators progressing careers in STEM."

Minister for Women Shannon Fentiman said that the outstanding women recognised through the Queensland Women in STEM awards are an inspiration for many.

"Congratulations to all the applicants. Each of them has made a profound impact in their respective fields, and their accomplishments remind us of the potential that lies with encouraging more exceptional women to work in STEM fields," Minister Fentiman said.

Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Minister for Multicultural Affairs Leanne Linard acknowledged that in a world where STEM are the driving forces behind innovation, it is crucial to celebrate and acknowledge exceptional women.

"These women on show tonight have demonstrated passion, innovation and leadership in their respective fields. Their work makes an important contribution to our progress, as we all work to close the gap on women's representation in STEM," Minister Linard said.

More information on the winners please visit <https://www.museum.qld.gov.au/about/queensland-women-in-stem-prize#2023winners>

Queensland Women in STEM Prize 2023 recipients

JUDGES' AWARD

Dr Sue-Ann Watson

BREAKING BARRIERS AWARD

Dr Lena Oestreich

HIGHLY COMMENDED AWARDS

Dr Catherine Kim and Dr Jayishni Maharaj

The Queensland Women in STEM Prize is presented by Queensland Museum Network in partnership with the Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist and Office for Women.

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