

Women in Economics Network Report for ESA AGM 2020

1. Overview of year

Despite the disruptions of this year, WEN was highly adaptive and maintained its commitment to our 4 objectives:

- (1) professionally connect and support the career development of women in economics
- (2) increase the representation of women at all levels of the economics profession
- (3) promote public contributions by female economists
- (4) encourage young women to study economics.

WEN was able to continue its activities throughout the year largely by:

- **converting quickly to the online environment** (eg. delivering webinars via zoom; leveraging WEN's existing social media platforms to exchange information and maintain engagement with members and community virtually; making recordings of webinar events available for viewing online)
- **pooling together nationally** (eg. participating in ESA national seminar program; opening up online participation in webinars to the public, regardless of geography)
- expanding our webinar topics, professional development opportunities and support resources to **reflect the pandemic circumstances** (eg. compiling list of supportive resources on working-from-home and home-schooling; hosting webinar discussions to focus on the economic impacts of the pandemic and other pandemic-related issues)

At the same time, we were highly cognisant of the additional time demands and mental/emotional load placed on our own committee members and their volunteer capacity. Many of our committee members had young children, responsibility for home-schooling, other caring responsibilities, and intensified work demands, to manage alongside the personal toll of the pandemic. Joining together to work more closely as a national network helped in some way to alleviate pressures on those committee members. Our planning efforts could be diffused more broadly, and we were able continue to deliver services to our members and wider community. Although we are keen to return to localised in-person events when safe to do so, for all the benefits that this brings, we are keen to retain an element of virtual delivery, as this clearly provided additional benefits particularly with respect to facilitating greater inclusion and involvement among participants.

2. Key national initiatives

- Australian Gender Economics Workshop (AGEW) 2020 was held in February pre-pandemic in-person, as planned. AGEW2021 will be delivered virtually in Feb 2021.
- Women in Economics Retreat 2020 was converted to virtual delivery, held in Nov 2020. All reports so far indicated it was a success. We thank and acknowledge Catie Bradbear (WEN ACT) who led the retreat organising team and did an exceptional job to recreate the retreat experience in a virtual setting.
- Media Register - Steps are being taken to expand categories so as to be more inclusive of WEN membership and to streamline the interface to be more user-friendly for the media, conference organisers and other users. Once the interface is revised, we will run a campaign inviting members to update and complete their profiles.
- Educational outreach - To complement our student video, WEN produced an online booklet for students, educators, parents to explain what economics is about and its uses in society. Several state branches held career-oriented webinars targeted at student audience. WEN has submitted an application to manage scholarship for women to study economics and finance, as part of the Australian Government community grants program.
- Other initiatives - WEN has facilitated opportunities for members to submit their own short articles on economic topics on WEN's LinkedIn page, as a means of promoting women's voices in public discussion and fostering opportunities to strengthen communication skills.
- Several regular national events could not go ahead due to the pandemic. WEN would ordinarily contribute a session at ACE. Plans were in place to go ahead with the National Press Club Address in May 2020, but this was precluded due to pandemic restrictions.

3. Membership

- WEN membership numbers (currently 626 members) have remained steady compared to the same time last year. These numbers represent a sizeable increase from the year prior.

Membership numbers for WEN and ESA (point in time comparison)			
Membership numbers	Dec 2018	Nov 2019	Nov 2020
WEN Members	506	620	626
Total ESA Members	1307	1408	1333
WEN proportion of ESA membership	39%	44%	47%

- WEN membership as a fraction of ESA membership has been growing (currently 47%).

- Current membership numbers include membership by 77 men. We are appreciative that men in the profession are expressing their support for WEN's cause in this way.
- To keep up membership numbers, in our webinar events, email notifications and social media, we have gently encouraged participants to join/renew their membership, mentioning how this membership support enables WEN to continue to deliver its resources and advocate for a greater representation of women in the economics profession. Although most of WEN's events this year were hosted as free and non-exclusive – in the interests of fostering an inclusive and supportive community – our impression is that members have largely responded positively to an intrinsic motivation to support the network, illustrated by our stable membership numbers. Next year, however, it is expected that some of our activities will shift back to members-only or fee-based event, so as to clearly signal value for money for WEN membership.

4. Finances

- Our state/territory branches have continued to facilitate their activities and initiatives using their own financing arrangements.
- At a national level, the main item of expenditure in the WEN calendar this year was the Women in Economics Virtual Retreat. Costs of speakers came to \$5200, plus online administration costs (TBC). These costs were partly offset by the \$2500 we received in sponsorship (from RBA and ANZ)
- AGEW 2020 did not need to draw upon national funding, due to sufficient sponsorship funding.

5. Committee members for 2021

- Within our team of national committee members, some of our current State/Territory Branch Chairs will be handing over the role to a new Chair. We welcome incoming branch Chairs Linda Ward (ACT) and Maria Yanotti (Tas), and express immense thanks to outgoing Chairs Cherelle Murphy (ACT) and Mala Ragahavan (Tas).
- We are also progressing steps to formally establish a WEN NT Branch, led by Maneka Jayasinghe and supported by Luana Cormac.

6. Message of appreciation

- On behalf of the WEN National Committee, thank you to ESA President Danielle Wood, and the ESA Central Council and branch councils, for your ongoing support for WEN's initiatives and your recognition of the value that WEN brings to the Society.
- We wish to thank Diane Litherland for exceptional administrative assistance, especially with the conversion to online events and the time-intensity involved in planning and facilitating these webinars. Diane could not have been more helpful, reliable and professional, and WEN

very much owes the success of our events to Diane's wonderful support and "can-do" optimism.

- As National Chair, I would like to personally acknowledge the dedicated efforts of our National Committee members and thank them for all they have done to contribute to WEN's accomplishments and positive impact this year.

Submitted by Leonora Risse, WEN National Chair, 27 Nov 2020