

Women in Physics Camp 2017 Report

Over the weekend of the 28th -30th April, the annual Women in Physics Camp was held at the Whitehall Guesthouse in Queensliff on the Bellarine Peninsula.

Attendance

This year the location was much closer to Melbourne (1.5 hour drive) and was accessible via public transport (Ferry and train). This made the camp much more accessible to people and made a reduced stay viable for those who could not attend the whole weekend. As a result we saw a 50% increase in attendance from University of Melbourne women.

This year we also invited Swinburne Physics to the camp, which provided the opportunity to expand the program and networking opportunities. It also gave the participants a new perspective on various gender issues from the other University.

In summary, we had 46 people attend

	Unimelb	Swinburne	Total
Staff	3	2	5
Post-doc	3	5	8
PhD	4	2	6
Masters	3		3
Pre-PhD	1	1	2
Ugrad	16	3	19
Totals	30	13	43

Our three invited guests included;

Orania Tokatidis – University of Melbourne director of Counselling Services

Dr Arna Karick – free lance astronomer and scientific computer consultant

Lucy Strang – Unimelb Physics alumni and BioInformatics PhD candidate.

Catherine de Burgh-Day from BOM was also invited but was ill for the weekend.

Virginia Kilborne was accompanied by her two children.

Program

The full program can be found attached below, the following comments arising from the program's activities can be made;

The first activity on the Saturday morning consisted of a 'speed dating' format where each person had to introduce themselves to someone else and determine something they had in common that had nothing to do with work in one minute, until they had met 15 people they had not met prior to the camp. This was a great icebreaker and facilitated opening up conversations over the weekend.

The second activity was speed mentoring, where junior scientists were able to speak to senior scientists for 5 mins before moving on to the next person. This also facilitated introductions and started conversations regarding future careers and study pathways.

Both of the above activities are hectic but fun and led to a range of conversations over the weekend as well as new connections between groups and Universities.

Prior to lunch, we had three speakers.

- Virginia Kilborne from Swinburne and president of the ASA spoke about how the ASA is addressing institutionalised and systemic issues around gender equity and diversity in general.

- Orania Tokatilis from University of Melbourne Counselling and Psychology Services spoke about mental health and led everyone through a mindfulness exercise.

- Emma Ryan-Weber from Swinburne spoke about the work-life balance and juggling parental care with a career.

After lunch a panel spoke about their careers to date and discussed their successes and trials along the way.

- Arna Karick – freelance astronomy and scientific computer consultant

- Lucy Strang – BioInformatics

- Katie Mack – Astrophysics and Science communication

- Jennifer Piscionere – Data scientist

Input was also included from staff as well.

NOTE: Shout out to Millie and John who were such awesome help with the scones and afternoon tea prep!

The final formal session for the day was entitled ‘Tricky Situations’

This was an activity lead by the staff members – the participants were placed in three groups – Undergraduates, Graduate students and Post-docs. Each participant was given the opportunity to write down a circumstance that they have experienced, observed, heard of or thought might be relevant on a card. We then randomly selected the cards and discussed how to deal with these situations. This was a very enlightening activity and many of the participants were very candid in their experiences. They were also able to receive advice in how to deal with these situations and what resources the Universities had available. Splitting the cohort into groups meant the conversations remained relevant.

After dinner, the opportunity to play board games or study was available and a Trivia night was hosted by University of Melbourne First Year students. Fun was had by all!

The Sunday morning was spent exploring the town, taking an Art cultural walk around the coastline, led by Rachel, bike-riding to Daylesford and back, organised by Emma or crafting with Stephi back at the Guesthouse. This was a great opportunity to further explore the surrounds before eating lunch and the final pack up. Unfortunately the last item on the program did not run due to time constraints and will be held over to the following year.

Special thanks to Laura for organising the transport arrangements, Daniela, Virginia and Angela for organising all of the food and leading the cooking, Naomi, Vinuri and Beiwei for putting together the Trivia Night, Emma for organising the best bike ride ever! All staff for helping with the program as well as everyone else for their input and our special guests for giving up their weekend to spend with us. Thank you to Antony from Whitehall Guesthouse for ensuring the facilities were all in order prior to us arriving. Most of all, thank you to all the participants whether you presented, discussed or just sat back and listened. We hope you all found something useful in the weekend and would welcome any feedback to make next year’s program even better.

We would like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) grant awarded by the University of Melbourne Student Union, that contributed to the cost for the University of Melbourne contingent. We would also like to acknowledge the Swinburne Dean of Science who supported the Swinburne contingent. This support enabled a significantly larger group of women to attend this year.

Thank you to the Diversity and Equity committee and School of Physics for their continued support of the camp and these issues.

The next camp will be held at Whitehall Guesthouse again in 2018 on the last weekend of April. There is still capacity for more women to join the camp and I propose we extend the invitation further to Mathematics and Engineering departments.

Rachel Webster has distributed a survey to all participants and the response summary can be found below.

Jacinta den Besten
25/5/2017

Comments from participants;

"Important to make friends so I could have someone who understands the struggles in this profession"
(Masters Student)

"As a first-year undergraduate student, I found this experience reinforced my interest in physics. It was fascinating to meet people at various stages in their physics career, who shared their advice and experiences. A memorable weekend with great food and great conversations :)" (First Year student)

"It was so great to be able to meet women that are either studying alongside me or have already left to pursue careers and get general advice from them. Just hearing of others' struggles really helped with my mindset and I feel newly motivated to keep on kicking with physics because I'm not alone." (Second Year Student)

"It was a wonderful experience, where I met amazing people and talked physics. All is good here. :)" (First Year Student)

"I first attended this camp as an undergrad in the late 1990s. It was absolutely pivotal in combating my impostor syndrome." (Staff member)

"There are some really amazing women doing physics, and the camp allowed me to meet them and get inspired by them." (Second Year Student)

I just wanted to say thank you for a wonderful weekend. The Women in Physics camp was better than I could have hoped. As a first year student, I'm really looking forward to reaching the level of knowledge and passion that I saw in the successful women around me.

WOMEN IN PHYSICS WEEKEND

April 28-30, 2017

PROGRAMME

Friday, April 28

From 4:00 pm Arrive at Whitehall Guesthouse and meet owner Antony Heath (Jacinta). Everyone to find their own dinner.

8:00pm + Supper (hot choc, cheese & crackers, fruit, chocolate)

Late Games, chatting, astronomy observing and photography (weather dependent), settling in

Saturday, April 29

8:00am ++ Breakfast (cereals, croissants, toast)

Session 1

9:30 Six-degrees of separation – Introduction game

10:00 Speed Mentoring

11:00 Morning tea

Session 2

11:30 Virginia – Pleiades Awards and dealing with issues

12:00 Orania – Well being and engaging with Science

12:30 Emma - Family and Career

1:00pm Lunch (bread, salad, quiche, meat, cheese etc)

Session 3

1:30pm Career pathways

Katie Mack – academia and outreach, getting tenure

Catherine de Burgh-Day – Bureau of Meteorology

Arna Karick – start-ups and Science communication

Lucy Strang – Bioinformatics

Jen Piscioniere - Data Science

3:00pm Afternoon tea (scones, fruit, etc.)

Session 4

3:30pm *Tricky Situations* Lead by Jacinta & Virginia (Ugrads), Nicole & Emma (PhDs), Rachel (Postdocs)

5:00pm Free-time and dinner preparation

7:00pm Dinner (Pasta/sauce)

Late Trivia Night

Supper

Sunday, April 30

8:00am + Breakfast and pack

9:00am *Explore Queenscliff*
Bike ride with Emma (details below)
Walk to the Lighthouse
Visit the Marine Discovery Centre with Rachel
Craft with Stephi
Explore the shops and cafes in Queenscliff
Or just chill!

12:00 Lunch (bread, salad, meat, cheese etc.)

Session 5

12:30pm Institution Perspectives – Swinburne and Melbourne

2:00pm Final clean-up and leave

4:00pm Arrive back in Melbourne

Bike ride

Bellarine Rail Trail Bike Ride

<https://www.railtrails.org.au/trail?view=trail&id=139>

Emma Ryan-Weber will lead a 30-km round trip bike ride.

BYO bike or bike hire available from Beacon Big4 (\$15).

If hiring a bike you may wish to bring your own helmet from home.

Please let Emma know Saturday afternoon, she will book bikes.

<https://www.beaconresort.com.au/activites/bike-hire>

9am BYO bike people leave Whitehall Guest House. Bike hire people travel by car to Beacon Big4

9:30am All meet on the corner of Ward Rd & Murray Rd Queenscliff.

9:30am to 10:30am Cycle to Drysdale (13km) - turn right off rail trail at Princess St.

10:30am Coffee in Drysdale (bring cash)

11:00am Cycle back to Queenscliff (bike hire people via Beacon Big4)

Midday Arrive at Whitehall Guest House

Walk to Lighthouse

This is a 12km round walk to the Queenscliff lighthouse

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queenscliff_High_Light