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SAI New South Wales celebrates IWD and walks the talk

The Audit Office of New South Wales (AONSW) is committed to ‘break the bias’, which was the theme of International Women’s Day (IWD) this year.

When asked what the theme meant to her, the Auditor-General for New South Wales, Margaret Crawford, said, “I am proud to lead a diverse and inclusive Office that delivers great audits to improve government in New South Wales”.

In its 2020–21 annual report, AONSW announced the number of women as a percentage of its total full-time equivalent workforce increased from 53 to 55 per cent. The representation of women in middle management and executive positions continued to exceed targets. AONSW reported a 51 per cent representation of women in middle management and a 56 per cent in executive and senior leadership roles.

By conducting a gender pay gap analysis twice a year, the Office Executive ensures remuneration is managed to avoid gaps based on gender.

"I am proud to lead a diverse and inclusive Office that delivers great audits to improve government in New South Wales."

 International Women’s Day
#IWD2022 #BreakTheBias



Auditor-General, Margaret Crawford, strikes the #BreakTheBias crossed arms pose as part of PASAI’s International Women’s Day social media campaign

On 8 March this year, more than 100 staff joined in an online IWD celebration featuring guest speaker Kathrina Lo, Public Service Commissioner, followed by a morning tea for those in the office. Kathrina had previously worked as Deputy Secretary for the Department of Communities and Justice. Prior to that, she was Assistant Auditor-General Performance Audit at the AONSW!

A few days later more than 20 AONSW staff attended Chartered Professional Accountants Australia's IWD luncheon. Margaret was a guest panellist at the event alongside Megan Motto, CEO of the Governance Institute of Australia, and Michaela Browning, Vice President Government Relations and Public Policy for Asia Pacific at Google.

Staff also attended IWD events held by the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) NSW, UN Women Australia and the NSW Public Services Commission.

SAI New Zealand launches Women's Network

On 8 March, the New Zealand Office of the Auditor-General (the OAG) held a virtual panel session featuring women from across the organisation for International Women's Day. Panellists spoke about this year's theme, #BreakTheBias, to more than 100 staff.

Amanda Gray (Sector Manager, Local Government) led the discussion and panellists included Sarah Stevenson (Assistant Auditor-General, Strategy and Communications), Joana Johnston (Sector Manager, Parliamentary Group), Karen MacKenzie (Audit Director, Audit New Zealand) and Yvonne Yang (Associate Audit Director, Audit New Zealand).



Screenshot of SAI New Zealand's IWD virtual panel session

Panellists spoke about biases they had experienced in their personal and professional lives. They shared practical advice to the audience on how they have worked to break these biases.

The event provided a platform for thinking about and celebrating the increased opportunity being afforded to women both in New Zealand and internationally.

It also identified and celebrated the ways that the OAG supports its female staff. This event launched the OAG's re-invigorated Women's Network.

The Network's purpose is to:

- create a sustainable cross-office network,
- increase the confidence of women in the organisation through sharing experiences and advice in a supportive and safe space, and
- embrace diversity and inclusion within the workplace through influencing organisational policy and practices with a particular lens on women's interests.

The Women's Network is predominantly for women (including staff identifying as women) and is led by a steering group made up of representatives from across the organisation.

SAI Pohnpei's female staff influencing a better tomorrow

The Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA), in celebration of International Women's Day this month, wishes to honour and salute all eight female employees of POPA.

They are Elaine Carl (Administrative Officer), Sophia Pretrick (Investigative Advisor), Alice Etse (Audit Manager), Cherry Lyn Somcio (Senior Auditor), Jackleen Route (Auditor III), Cardina Joel (Auditor II), Vellisa Edgar (Auditor II) and Trinia Eliou (Investigator I).

In February, POPA was busy with 13 on-going audits and investigations but still the women made time for activities that contribute to good governance and the promotion and development of future leaders with integrity.

On 23 February, Just Wesley John Ringlen, a senior from Madolenihmw High School, took on the role of the Public Auditor. POPA was once again a host office for Student Takeover Day, so there was no need to print new business cards!

Sophia Pretrick guided and coached him with support from all POPA staff.

With coaching and encouragement, the Student Public Auditor (SPA) presided over a staff meeting and even gave his approval for a couple of routine forms the Compliance Investigation Division (CID) uses.

Passionate about collaborating and empowering youth with awareness and information in the fight against corruption, Sophia and the CID provided the SPA with an in-depth orientation of the office's workings.

This included the values and benefits of POPA, the fraud awareness programme, youth empowerment and advocacy against corruption, and the career path towards the auditing/investigation profession.

At the end of the day Just Wesley expressed his interest in pursuing education in the field of auditing/financial investigation.



Sophia Pretrick and Student Public Auditor, Just Wesley John Ringlen

On 25 February, POPA staff visited the Madolenihmw Municipal Government (MMG) at the request of the newly elected Meninkeder Lapalap (like 'Chief Magistrate', but non-judicial) of the MMG.

The Honorable Kiomy Albert is the first female head of a municipal government in the history of Pohnpei. Under her administration, the MMG's theme is "Promoting teamwork today for a better tomorrow".

POPA Investigative Advisor, Sophia Pretrick and Senior Auditor, Cherry Lyn Somcio conducted training on internal controls, ethics, fraud and orientation of the QuickBooks accounting software.

All three branches of the MMG government welcomed the training.

The Hon Albert emphasised how informative the training was. She thanked the POPA team for providing the orientation and first-hand knowledge of ethics and fraud at the start of her term in office.



Cherry Lyn Somcio conducting training for the Madolenihmw Municipal Government

SAI New South Wales inducts 15 graduates

The Audit Office of New South Wales (AONSW) in late January welcomed its latest group of graduates with 15 new team members joining the financial audit branch.

The graduates had a thorough, two-week induction consisting of training in areas including AONSW systems, accounting standards, plain English and data. They even got to spend time having lunch and interacting with Auditor-General, Margaret Crawford, as well as Assistant Auditors-General Financial Audit.

With an easing of local COVID-19 restrictions the graduates were able to complete the induction both online and in-person. This gave the graduates opportunities to have in-person discussions with trainers, interact with their cohort and build important working relationships.

The graduates also completed several days of online learning to ensure they are equipped to work remotely both from home and when at client sites during audits.

Last year, AONSW implemented a 'Flexible Work Practices' model after consultation with staff. This model encourages staff to work both in the office and remotely, depending on their needs and the needs of their team.

The graduates will continue to complete training for audit methodology over the next 12 months. They have commenced their work in AONSW's financial audit teams of Human Services, Central Agencies and Transport, Local Government and Utilities and Information Systems (IS) audit.

AONSW looks forward to the graduates making a strong contribution to the work the organisation does to 'help the Parliament of New South Wales hold government accountable for its use of public resources.' Past graduates have become audit leaders, directors or, as mentioned in the previous article, even Assistant Auditor-General while at AONSW.





SAI NSW's new graduate officers

SAI New South Wales' 'CoLab' project strives for audit efficiency

The Audit Office of New South Wales (AONSW) is undertaking a project to improve audit efficiency by streamlining the work of individuals, teams and auditees.

This 'collaboration laboratory', or CoLab, aims to enable seamless collaboration with AONSW's internal and external stakeholders, while providing a secure environment to share information.

It has been exploring different options over the past few months to develop a new cohesive technology solution.

There are three main deliverables for the CoLab project:

- The first piece of work is an internal collaboration platform. Discovery workshops for this phase commenced this month and will consider how AONSW staff currently collaborate with each other, before looking at options for new and better ways of working. This will likely explore methods of streamlining the development of our Reports to Parliament among other tasks.
- Second, there is an external collaboration portal being designed and built using insights gained from this series of in-depth discovery workshops across both financial and performance audit. The external portal is currently being tested and a pilot will be rolled out to a small number of audits in April 2022.
- Finally, the procurement of a new cloud-based records management system will save staff many hours each year by managing our records in-place, reducing manual recordkeeping administration.

This major project started last September and is expected to be completed in April 2023.

AONSW looks forward to an enhanced user experience for employees and external stakeholders.

New mentoring programme between SAIs Australia and Papua New Guinea

Following the successful pilot of an online mentoring programme with the Tongan Office of the Auditor-General in 2020, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) commenced a similar programme with the Auditor-General's Office (AGO) of Papua New Guinea in February 2022.

This mentoring programme builds on the already strong relationship between the two SAIs established at the time of Papua New Guinean independence in the 1970s and formalised through the twinning partner arrangements of the Australasian Council of Auditors-General (ACAG), to which both SAIs belong.

The programme includes one-on-one sessions followed by monthly group meetings to encourage idea sharing across the AGO.

Each month has a specific topic for discussion to support soft management skills, including:

- 1. Introductions/networking:** Provide mentors and mentees with the opportunity to broaden and expand their networks and relationships nationally and internationally.
- 2. Professional development:** Allow mentors and mentees to share their experiences of managing staff, how best to encourage the development of team members and seek career progression by developing skills.
- 3. Situational guidance:** Enable mentees to experience mentoring and to receive guidance and advice on how to manage practitioner-related projects, duties, dilemmas and overcome problems.
- 4. Knowledge and skill transfer:** Provide mentees with opportunities to discuss specific technical areas of knowledge and share their respective experiences in their auditing field.

The Auditor-General of Papua New Guinea, Gordon Kega, has been enthusiastically supporting the programme.

Expressions of interest to participate were open to all executive level staff from the ANAO and team managers at the AGO. Having mentees and mentors with experience managing staff means they can share and learn from each other.



AGO mentees with ANAO deployee in Port Moresby (Fred Rocky, Maureen Adadikam, Norma Dalu Heritrenggi, Ovin Paak and Meegan Reinhard)

The programme participants include one male and three female mentees from the AGO, and two male and two female mentors from the ANAO.

It is hoped that this gender balance will support discussions on barriers to gender equality and how best to manage and support team members with diverse backgrounds and skills.

The learnings from this mentoring programme will be shared with ACAG and PASAI members after its finalisation in September 2022.

Other SAIs with twinning partners in the region may note the only cost for such a mentoring programme is the staff time to participate, which is itself not great. Significant positive impact for both SAIs with minimal expense is the likely outcome.

It is intended that future iterations of this mentoring program will continue to be part of the twinning relationship between the ANAO and the AGO for several years to come.

SAI Northern Mariana Islands joins INTOSAI

In December 2021, the Secretary General of INTOSAI, Margit Kraker, informed Northern Mariana Islands' Public Auditor, Kina B Peter, they had approved the SAI as an affiliate member of INTOSAI.

Participation as an affiliate member is open to SAIs of overseas or dependent territories which have a certain level of autonomy for their regional and international relations activities.

The SAI is now one of just two in the world that have this type of membership, the other being the Office of Public Accountability in Guam.



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