

## **PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL WOMEN CONFERENCE AND MENTORING PROGRAM**

Australia's largest simultaneous group mentoring program, the Promoting Professional Women Conference and Mentoring Program, was a pilot program that resulted from funding from the Australian Government Office for Women (under the Women's Development Programme Project Grants 2004-2005).

On 5th April 2005, 166 professional women from across Australia attended the Promoting Professional Women Conference in Sydney. Key note presentations were delivered by:

- Elizabeth Bryan, non-Executive Director Caltex Australia,, Ridley Corporation, Guild Insurance, and Financial Services Ltd and St Hillier's Pty Ltd
- Wendy McCarthy AO, Chancellor University of Canberra, Chair NSW Ministerial Health Participation Council and Deputy Chair Sydney Community Foundation and
- Imogen Wareing, Director, The Growth Connection

An interactive panel session by leading professional women stimulated discussion on how women can be most effective in gaining and holding leadership roles. Panel members included:

- Elizabeth Broderick, Partner, Blake Dawson Waldron, Lawyers
- Mary Grace, General Manager Human resources, Roads Transport Authority
- Nicole Campbell, Environment Manager, Sydney Olympic Park Authority and National Vice-President APESMA

Participants received information on group mentoring and were led through group formation, skills development and mentoring planning exercises. 14 mentoring groups then met over a three month period, supported by online forums, information and resources. Groups also accessed guest speakers from a volunteer database, or from their own networks.

The program was initiated and run by the APESMA Professional Women's Network, a part of the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia. The program aimed to enhance the potential for professional women to undertake leadership roles across business, government and the community. As leadership opportunities may not be realised due to personal and professional isolation, lack of networks, role models and support, the program aimed to address these challenges.

The program has been extremely successful; beneficial for the participants and for the lessons that it provided to the APESMA Professional Women's Network for future professional women's mentoring activities.

Some of the participant groups have continued after the completion of the program, reflecting the ongoing benefit for these professional women. APESMA has continued to provide support for these groups and has further developed its Professional Women's Network as a result of the program.

APESMA's Professional Women's Network is committed to running further conference and mentoring program activities as a result of this program and thanks the Australian Government Office for Women for its support.