

Company: Western Sydney University, Sydney, NSW Australia

Nomination Submitted by: PNP Group

Company Description: Western Sydney University is a multi-campus public research university in Greater Western Sydney, ranked in the world's top 250 and known for innovation and community impact. The School of Engineering, Design and Built Environment offers programs in engineering, architecture, construction and design, combining research excellence with strong industry links.

Nomination Category: Individual Awards Categories

Nomination Sub Category: Women Helping Women - Social Change

Nomination Title: Prof. Olivia Mirza - Women Of Wisdom Pioneer



1. Briefly describe the nominated individual: history and past performance (up to 200 words):

Total 186 words used.

Professor Olivia Mirza is a highly accomplished academic and engineering leader at Western Sydney University, with a career spanning more than 20 years. Beginning as a civil and structural engineer, she has become a nationally recognised professor and researcher, dedicated to advancing structural engineering and sustainable infrastructure. She is best known for her pioneering work on Macro Synthetic Fibre Reinforced Concrete (MSFRC), which influenced its adoption in the Parramatta Light Rail Stage 1 project—one of the largest applications of this innovative material in Australia.

Beyond research, she is a champion for diversity and inclusion. Professor Mirza founded *Women of Wisdom (WoW)*, a program that supports female engineering students with mentoring, networking, and professional pathways, and the *Aspire Indigenous Program*, which empowers Indigenous high school students to pursue careers in STEM fields.

As President of Engineers Australia Sydney Division (2022–2024), she continues to bridge research and practice, promote sustainable solutions, and advocate for systemic change in the profession. Through these achievements, Professor Mirza has inspired and empowered countless women and underrepresented groups to enter and thrive in engineering, leaving a lasting legacy of innovation and social impact.

2. Outline the nominee's achievements since July 1 2023 that you wish to bring to the judges' attention (up to 250 words):

Total 222 words used.

At Western Sydney University, Professor Olivia Mirza has continued to champion diversity, inclusion, and equity in engineering and technology. She is the founder of *Women of Wisdom (WoW)*, a program that mentors female engineers, builds inclusive professional networks, and inspires the next generation of women leaders in STEM.

Through the *Aspire Program*, she has expanded opportunities for Indigenous and refugee-background students, delivering tailored STEM workshops, mentoring, and school engagement activities. Under her leadership, her team has reached low socio-economic schools, providing impactful STEM education programs that directly encourage girls and underrepresented groups to pursue engineering and technology careers.

Her achievements since July 2023 have been recognised with prestigious national and international awards, including:

- o **2024 Distinguished Academic Leadership Award**, IEOM
- o **2024 Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Excellence Award** (Excellence in Research Leadership & Development)
- o **2024 Highly Commended**, Vice-Chancellor's Excellence in Community Engagement (Staff Individual)
- o **2023 Winner**, UNSW Judy Raper Leadership Award for outstanding leadership in engineering excellence

Professor Mirza demonstrates a rare combination of innovation, impact, and inclusivity. By embedding mentoring, community outreach, and leadership development into her academic role, she is reshaping pathways for women, Indigenous, and refugee-background students to succeed in STEM. Her achievements since July 2023 highlight her exceptional ability to turn research leadership into social change, making her a compelling nominee for the *Women Helping Women – Social Change Award*.

3. Reference any attachments of supporting materials throughout this nomination and how they provide evidence of the claims you have made in this nomination (up to 250 words):

Total 247 words used.

The following materials provide independent validation of Professor Mirza's achievements, demonstrating her excellence in research, leadership, and social impact:

1. [Aspire Indigenous Program – Success Story – Showcasing the success of the Aspire Indigenous Program, founded by Professor Mirza, to empower Indigenous students through education and industry engagement.](#)
2. [Indigenous ASPIRE Program | Western Sydney University](#)
3. [Leadership in Indigenous Pathways to Engineering – Highlighting her commitment to increasing Indigenous participation in engineering and tertiary education.](#)
4. [Advancing Women in Engineering.](#) – Demonstrating her passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and her upcoming role as a speaker at the 2025 Women in Engineering Summit.
5. [Women of Wisdom \(WoW\) Program](#) – Showcasing her creation of a dedicated support network for female students in engineering, ensuring women feel welcomed and empowered from their very first day at Western Sydney University.
6. [Women of Wisdom | Western Sydney University](#)
7. [STEM Outreach for Refugees and Low SES Communities](#) – Reflecting her dedication to mentoring underrepresented communities and inspiring refugee and low socio-economic background students to pursue engineering careers.
8. [Professional Leadership](#) – Engineers Australia – Demonstrating her active role as President of Engineers Australia Sydney Division, where she shapes the profession's future, mentors the next generation, and advocates for engineering leadership at a national level.
9. [>Full article: Overcoming challenges faced by female construction management graduates: an exploratory study in Australia](#)

Together, these references confirm the scale of her impact and why Professor Olivia Mirza is an outstanding candidate for the *Women Helping Women – Social Change Award*.

4. Which will you submit for your nomination in this category, a video of up to five (5) minutes, explaining the achievements since July 1, 2023 of the nominated woman, OR written answers to the questions? (Choose one):

Written answers to the questions

5. If you are submitting a video of up to five (5) minutes in length, provide the URL of the video here, OR attach it to your entry via the "Add Attachments, Videos, or Links to This Entry" link above, through which you may also upload a copy of your video. If you are submitting written answers to the questions for this category, provide them in the spaces below:

This nomination recognises Professor Olivia Mirza for her exceptional leadership in engineering, education, and social change. Alongside her pioneering research in sustainable infrastructure, she has founded transformative programs such as *Women of Wisdom* and *Aspire*, which mentor female, Indigenous, and refugee-background students and open pathways into STEM careers. Through these initiatives and her role as President of Engineers Australia Sydney Division, Professor Mirza is reshaping one of the most male-dominated professions, driving equity, inclusion, and systemic change.

6. Explain why the achievements you have highlighted are unique or significant. If possible compare the achievements to the performance of other players in your industry and/or to the nominee's past performance (up to 250 words):

Total 225 words used.

Professor Olivia Mirza's achievements are unique because they combine technical excellence with an unwavering commitment to equity and inclusion. While women make up less than 15% of Australia's engineering workforce and Indigenous individuals less than 1%, Professor Mirza is actively shifting this imbalance through programs such as *Women of Wisdom (WoW)* and the *Aspire Program*. By creating mentoring structures, professional networks, and STEM pathways for girls, Indigenous students, and refugee-background communities, she is changing the face of engineering education and the profession's future pipeline.

Few leaders in the sector are able to integrate cutting-edge research in sustainable infrastructure with such a sustained focus on social change. Professor Mirza not only develops innovative low-carbon technologies but also ensures women and underrepresented groups are central to these advances, setting her apart from many of her peers.

The calibre of recognition she has received further demonstrates the significance of her achievements. Recent honours, including the 2024 Distinguished Academic Leadership Award (IEOM) and the 2023 UNSW Judy Raper Leadership Award, confirm her standing as a leader of both national and international influence. Compared to her earlier contributions, her recent awards and expanded programs mark a new phase of impact—extending her influence from academia into industry, policy, and community transformation.

Professor Mirza's achievements are therefore not only exceptional but transformative, delivering measurable change for women and underrepresented groups in engineering.

Attachments/Videos/Links:

[Prof. Olivia Mirza - Women Of Wisdom Pioneer](#)



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