

Exciting times for the Women in Electricity – Press Release

AMEU Women in Electricity (WiE) held its first conference on the 23rd August 2016 at the President Hotel in Bloemfontein under the theme “Women Powering Smart Cities”. This successful conference was co-hosted by Centlec and Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. The conference preceded the launch of WiE which was held in August 2015 in the city of Durban. Its aim was to bring together women in the electricity industry to create awareness on the benefit of gender representation beyond transformation compliance, to share progress on WiE initiatives, provide a networking platform to build strong and united partnerships between delegates within the industry and to gather more insights into challenges and needs of women in the industry

The Women in Electricity initiative was created with the purpose of empowering women in the male dominant electricity industry. Its main aim was to achieve meaningful transformation by identifying the right candidates with the right skills set to tackle current and future challenges in energy management. The conference was instrumental in ensuring that WiE continues to live up to this original aim.

The conference had an excellent attendance of 160 delegates from different areas in the electricity industry who are all passionate about women issues ranging from competence to confidence. The program was facilitated by Ms Lungi Mbewu of City Power who did a great job in keeping delegates informed of the proceedings. The event was attended by the leadership of AMEU including Mr Sicelo Xulu (Current AMEU President), Mr Sandile Maphumulo (Past President), Ms Sy Gourrah (Past President), Mr Moferefere Tshabalala (President Elect), Mr Vally Padayachee (AMEU Strategic Advisor) and AMEU Exco members.

All in all the conference was graced by a variety of phenomenal speakers. The AMEU Vice President Elect and WiE Chairperson, Mrs Refilwe Mokgosi, welcomed the guests and briefly explained the programme goals. Her speech clearly captured the fact that she is very determinant and positive about the future success of WiE in South Africa as a whole.

The Guest of Honour, the honourable Deputy Minister of Energy, Ms Thembi Majola, thoroughly inspired the delegates as she shared her insights and knowledge through her speech titled the “Evolution and the role of Women in Power Space”. She gave several insights on how to reflect on current conditions and effect changes with the skills and experience possessed by women in the energy industry. She also discussed the current state of the energy sector and possible solutions. It was encouraging to learn that there is an ongoing development project for young underprivileged students throughout South Africa, who are interested in engineering as a career. She contributed very valuable comments and leadership insights throughout the entire conference.

The Deputy Minister’s speech was followed by a detailed account of what has been going on within WiE since its launch as the Pillar Leaders presented progress on the four pillars which are the main initiatives outlined in the WiE’s Implementation Plan.

Ms Mokwape Lekganyane of eThekweni Electricity covered the Mentorship and Leadership Development Pillar and highlighted the lack of assistance in preparations for ECSA registration, the difficulty in finding mentors and the limited opportunities for the development of leadership skills. She also presented the achievements thus far and called on all WiE members to get involved and, affiliates and the AMEU members’ leadership cohort to provide support. She acknowledged that it is a mammoth task and reiterated that its success will, to a large extent, depend on collective effort.

Mrs Yolanda Ngalwana-Mabuto of Eskom Western Cape Operating Unit presented the Partnership & Networking Pillar and highlighted the importance of creating awareness on successful women within the industry and engaging with international organizations. She also discussed matters around access to industry networking platforms, industry challenges and opportunities, the importance of engaging with intercontinental and international movements and sharing information about women advancement programs.

The International Exchange Pillar was presented by Ms Jacky Ramailane of City Power, who shared progress on the identification of international exchange programmes that can contribute towards empowering WiE members. One objective of the pillar is to cultivate strong human network between international programmes and AMEU-WiE. These include the exchange of “best practices” for maximizing participation of women in the business of generation, transmission and distribution of power.

Ms Prisha Harigen of Eskom KZN Operating Unit covered the Talent Development Pillar. She emphasized the need to not only attract talent, but also to develop the talent and retain it within the industry. She also touched on ways to improve municipalities and highlight the importance of investing in employees and the communities that they service.

The update on the pillars was followed by Ms Nola Mashaba of Africa Business News who shared a very inspiring and touching talk on the importance of Maximizing Network & Collaboration for Advancement of Smart Women. She emphasised the importance of getting back to potential contacts timeously and understanding how both parties can benefit from the connection.

Ms Ria Louw of Charnaud touched on a very important aspect of women working in electricity, Safety. Her presentation sensitised the delegates to possible arc flash accidents that can occur whilst working on electrical equipment and the need to use correctly specified protective clothing with comfortable fit. She also facilitated a showcase of protective clothing that is designed for women in technical fields.

Another technical item was presented by Ms Nozi Sogoni of Landis and Gyr, who talked about smart metering and its place in electricity networks and the importance of making sure that the technology is aligned to the required needs.

The program concluded with an interesting panel discussion facilitated by Ms Rachel Seabela of City Power. The panel comprised the following highly experienced and respected women who are in leadership positions within their respective organizations: Ms Aayanda Nakedi of Eskom, Ms Sy Gourrah of Actom, Ms Bertha Dlamini of EON Consulting, Ms Neli Magubane of Matleng Energy Solutions and Ms Irene Ochem of AWIEF. The panel grappled with the issues around Sustainable Revenue Management, with the discussion and inputs around strategies can be implemented to maximise revenue in smart cities

Included on the program was Ms Doris Msibi of The Image Firm, who gave insights to the delegates on the importance of building your personal brand and how to professionally brand their image.

The day was concluded with group reflections on the WiE programmes presented by the pillar leaders and the advancements that the members of WiE would like to realise going forward. This was facilitated by Ms Malerato Mohlala of City Power assisted by other WiE committee members.

AMEU WiE, would like to express their gratitude to the attendees, the speakers and the sponsors, namely: Schneider Electric, Speed Craft Manufacturing, Landis & Gyr, Matleng Energy, M-Tec, Edgeline, Lucy Electric, TGood, Ramika Projects, Charnaud, Aspen Pharmicare, Telosmax Solutions, Green Leaf Projects and Contour Technology.

Lastly AMEU would like to acknowledge the event management support provided by Mr Jean Venter and Ms Mpho Motloutsi of VDW (AMEU Secretariat), the publicity created by WiE Public Relations Team led by Ms Selina Velaphi of City Power and the contributions made by the entire WiE Steering committee. The event would not have been a success without all them

For upcoming events and news you can follow AMEU WiE on all social media platforms and on www.ameu.co.za

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/Women-In-Electricity-1645349899111920/?fref=ts>

Twitter- <https://twitter.com/WieWomen>

LinkedIn- <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/12001226>

WiE is looking to expand and get more women involved so if you are interested please make contact with them.