



DELIVERING ASTRONOMICAL IMPACT FOR SCIENCE, INDUSTRY AND THE COMMUNITY

Credits: Optical image: Steve Mazlin and Vicent Peris, Calar Alto
Observatory; Radio data: Mulcahy et.al. 2017, Jansky Very Large Array
(VLA)



VISITING FELLOWSHIP FOR SENIOR WOMEN+ IN ASTRONOMY

CASE STUDY



Cover Image Dr Grazia Labate, 2023 Fellowship Recipient presenting her research to staff and students at ICRAR. Credit: ICRAR

Top Professor Prajval Shastri 2020 Fellowship Recipient delivering a talk at Astrofest. Credit: ICRAR

VISITING FELLOWSHIP FOR SENIOR WOMEN+ IN ASTRONOMY

When ICRAR was launched, a key objective was to create opportunities for senior women+ scientists, engineers and data scientists in astronomy to work in an inclusive environment, further their research, and become mentors and leaders in STEM.

In 2014, ICRAR established the Visiting Fellowship for Senior Women and other underrepresented genders to raise awareness of the gender imbalance in astronomy by offering support and visibility to senior women+ researchers.

The Fellowship also aims to foster international collaboration, the exchange of knowledge in radio astronomy, and enhance the professional development of visiting Fellows through engagement with ICRAR's dynamic research environment.

Dr Renu Sharma, ICRAR's Chief Operating Officer and Director of Translation and Impact, says the Fellowship highlights senior role models for early career researchers and PhD students, particularly women.

"It started with the prime focus of showcasing the unique career journey and difficulties women face."

"The Fellowship is awarded to women astronomers, who are at least five years into their careers and have achieved success, but also experienced some career challenges", Dr Sharma says.

The Visiting Fellowships have profoundly impacted participants and the broader astronomy community.

Dr Andreea Font, a computational cosmologist and the first recipient of the Fellowship in 2014, says, "I was excited about the prospect of joining a talented team of astronomers who aim to answer fundamental questions about the Universe with a powerful combination of computer simulations and state-of-the-art observations."

To be a recipient, visiting Fellows must formally apply with one candidate selected for the Award each year.

The successful Fellow visits ICRAR for two months and engages in various activities and programs related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. They also foster research and collaboration with staff and students, and openly share their experiences regarding career development and work-life balance strategies.

Dr Francesca Primas, 2017 Fellowship recipient, says the Fellowship was a positive and rewarding experience, with gender equality, diversity, and inclusion at its core.

Dr Primas stated that mentoring opportunities for the younger generations of astronomers were a key part of the program.

“The experience meant a lot in terms of new connections, exchanges and productive discussions, especially in the equality, diversity, and inclusion domain, especially with early career scientists.”

The opportunity to pass on their life experiences and knowledge to younger scientists and researchers is a common sentiment among Fellows.

“The experience meant a lot to me. This was one of the best experiences in my career,”

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR VERNESA SMOLCIC, 2015 FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT.

Dr Maria Grazia Labate, 2023 Fellowship recipient, says she wanted to nurture and enrich upcoming researchers and scientists through her knowledge and experiences during her visit.

“The Fellowship is an excellent opportunity offered to students and young researchers, and I wish I had this opportunity as a student and PhD.”

The Visiting Fellowship also aims to accommodate senior women's diverse needs and career stages in astronomy. ICRAR provides travel assistance, a living and accommodation allowance, and needs-based support such as childcare.

Professor Anna Frebel, 2018 Fellowship recipient, says that winning the Fellowship was an important honour in her career and that the support provided by the program was invaluable.

“Winning the Fellowship allowed me to pursue my science in an inspiring and beautiful environment while fully supporting my family's needs without question. I have yet to see something else quite like it”.



The Fellowship recipients also provided mentoring opportunities for fellow female and under represented staff and students at ICRAR. One staff member said the ability to gain insights and different perspectives from the Fellows, particularly their focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, led to new initiatives and approaches as part of our ongoing efforts to foster equity in the workplace.

The Visiting Fellowship for Senior Women+ in Astronomy exemplifies a proactive approach to addressing gender inequity within astronomy.

The program advances individual careers by providing targeted support to senior women+ astronomers. It contributes to a more inclusive and diverse astronomical community, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued in the pursuit of scientific excellence.

Top Professor Frebel enjoying time with her son during her Fellowship in Perth. Credit: Anna Frebel

Bottom Left Dr Francesca Primas 2017 Fellowship Recipient. Credit: ICRAR

Bottom Right Professor Vernesa Smolic 2015 Fellowship Recipient. Credit: ICRAR

VISIT ICRAR TO READ ABOUT ALL OF OUR VISITING FELLOWS VISIT WWW.ICRAR.ORG/ABOUT/VISITING-FELLOWSHIP/

ICRAR

E info@icrar.org

T +61 (08) 6488 7766

W www.icrar.org



International
Centre for
Radio
Astronomy
Research



Curtin University



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**

