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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Glittering race to the finish in WiT awards**

Thirty Queensland women, many pushing the frontiers of science and technology worldwide, have been chosen as finalists in the 2018 Queensland Women in Technology (WiT) Awards.

The WiT Awards, which are the biggest and longest-running awards program of their kind in Australia, attracted a record field of entries this year from all branches of ICT and life sciences – including medical researchers, inventors, scientists, computer engineers, start-up innovators, employers and entrepreneurs.

More than 550 of Queensland’s tech glitterati will gather at the Royal International Convention Centre on Friday 14 September as the winners are announced in 12 categories including employer-of-choice awards for both small and large business. Highlights from the field of 36 finalists include:

* A startup entrepreneur using fashion-inspired biometrics to save lives for astronauts and miners.
* A researcher using snake venom to create new drugs for heart disease, stroke and diabetes
* A biologist tracing human evolution through teeth to find out what has made us one of the most successful mammals on the planet. Her book is about to be published.
* An electrical engineer and world crossfit competitor leading the race in machine learning.
* Biofabrication – using 3D printing for human tissue.
* A scientist running the world’s first Robotics Vision Research Centre who is looking for ways Australia can build a successful robotics industry and publishing Australia's first Robotics Roadmap this year.
* A self-made expert in digital payments who is set to disrupt the banking sector. Who would have thought direct debits could be fascinating but we all stand to save.
* An online legal service giving access to the 85% of people who can’t afford a lawyer.
* Leaders in the treatment of childhood burns, oral, breast and prostate cancers.
* Small and large employers creating opportunities for women in the workplace.

And the list goes on…

Women in Technology Co-Presidents Dr Alison Rice and Joanna Field said the WiT Awards were one of the biggest showcases for women in the country.

“WiT has been celebrating women’s achievement in technology and life sciences for more than two decades.

“Although women make up half our population and half our intellectual capital, they account for only a quarter of our STEM graduates and less than 10% of senior management in technology industries.

“This is a major problem for our economy and our future. It’s critical that Governments and corporations around Australia are actively promoting opportunities from women in STEM.

“Australia’s future will be built on technical skills and we are missing out on a wealth of talent so it is vital that we encourage and inspire young women by drawing their attention to great role models and showing how rewarding a career in science and technology can be.

“Queensland has one of the highest rates of tech startups in Australia. Our scientists are leaders in world class research and our entrepreneurs and expert professionals are breaking new ground in IT, digital technologies and online services.

“This is the calibre of women that have been recognised since the WiT awards began.”

The 2018 WiT Awards ceremony will be hosted by Queensland celebrity scientist Dr Joel Gilmore, a regular guest on the ABC and the entertaining co-host of FoodLab on SBS.

Guest speaker will be Dr Kirstin Ferguson who made headlines last year for her stand against abuse of women in social media. Her #CelebratingWomen campaign profiled 756 women from around the world – two every day for a year – giving rise to a new book “Women Kind”. A company director, former CEO and military officer, Kirstin joins forces with Catherine Fox, Walkley award-winning journalist and leading commentator on women in the workplace, to examine how women supporting women can transform the world. The book will be released this month.

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**About WiT**

Women InTechnology (WiT) is Queensland’s peak body for women in the ICT and Life Science industries. Founded in 1997, WiT is one of the biggest and most respected technology industry associations in Australia representing more than 5000 professionals from every branch of science and technology. The organisation works to promote the achievements and advance the status of women in industry and technology building a strong and collaborative community and providing opportunities for advancement through its Board readiness, mentoring and other professional development and networking programs.