

MEDIA RELEASE

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED ON GENDER EQUALITY IN STEM TO BOOST OUR INNOVATION POTENTIAL

FOR RELEASE: 12.01AM -11 October 2017

Australian leaders across business, government and universities have identified four critical areas of action to boost the severely low levels of women in education, employment and senior leadership positions in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

Work completed by the Male Champions of Change (MCC) for STEM over the past year has sought to better understand the key barriers preventing women from progressing careers in STEM organisations - where women make up only 16% of STEM qualifications; are over-represented in clerical administrative positions and under-represented in management; and just 12% are classified as high-income earners (over \$104k) compared to 32% men.

In a report released today, the MCC STEM group shares outcomes of consultations with more than 300 women and men across their organisations and recommends a sector-wide focus on the following key areas to address the gender imbalance:

- ◆ Building equality and innovation mindsets: to build organisational cultures that simultaneously foster equality and innovation
- ◆ Dismantling barriers for carers and normalising flexible work: to create flexible workplaces where carers can thrive in their careers
- ◆ Growing the pipeline: to improve gender balance and ultimately achieve 50/50 in all stages of the recruitment and promotion cycle
- ◆ Leading on gender reporting and transparency: to deepen understanding of gender inequality at each stage of STEM career paths and strengthen accountability for action.

Adi Paterson, Chief Executive Officer of ANSTO, is a member of the MCC STEM group and signatory to the report. He said: "There are aspects of our organisations where we have power to make change. It's about how we make our organisations places that attract and retain women; how we support their careers to progress when they have caring responsibilities; and how we ensure that diverse perspectives and experiences are valued as a key driver of innovation."

Acting Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, said STEM knowledge is vital to Australia's economy and the Turnbull Government is delivering a set of comprehensive policies to support women in science, technology, engineering and maths.

"We know that women are still under-represented in many areas of science, technology, engineering and maths," Minister Cash said. "We need to harness the full potential of women, in order to reach our innovation capacity as a country, which is why the Government is focused on supporting women and girls into STEM-based education and careers."

Giam Swiegers, Global Chief Executive of Aurecon, a member of the MCC STEM group said: "We all stand to gain from revolutionising how we recruit, recognise and reward talent. Change starts at an individual company level. It is only when we understand what our nation stands to gain by mobilising companies to make STEM more attractive to women, that we'll understand that doing so is everybody's responsibility."

Ann Sherry AO, Convener of MCC STEM, said that tackling gender inequality in STEM is an urgent challenge: “What we know is that our workforces will require increasing levels of STEM capability. A predicted 75% of all future jobs will require STEM literacy and skills. We must rethink the status quo and build inclusive environments where women and girls can thrive in STEM.

“We are at the beginning of this journey but already we have gained many insights and started the process of change to remove barriers for women, for example by making all roles flexible, by improving parental leave provisions or by setting targets to increase the representation of women in STEM roles at all levels,” she said.

With the support of the Australian Government’s National Innovation and Science Agenda, the MCC STEM is focussed on accelerating the representation of women in leadership positions in the sector. Their 2017 Progress Report provides further detail on actions they will lead individually and collectively to achieve that goal.

The STEM Male Champions of Change members are:

Spencer Beasley, Former Vice President, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons; **Alan Finkel**, Chief Scientist, Australian Government; **Mike Foster**, CEO, Fujitsu Australia; **Gavin Fox-Smith**, MD, Johnson & Johnson; **Peter Høj**, Vice Chancellor, UQ; **David W Kalisch**, Australian Statistician, Australian Bureau of Statistics; **Larry Marshall**, Chief Executive, CSIRO; **Adi Paterson**, CEO, ANSTO; **Tim Reed**, CEO, MYOB; **Brian P Schmidt**, Vice Chancellor, ANU; **Andrew Stevens**, Non-Executive Director; **Giam Swiegers**, Global Chief Executive, Aurecon; **Alex Zelinsky**, Chief Defence Scientist.

The Male Champions of Change strategy is about men stepping up beside women and being accountable for achieving gender equality. Founded in 2010 by the former Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, the Male Champions of Change has now grown to a coalition of over 160 leaders across Australian business and government who collectively employ some 726,401 people, representing 5.97 percent of the Australian workforce.

For more information or to arrange an interview with:

- ◆ Ann Sherry, AO – Convener of the Male Champions of Change for STEM
- ◆ Adi Paterson, Chief Executive Officer, ANSTO Organisation and MCC for STEM
- ◆ Larry Marshall, Chief Executive, CSIRO
- ◆ Tim Reed, Chief Executive Officer, MYOB
- ◆ Giam Swiegers, Global Chief Executive, Aurecon
- ◆ Cath Foley, Deputy Director of our Manufacturing, CSIRO
- ◆ Louise Adams, Regional Director - VIC/SA/ACT & Global Board Director at Aurecon

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