



**Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash**

MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE

SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**STEM funding to open new doors for Australian women**

The Coalition Government will help support women pursue careers in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industries, research sector, start-ups and entrepreneurial firms by investing \$13 million over five years.

Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash said the investment will support greater participation of girls and women in what are predominantly male-dominated fields.

“We need a concerted, national effort to overcome the cultural and organisational factors that discourage girls and women from studying STEM and which subsequently limits their career opportunities,” Minister Cash said.

“We will help address this challenge by encouraging greater gender equity in STEM organisations and STEM-based industries.”

“This will be an important element of broader efforts by the Government to boost women’s workforce participation and strengthen their economic security.”

A study conducted by The Centre for Entrepreneurship found that female business owners in the technology sector took home twice as much pay as men.

The research also shows women-led private technology companies are more capital-efficient and achieve a 35% higher return on investment than companies that are led by men.

“Female leaders in the technology sector have experienced high success rates to date, but there is still much room for improvement,” Minister Cash said.

Across all business areas, entrepreneurship is on the rise in Australia, evidenced by the number of business owners growing by 1.4% across the past 12 months.

In particular, the volume of business owners in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services experienced a 2.9% change in the year to February 2015, part of a 22.5% change over the preceding 10 year period.

These statistics indicate a high level of potential growth for women in STEM fields following the government funding set to commence in the coming year.

Projects to be implemented will:

- Support the expansion of the Science in Australia Gender Equity pilot to cover more Australian science and research institutions;
- Establish a new initiative under the ‘Male Champions of Change’ project to focus on STEM-based and entrepreneurial industries; and
- Partner with the private sector on initiatives to celebrate female STEM role models and foster interest in STEM among girls and women.

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