



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

PO Box 62 Enmore NSW 2042

www.afgw.org.au

3 March, 2016

Byron Scaf
CEO Stile Education
Level 2
585 Victoria St
Abbotsford
Vic 3067

Dear Byron Scaf,

Re STEM Education in Schools

I'm writing to you on behalf of AFGW Inc to commend you on the agreement with CSIRO to develop digital resources for teachers focussed on science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education. We urge you to consider specifically the gender applicability of the material so both girls and boys will benefit.

AFGW is the national voice of graduate women working, since 1922, through initiatives in Education especially for the advancement and wellbeing of women and girls. We have been especially concerned with the education and employment of women and girls in the less traditional fields of engineering and science and have promoted this through our membership of the alliance for the economic Security 4 Women (eS4W). We have endeavoured also to promote women's achievements in STEM areas through our national and state scholarships. Each year AFGW, its affiliated state bodies and branches, give over \$0.5 million in scholarships to woman and girls to further their education particularly at tertiary level. Many of these awards go to women studying in the varied fields of science.

We wrote in February 2015 to then Prime Minister Abbott deploring the cuts to CSIRO which would lead to the closing of their Double Helix program. We stressed that CSIRO has played a significant part in children's education through this national programme run through CIROSET for children from 7 years onward. This programme had for many years produced free resources for teachers in Biology, Earth and Space, Physics and Chemistry. CSIRO also hosted SCOPE, a weekly science television programme for schools, email newsletters in maths and stats and science and published magazines, and supported the Double Helix Science Club which organises weekend, afterschool and holiday activities and an interactive blog and is open to people from around the world.

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We are delighted to hear that with your input the valuable experience of CSIRO will be incorporated with your innovative digital education program. Teachers and students will be encouraged greatly to actively engage with STEM material in the Australian Curriculum through your interactive, class-room ready lessons and the facility they have of being easily customised to meet individual student's needs. We hope that when setting subscription rates the needs of disadvantaged school sand students are a significant consideration.

STEM education and careers are indeed critical for Australia's future and for our nation's productivity and competitiveness, for the creation of decent work opportunities and as a significant contribution to people's well-being. They can also further the attainment of the international sustainability and development goals to which Australia is a signatory by facilitating efforts to eradicate poverty, achieve food security, fight disease, improve education, and respond to the challenges of climate change.

The promotion of STEM subjects for women and girls is also a central focus for our international arm Graduate Women International (formerly the International Federation of University Women). Enclosed is a copy of the pamphlet which was circulated at the UN Commission for the Status of Women last year. I hope you will find it interesting and the statistics helpful.

We look forward to seeing the benefits of your collaboration in our schools.

Yours sincerely

Tricia Blombery
Convener Standing Committee for Education
for Dr Jane Baker, President AFGW