



**Professionals
Australia**
Gender and Diversity

CAREER DEVELOPMENT, GUIDANCE AND ADVANCEMENT FOR WOMEN

Professionals Australia position paper



Australia has a [National Career Development Strategy](#) but it has not been updated since 2013 and does not refer to gender.

Professionals Australia believes a STEM workforce development strategy should be part of an updated National Career Development Strategy that would sit alongside the [2019 Women in STEM Decadal Plan](#) and that a key outcome of those combined strategies should be sustained increases in women's participation, advancement and retention in STEM.

We believe that women's career development can include unique challenges including accommodating career breaks to assume care responsibilities, bias in access to career-building activities, high rates of discrimination in male-dominated professions, the career penalty attached to part-time work, gender stereotyping of STEM professionals as male and unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion. The aim of providing our targeted career guidance resources is to assist in these areas. We are committed to the removal of obstacles and barriers to merit-based advancement not only as a justice and equity issue but because they can operate as disincentives for women to remain in the STEM workforce.

We believe that Australia needs a workforce development strategy that would grow our STEM skills base, provide a mix of technical and transferable enterprise skills for STEM professionals including management and leadership training to ensure competent leadership, build depth, specialisation, diversity and sustainability into the workforce, create rewarding career paths and job mobility through skill acquisition, support the role of STEM professionals in evidence-based policy and decision-making and ensure long-term capacity and capability in the STEM workforce.

We advocate for a strategy that would detail the need to:

- attract and develop the next generation of STEM professionals;
- recognise the value of STEM skills and qualifications within and beyond the STEM workforce;
- address the gender pay gap;
- address gendered occupational and industry segregation;
- address attrition of groups under-represented in STEM including women in engineering, IT and the "hard" sciences such as chemistry, physics and mathematics;
- address the factors giving rise to differential retirement savings of women.
- rebuild STEM capability within government and government-funded agencies;
- ensure stable STEM funding policy and growing investment in R&D to 3% by 2030;
- address insecure employment;
- maintain STEM capability at leadership and management levels;
- maintain high professional standards and regulation as required;
- address deprofessionalisation of the STEM workforce;
- align recognition and reward with workforce skills needs;
- support the provision of career pathways through skill acquisition;
- address the gap between diversity and inclusion policy and practice in workplaces; and
- utilise the industrial relations system to effect broader change and extend improvements in areas such as paid parental leave, flexible work arrangements, job sharing and carer's leave.



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