

Early and mid career researcher forum

A FORUM OF THE AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

To celebrate International Women's Day 2014, the Early- and Mid-career Researcher (EMCR) Forum wishes to acknowledge and celebrate the progress that has been made since releasing ['Gender equity: current issues, best practice and new ideas'](#) on this day in 2013.

'If we are to make use of the talents of women in the scientific and technological workforce, actions that encourage gender equity are required now. The policy document puts forward a platform of initiatives which have been used in universities, research institutes and laboratories. The initiatives accommodate for all choices and styles of work, regardless of gender or circumstance. They are designed to play to the strengths and needs of every individual, are consistent with family needs as well as other carer roles, and work well in a value-based workforce where judgments are based on merit.'

The document covers five main areas:

1. The current issues:
 - Fewer women hold senior leadership roles than men
 - Women leave technical and scientific positions at a greater rate than men (either for other sectors, or to leave the workplace entirely)
 - The difference in styles of working, where women tend to be more collaborative and less self-promoting
 - The challenges of balancing a career in science with motherhood/primary carer role.
2. Suggested workplace initiatives with general impact.
3. Specific initiatives related to women with young children and other carer roles.
4. What to do at the national level.
5. Recognition and support for partners/spouses with carers' duties.

The EMCR Forum acknowledges the positive support received from individual institutions, the NHMRC and ARC for this initiative. The NHMRC Women in Health Science Working Committee has introduced initiatives to the project grant and Fellowship schemes to accommodate career disruptions and part-time work. The committee has also recently released statistics on funding outcomes and grant review panels by gender, and a summary of institutional gender equity policies from 46 institutes across Australia. Many of the best practice policies used by these institutes are covered in the EMCR Forum document.

An ARC Linkage Grant partnered with The Bio21 Cluster titled 'Women in the scientific research workforce: identifying and sustaining the diversity advantage', led by Professors Sharon Bell and Lyn Yates, has commenced. The issues this project aims to overcome overlap with many of the issues highlighted in the EMCR Forum document. The overall aim is that 'Detailed analysis of the study data will be used to guide development of a Diversity Advantage Toolkit'. The purpose of the toolkit is to provide a series of practical measures, applicable across sectors, to develop and sustain diversity.

We congratulate the entire sector on the progress that has been made over the past 12 months. There is still a great deal we can all do to improve gender equity and diversity in STEM and we will continue to follow up on best practices to ensure the entire sector can move in the same direction.

Happy International Women's Day from the EMCR Forum.

