

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business



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ALL SYSTEMS GO – BACKING VICTORIAN GIRLS AND WOMEN IN STEM

Victorian girls are leading a drive to remove a dramatic gender imbalance in study numbers and career opportunities in science and technology.

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford emphasised the benefits of girls and women embracing science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) during a visit to Swinburne University's science facility in Hawthorn to launch a new initiative.

Despite advancements, girls and women are still vastly underrepresented in STEM fields in Australia – a 2020 study found just 28 per cent of tertiary students enrolled to study STEM fields were women while a separate study found that 27 per cent of Australian workers employed in STEM-qualified industries were women.

To help with the push to engage more girls and women in STEM, the Andrews Labor Government is backing multiple STEM-based programs, initiatives and events, working closely with industry and STEM organisations to support girls and women in school, university and the workforce.

The Labor Government provides operational funding for 10 Tech Schools across the state, all of which are active in reaching out to prospective female students through initiatives like the Whittlesea Girls Summer STEM Programs.

The three-day virtual camps for girls ran over three days this month with participants in one camp designing their own game and controller, gaining skills in block coding, digital design and 3D modelling.

The Government is also investing \$1.37 million to create the STEM Centre of Excellence at Science Gallery Melbourne in Parkville, for Victorian secondary students to explore STEM career opportunities. The centre will include state-of-the-art learning spaces and introduce students to new and emerging industries and opportunities in the STEM fields via cutting-edge machines, industry-grade labs and access to researchers.

Minister Pulford launched the Labor Government's newest STEM initiative, the Women and Girls in STEM Map – an easy to use online resource listing more than 170 programs and activities designed for girls and women.

The map will help girls and women at the primary, secondary, university and professional levels maximise their STEM engagement with categories including events and awards, internships, and development and mentoring opportunities and can be downloaded at djpr.vic.gov.au/victorias-lead-scientist.

By 2023, Australian STEM jobs are predicted to grow faster than all other occupations, making the fields important contributors to economic growth, new jobs and new opportunities for women and girls.

Quote attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford

"We're helping more Victorian girls and women get involved in STEM so they can access a world of opportunity and build great careers that benefit the community."

Quote attributable to Victorian Lead Scientist Dr Amanda Caples

"Through initiatives like the Women and Girls in STEM Map, we're giving our women and girls every opportunity to kickstart a career in STEM."

Quote attributable to Swinburne University Vice-Chancellor Professor Pascale Quester

"Only by raising everyone's ability to operate in a tech-rich world can we advance Australia's competitive capability in STEM – a critical plank for our future prosperity as a nation."

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