

**The HON PRU GOWARD MP
Women in Science Symposium,
Australian National Maritime Museum,
Tuesday 8 March 2016**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

- Good morning everyone and thank you for welcoming me here today.
- A special thank you to Professor Veena Sahajwalla from the University of New South Wales for inviting me to speak, the staff at the Australian National Maritime Museum for hosting this wonderful event, and our special key note speaker Dr Fiona Cameron.
- It seems fitting to start my address by saying Happy International Women's Day.
- As the NSW Minister for Women, it is my pleasure to be able to speak to you today. It's wonderful to see so many young women here.
- Ambitious young women.
- All around the world, there are people discovering new species, developing disease treatments, designing better solar panels and understanding the latest nanotechnology and personalised medicine....many of them are women!

- There also remarkable women developing science and health policies.
- 75% of NSW Health employees are women.
- NSW Health is led by Secretary Mary Foley and our NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer is Mary O’Kane AC.
- You don’t have to be a Mary to hold a senior position of course.
- These are extremely high profile and important roles, and there is no reason we shouldn’t expect women to thrive in them.
- Historically there has been low representation of women studying and working in science-related areas, part of what is commonly referred to as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, or STEM.
- The 2015 Women in NSW report published by the Women NSW found that girls are less likely than boys to study STEM courses at school and university, and face stereotypes from a young age that influence their choices throughout their education and careers.
- The report also showed that girls’ and boys’ HSC course completions in STEM fields have changed little in recent years.

- Because of this, young girls and women remain a significant untapped labour resource in STEM fields.
- Unfortunately for a very long time, science has traditionally been thought of as men in white coats working in laboratories.
- This stereotype is hugely inaccurate and very damaging.
- White coats don't have to look that bad.
- We need more women scientists – just like we needed more women doctors and lawyers.
- In the last 10 years, heart disease was responsible for the death of more than 103,000 mums, aunts, sisters and daughters.
- It is the single biggest killer of women.
- It doesn't affect all people alike and the warning signs for men and women are not the same.
- Despite this the majority of cardiovascular research is carried out *on* men.
- In the early stages of the research process even the mice are almost *exclusively* men!
- Thankfully there are wonderful women in research looking to change that.

- The Heart Foundation led by Kristina Cabala, another excellent female leader in science developed the 'Go Red for Women' initiative, which aims to raise awareness of heart disease in women and the need for research in this area.
- They need you to join them.
- Women are leading the way in many areas of science.
- **Dr Cathy Foley** is the chief of the **Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO)** Materials Science and Engineering division. Dr Foley has led ground-breaking research to develop a device that has revolutionised how mining companies detect ore deposits – leading to the discovery of over \$6 billion worth of mines worldwide. In recognition of her achievements Dr Foley was awarded the 2013 Premier's Women of the Year Award.
- Support for women is coming from government and institutions too.
- The NSW Government has recently invested in grants for early-mid career researchers to help bridge the gap between being a graduate and an established medical researcher with sound career prospects - a gap felt most sorely by women.
- Professor Veena Sahajwalla developed *Science 50:50* at the University of New South Wales.

- *Science 50:50* aims to inspire Australian girls and young women to pursue degrees and careers in science and technology, so they can succeed in an innovation-driven future.
- *Science 50:50* makes the simple point –half the population is female, why not half the scientists and technologists?
- There are also excellent grass roots organisations like *Franklin Women* founded by Melina Georgousakis that are dedicated to improving retention rates of women in health sciences and medical research.
- So women are doing it for themselves, and you can be part of that.
- Yes, science is hard.
- Yes, it requires a level of precise thinking.
- But the opportunities that flow from science more than outweigh this.
- It's also great fun.
- Areas of science we did not even know about 10 years ago now represent employment opportunities and career trajectories.

- For others, they represent improved ways of living, a better understanding of the world around us and perhaps even a longer life expectancy.
- Science has and will continue to change the world.
- We need to remember it was once seen as a direct challenge to the authority of religion in its power to describe the world.
- We need to ensure that science change is positive for the world and positive for women.
- But that means women, including young women like you have to be part of it.
- As well as being Minister for Women I also have the privilege of serving as Minister for Medical Research, and I know there is an array of exciting career options for people working in science. No doubt you'll hear more about the diverse range of opportunities from some very accomplished speakers later today.
- So draw upon the successes and achievements of these people, seek out inspirational role models to help you each realise your future potential working in a science career.
- Find ideas that fascinate you.
- Whatever career path you chose never hold back because you're women.

- Being a woman doesn't make you any more or any less able than young men your age.
- Margaret Thatcher said "If you want something said ask a man, if you want something done ask a women"
- And science is all about doing.
- So if you're interested in a career in science, if you want to win a Nobel Prize, if you dream of changing the world, the time to start is now.
- You will all shape the future, how you shape it is up to you.
- I wish you all the best for your future endeavours and challenges ahead.
- Thank you