THE march to secure gender equity in science will continue on Friday with a new initiative seeking to inspire a new generation of female scientists.

Science 50:50 is the brainchild of University of NSW engineer Veena Sahajwalla, who has gained international attention for her work in creating “green” steel from car tyres and plastics.

Professor Sahajwalla’s new initiative is part of her ARC “Georgina Sweet” Laureate Fellowship.

“We are living in a science and technology dependent era.

“The link between innovation and national economic prosperity is now well documented as is the critical role of education in building the scientific and technological skills and literacy the next generation will rely on,” Professor Sahajwalla said.

“High school girls are currently under-represented in the science subjects that underpin so many important university courses. I believe girls need to hear real
stories from real people whose own pathways to success make it abundantly clear that science and technology really is for girls.”

The inaugural event to be held at the National Maritime Museum in Sydney on Friday will be launched by UNSW’s new vice-chancellor Ian Jacobs. Aidan Byrne, chief executive of the Australian Research Council, will be among a number of speakers from the business and research communities, who will attend event.

“By informing and engaging young women with the power of science and technology to solve complex problems and transform lives — and by introducing them to scientists and innovators who are doing just that — Science 50:50 can help recalibrate the gender balance,” Professor Sahajwalla said.