

MEDIA RELEASE

RESEARCH FINDS OVER HALF OF WOMEN IN STEM SECTOR CONSIDER QUITTING: DISRUPTIVE ATTRACTION AND RETENTION STRATEGIES ARE URGENTLY REQUIRED

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New research conducted by Accenture for Male Champions of Change, surveying over 3000 women and men working in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths (STEM) careers in Australia, has revealed that more than half of women have considered quitting the field, with gender inequality continuing to be a major issue.

“This research highlights that women in STEM experience significantly more barriers than men with almost half of the women surveyed (47%) reporting a lack of opportunities for promotion and no pathway to leadership, compared to 39% of men. Everyday sexism is pervasive and a driver of women's attrition, with two thirds (66%) of women reporting having their voices devalued in work settings in the last two years,” said Ann Sherry AO, Convenor of Male Champions of Change STEM.

“Women’s low representation in STEM careers remains a critical issue. Given that STEM skills are crucial to the future world of work, significant shifts in workplace cultures will be required to attract and retain more women to Australia’s STEM workforce,” she said.

The research revealed both women and men pursue a career in STEM for exciting and rewarding work. In addition, women are motivated by the opportunity to explore and solve ecological and scientific issues facing the world, while men are more likely to be motivated by earning potential. This suggests fresh approaches to positioning and promoting purpose in STEM careers may be required to attract more women.

The new MCC report, [Harnessing our innovation potential](#), recommends that gender equality in STEM be addressed from two directions - with an urgent need for cultural change as well as a rethink of systems so they support women and men to thrive equally in STEM.

“We know diversity helps drive innovation, and women’s representation in leadership is particularly critical for delivering disruptive innovation,” Ms Sherry said. “We simply must do more to unlock and access this untapped and under-represented talent pool.”

The survey - one of the largest around gender equality in the STEM workforce in Australia – was conducted for Male Champions of Change by Accenture. Bob Easton - Chairman, Accenture Australia & New Zealand and Male Champion for Change said that, for sector leaders, the implications of the research findings were clear.

“The future of work – and the competitive success of our country – depends on our ability to attract and retain talent in STEM-related fields. We have an exciting opportunity to accelerate the level of innovation happening at both an organisation and country level, and to do so we need to remove the barriers to success in STEM and that means achieving greater gender equality. This research highlights the importance of creating visible sponsorship and pathways for women to develop their careers in STEM. Everyone – both women and men – must be part of the solution to build more inclusive and respectful cultures that magnetise talent to stem careers,” said Mr Easton.

The Australian Government's Women in STEM Ambassador Lisa Harvey-Smith said, "Urgent, systemic change is required. These survey findings show that bias and discrimination in workplaces, a lack of senior female leaders and slower career progression are major factors in the disproportionate exodus of women from STEM careers."

"This research reinforces that no amount of mentoring, nor sheer numbers of young women crammed into the pipeline will make up for a broken system when it devalues women's perspectives, makes their contributions invisible and makes balancing their responsibilities at work and home impossibly hard," she said.

Male Champions of Change STEM's **Harnessing our innovation potential** report contains Accenture's survey methodology, key findings, case studies from the sector, and priority areas for action.

For more information or to arrange an interview with:

- ◆ Ann Sherry, AO – Convenor of the Male Champions of Change for STEM
- ◆ Bob Easton, Chairman - Accenture Australia & New Zealand

Please contact:

Brinsley Marlay, 0412 084 015 or media@malechampionsofchange.com

About Male Champions of Change STEM

With the support of the Australian Government's National Innovation and Science Agenda, the MCC STEM aims to lead and influence change in women's representation in STEM. The group represents the diversity of organisations working in the area and the members have a deep commitment to advancing gender equality within their own organisations and more broadly. The MCC STEM is in a unique position to influence change and challenge the systems and stereotypes in STEM that hold women back. The group is convened by Ann Sherry. Members include:

- Bill Cox, Global Chief Executive, Aurecon
- Robert Easton, Chairman & Senior Managing Director, ANZ Accenture Australia Pty Ltd
- Alan Finkel, Australia's Chief Scientist
- Mike Foster, CEO, Fujitsu Australia
- Gavin Fox-Smith, Vice President, Education Solutions APAC, Johnson & Johnson
- Peter Høj, Vice Chancellor, UQ
- Bruce Goodwin, Managing Director, Janssen ANZ, Pharmaceutical Company of Johnson & Johnson
- Dig Howitt, CEO & President, Cochlear
- James Johnson, CEO, Geoscience Australia
- David W Kalisch, Australian Statistician, Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Peter McIntyre, CEO, Engineers Australia
- Tanya Monro, Australia's Chief Defence Scientist
- Larry Marshall, Chief Executive, CSIRO
- Adi Paterson, CEO, ANSTO
- Tim Reed, CEO, MYOB
- Brian P Schmidt, Vice Chancellor, ANU
- Andrew Stevens, Non-Executive Director