



8 September 2023

Ms Sally-Ann Williams  
Chair, Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review  
Department of Industry, Science and Resources  
GPO Box 2013  
Canberra ACT 2601

Email: [DiversityinSTEM@industry.gov.au](mailto:DiversityinSTEM@industry.gov.au)

Dear Ms Williams,

**Re: Diversity in STEM Review: draft recommendations**

The University of Melbourne welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft recommendations from the Diversity in STEM Review.

The University made its original submission on 10 May, and we are pleased to see this input incorporated into the draft recommendations. We are supportive of the recommendations, particularly the national strategic approach to diversity in STEM initiatives and national communications, the incorporation of First Nations knowledge systems, expanding diversity and inclusion beyond gender, and universities increasing access for diverse cohorts into STEM courses.

While we broadly support the draft recommendations, we would like to highlight some recommendations that require further clarification to ensure they do not impact negatively on the higher education sector. While universities can do more to improve diversity in STEM, it is crucial that the review's recommendations support institutional autonomy, which leads to better outcomes for students and allows universities to respond effectively to local needs. There are several recommendations that could benefit from further refinement including:

- Recommendation 5a proposes 'more teaching places at universities in the right subjects and specialisations' to achieve the life-long learning objective, and 'mandatory STEM training in initial teacher education'. The University welcomes the opportunity for improved outcomes through improved training to educators, however we would like to ensure that these outcomes are a result of collaboration with institutions rather than through mandates which can lead to inefficiencies and do not support student choice.
- Recommendation 8a mentions 'systemic changes to incentivise not only greater enrolment, but retention and attainment of underrepresented cohorts in STEM courses.' The University strongly supports incentivising these outcomes, but incentives should be defined and implemented in collaboration with the sector to ensure they are evidence-based and effective.
- Recommendation 11a lists proposed conditions to be implemented by research funding bodies and organisations for researcher job security and progression. University research contributes significantly to the Australian economy; we strongly value STEM researchers and support improvements to the way their

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contributions are recognised, however we believe that any changes to conditions should be made in collaboration with institutions and recognising the need to work across the existing landscape to avoid any unintended consequences of change. We note that the Australian Universities Accord has also made proposals about supporting research careers, including through increased PhD stipends and government research funding, and the sector is preparing to give effect to the *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022* which takes effect in December this year.

The University would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide our feedback and we look forward to the final report.

Yours Sincerely,



**Professor Pip Nicholson**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor People and Community  
The University of Melbourne

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