



Association for Women in the Sciences
Feedback on Draft National Statement of Science Investment

Submitted on behalf of AWIS by:

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This submission addresses general issues regarding the overall science investment outlined in the draft National Statement of Science Investment.

The Association for Women in the Sciences believes that equality in the science workforce is crucial for the New Zealand Government to meet many of its key objectives, particularly in producing excellent science of the highest quality. AWIS believes that this equality is important in ensuring a balance and spread of skills and viewpoints, providing us with the best talent to meet New Zealand's future needs.

Whilst there is relatively equal gender representation in the scientific workforce, the income distribution shows that many women are not reaching the same levels in the workforce as their male counterparts. Analysis of PBRF funding, the proportion of female principal investigators on Marsden Fund grants and the number of females at senior positions of both university departments and Crown Research Institutes also reflect this trend.

AWIS would suggest the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment collecting and monitoring data on gender balance of their funding, particularly in primarily investigator-led funds such as the PBRF, Marsden Fund, International Relationships Fund, Science Workforce Fund and Science in Society funding. We would also suggest collecting and monitoring of the organisations receiving funding to track trends in gender balance over time.

In addition, the current funding system does not provide funding for those women, or indeed men, returning to work after prolonged leave, for example, when looking after children. AWIS suggests the creation of new, or extension of existing, funding mechanisms that would provide funding to allow these people to re-enter the workforce or to encourage flexible working for those with carer responsibilities. The Royal Society's Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships is an example of how this is managed overseas. We also believe that provisions should be available in funding applications, for example in the PBRF, that acknowledge and allow for people who may have taken extended leave for family circumstances.

In general terms, AWIS would strongly support an increase in funding so that New Zealand's business expenditure in R&D (BERD) better reflects the levels found across the OECD. We would recommend this is applied across the Science Investment platform, with increased investment in primary and secondary school engagement programmes, the Marsden Fund and emerging/early career fellowships as priorities for maintaining engagement in science at these critical stages.

About AWIS www.awis.org.nz

The Association for Women in the Sciences, founded in 1985, has 100+ members throughout the New Zealand science system. The Association aims to encourage women to use and develop their scientific abilities and achieve their full potential through networking and providing visibility and support for girls and women with an interest in science.

Reference: Women in Science: A 2011 Snapshot. Published by AWIS, 2011.