



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Centenary Institute celebrates International Day of Women and Girls in Science**

The *International Day of Women and Girls in Science* aims to draw attention to the inequity which exists in participation and leadership in science, empowering women by eliminating gender disparity in science. At the Centenary Institute, we share this vision and, in order to address this important issue, established the Gender Equity Program in 2014. As a result, Centenary is proud to have seen more women rise to leadership positions, an increase in female guest speakers, more flexible parental leave for both women and men, and measures to ensure women on maternity leave remain connected with their work and/or project, and return back to the workplace with much greater ease.

Whilst we honoured to be a part of a society that promotes women and girls – across various industries - and are very proud of our achievements as an institute, we do appreciate that there is some way to go towards the desired gender equality in science careers globally. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to change this trend, meeting annually on February 11<sup>th</sup> to address this important goal. To mark this significant day, leading female scientists at the Centenary Institute have shared their own experiences of being ‘women in science’, along with some high profile female leaders and friends of Centenary.

**Dr Chandrika Deshpande**  
**Structural Biology Program, Centenary Institute.**

*“As a female scientist, I feel proud to be working in the field of research. Understanding human diseases and working towards better treatment keeps me motivated to work harder. Growing up, I was surrounded by families that did not believe in educating girls and there was a limit to the maximum education they were allowed to receive. Now when I look back, I see it as a miracle to be born to parents, especially my father who believed in equal education and opportunity for girls and who always motivated me to study further. Times are changing and more women are seen acquiring leadership roles. Ongoing gender equity programs are promoting equal rights for female scientists and thus bringing change.”*

**Dr Helen McGuire**  
**Melanoma, Oncology and Immunology Program, Centenary Institute.**

*“I view my role as a scientist with such humbleness. Having the opportunity to drive*

*research, make amazing discoveries and think about the 'bigger picture' is just such an amazing opportunity and a real privilege. Saying this, it's my hope that girls growing up know this world exists, and know that it is such an amazing opportunity-one I cannot recommend enough."*

**Dr Devanshi Seth**

**Alcoholic Liver Disease Program, Gender Equity Program, Centenary Institute.**

*"I grew up in a society which doesn't have a good reputation for equity for women and very few women progressed to secondary and tertiary education. Fortunately, my parents made sure I received a proper education and was inspired to be an independent woman. Throughout my education and career, I felt singled out, as the only woman in a class of 200 during my post-graduate degree in India, the only woman with a PhD in the department later working in the UK and the only female senior scientist at a biotechnology company in Australia. It was a tough environment as there were few female role models and a culture of male dominance.*

*What made my journey special is the strength and power instilled in me by my parents. I learned how to navigate through the unsupported environment, became more resilient as I accepted one challenge after another. I always wanted to inspire women by leading as an example."*

**Professor Elizabeth Blackburn AC**

**Nobel laureate, President of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies.**

*"Women are no longer the supporting characters in the story of science. Women are directing the discoveries. Inclusion and diversity are the best way to tackle complex issues, and produce the best science. So I encourage young women to join us in our explorations. You'll see the world around you in a whole new light."*

**The Hon Justice Margaret Beazley, AO**

**President of the New South Wales Court of Appeal.**

*"I had cause to observe, in a speech I gave in November 2015 to the Public Sector Women in Leadership Conference, that my work place, the New South Wales Supreme Court, is hung with portraits of worthy, but singularly male, leaders and that modern leadership looks quite different. Just as the leadership of former times should be judged for what it was in its time, history will likewise judge our leadership, which is more diverse in a society which *itself* is more diverse, for what it is. *Modern leadership* needs to be effective and inclusive - otherwise it will have missed its mark.*

*Having made that observation, I can never contain my excitement when International Women's 'week' comes around as each year I hear the stories of amazing young women in all fields of endeavour. Although a lawyer, I have a particular interest in supporting and promoting scientific and medical endeavours. I am in awe of the dedication of our scientists and medical researchers, the amazing contribution they are making to society, to say nothing of the sheer genius of their creative*

*minds. May our young female scientists enjoy the special part they play in the day and week dedicated to **all** Women”.*

**Sally Loane,**  
**Chief Executive Officer, Financial Services Council.**

*"Growing up on a wool-growing property, there was no lack of female leaders - my mother, aunt and grandmothers were all equals to men. In my first career, journalism, I learned the importance of accuracy and balance working for the Canberra press gallery's doyenne, Michelle Grattan. In my next careers in the corporate world, financial services and as a non-executive director, I have been grateful for the backing of female leaders who support other women. I hope young women learn that resilience, persistence and self-belief helps us achieve in all walks of life."*

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