

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Centenary Institute and major partner the Bank of Queensland address female scientist drop-out rate, with lucrative Gender Equity Early Career Award.



Centenary Institute's Gender Equity Program (GEP), established just two years ago, has achieved great success, as a result of rigorous evaluation of policy and culture and making significant positive changes to promote gender equality in the workplace.

One of the main focusses of the GEP is to retain female scientists and support their rise to the top, while taking into account family responsibilities and providing the flexibility required to fulfill important roles at home and in the laboratory.

The program has introduced increased leadership opportunities for female researchers, inviting more female speakers and making improvements to parental leave, but one of the groups' proudest achievements is establishing the Gender Equity Early Career Award, which provides a female scientist with up to \$35,000 in funding proudly supported by our major partner the Bank of Queensland.

This year, the generous prize will support the work of Dr Jodie Ingles for her outstanding work, leading the Clinical Cardiac Genetics Laboratory within the Molecular Cardiology Program at Centenary. Jodie has published results of a world-first study on the effects of sudden cardiac death on loved ones left behind. These families must deal with the grief of unexpected death and the genetic risk for other family members and future generations.

Jodie also established Australia's first National Genetic Heart Disease Registry, to provide a research resource, education and improved awareness for health professionals and families at risk.

Young, promising female scientists such as Jodie must be supported to reach their full potential. Women comprise more than half of science PhD graduates and early career researchers, but only 17% of senior academics in Australian universities and research institutes. The loss of these women in science is a waste of investment into their education and careers and impacts our nation's performance and productivity.

Women are also consistently less likely to receive research funding compared with their male counterparts, which is why the Bank of Queensland, acknowledges the importance of supporting women financially, kindly sponsoring the Award. "It is important to recognise when there is a gap and do what you can to address it. It's long been proven in medical research a lack of early career funding success can compound throughout a career. We believe addressing this disadvantage will result in better long-term results for the entire community," Jon Sutton, CEO and Managing Director, BOQ said.

Centenary Gender Equity Ambassador, Newsreader, Sandra Sully, agrees that it is necessary to retain talented females in science and in all industries, "I know we all probably wish the Gender discussion would end, but the facts prove there is still a lot of work to be done to create fair and equal opportunities for women across the board."

Sandra is passionate about women's issues, succeeding in a male-dominated industry, she says women should not be discouraged, "As a rule, women should never be daunted by the statistics, instead use it as motivation to prove the naysayers wrong."

**Dr Jodie Ingles and members of the GEP are available for comment upon request.**

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