



Chief Executive Women

Defence science chiefs show what's possible when women are given the chance to lead in STEM

21 July 2022, 12AM: The three people tasked with leading scientific efforts for defence in the UK, US and Australia will meet in Sydney today, to discuss how to improve women's representation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) leadership roles: Australia's Chief Defence Scientist Professor Tanya Monro AC, US Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering The Honorable Ms Heidi Shyu, and Chief Scientific Adviser for the UK Ministry of Defence Professor Dame Angela McLean.

In Australia, women currently hold less than 10% of leadership roles in STEM organisations, a figure that has remained persistently low despite increasing numbers of women choosing to study and pursue careers in STEM.

Chief Executive Women (CEW) president Sam Mostyn AO says the defence science chiefs exemplify what Australia needs more of – great leaders in STEM, with a meaningful representation of gender equity.

"We've made some progress on women's participation in STEM, but there is still a lot of work to be done," Mostyn says.

"With STEM playing an increasingly important role in Australia's economy, drawing on all available talent, and therefore giving more women the opportunity to lead, will only strengthen these sectors."

A [recent report](#) from CEW and Boston Consulting Group examined issues standing in the way for women leaders in STEM and found many face pushback and exclusion, to the point where some chose to leave the sectors altogether.

Professor Monro, who has a long and distinguished career in STEM, said in comments before the breakfast that she faced many barriers along the way, and more must be done to support the next generation of female leaders.

"There are a number of actions organisations can take: adopting balanced interviewing, supporting talented young women, and ensuring foundational equity practices are in place. We must do all we can to retain and advance talented women," she says.

"I wanted to change the world. That is why I chose science as my career. I am working in an area that is making a difference. Making a difference gives you energy, which is important in senior roles."

The defence science chiefs will be participating in a panel discussion moderated by Mostyn at a breakfast event hosted by CEW at the International Convention Centre in Sydney this morning from 7am-8am.

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Journalists are invited to attend the event, either in person, or via Zoom. Please contact Kye to RSVP.

About Chief Executive Women

CEW's 800 members hold leading roles in Australia's largest private and public organisations. They oversee more than 1.3 million employees and \$749 billion in revenue. Member's organisations have a combined market capitalisation greater than \$1.144 trillion and contribute in excess of \$249 billion to Australia's GDP.

Since 1985 CEW has influenced and engaged all levels of Australian business and government to achieve gender balance. Through advocacy, research, targeted programs and scholarships, CEW helps to remove the barriers to women's progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity. CEW's members work actively to realise our vision of a community where women and men have equal economic and social choices and responsibilities.

cew.org.au