

MEDIA RELEASE

Mentoring women in science to rise to the top

Twelve top health research organisations have signed up to participate in an innovative mentoring program aimed at supporting up-and-coming female scientists to reach leadership positions in the sector.

The Mentoring Program delivered by Franklin Women, a professional organisation dedicated to retaining women in the health and medical research field, launches on Thursday 22nd of June with a kick-off function where the 54 mentees and mentors will meet for the first time.

"Our mentoring program is the first of its kind in the sector connecting female researchers with male and female leaders from diverse organisations who will embark on an important mentoring relationship" says Franklin Women founder, Dr Melina Georgousakis. "The fact that so many health research organisations have come on board for the inaugural year of our mentoring program demonstrates their commitment to addressing the gender imbalance in the sector and the expected impact the program will have."

Some of Australia's most influential health researchers will be participating in the program as mentors helping female researchers navigate their career pathway and the challenges they face. This year's mentors include Distinguished Professor Caroline Homer from the Faculty of Health at University of Technology Sydney who was recently awarded an Order of Australia medal for her service to medicine; Professor Chris Goodnow, Deputy Director of The Garvan Institute of Medical Research; and Professor Deborah Marsh, Laboratory Head at The Kolling Institute.

Dr Inken Martin, a scientist at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, is participating in the program as a Franklin Women sponsored mentee. Dr Martin believes the Franklin Women Mentoring Program is just what she needs at a critical stage in her career where she is ready to progress to a senior level. "The program provides a unique opportunity to gain access to a high-profile role model who can help me identify and utilise my strengths and also provide some unbiased reflection on navigating my career to the next level", says Dr Martin. "I want to be able to continue my research into the genetic causes of heart disease which is the leading cause of death in women and men in Australia."

While girls and young women excel in science in school and university, women in science do not go on to reach leadership positions at the same rate as their male colleagues. "Only a small proportion of the top positions in science are held by women", says Franklin Women founder Dr Melina Georgousakis. "This means somewhere along the way we are losing the knowledge and passion of women who have dedicated their careers to saving lives through their research. We need to support researchers like Dr Martin so we do not lose their talent."

Mentoring programs introduced in the corporate sector have shown a positive impact on the careers of women seeking to reach leadership positions. It is for this reason that Franklin Women have partnered with Serendis Leadership consultants who are experienced in

delivering mentoring programs which aims to help promote and develop women for senior leadership roles.

“The Franklin Women Mentoring Program incorporates a number of key factors that our team have identified as critical to the success of a mentoring”, explains Serendis Program Director Bianca Havas. “This includes an exhaustive matching process to achieve the best fit between the mentee and their mentor; a structured program to ensure the relationship gains momentum; and the use of mentoring tools to support skill development that participants can take forward in their career. We are so excited to be bringing our leadership experience to such an important professional sector.”

Franklin Women is run by a dedicated group of health researchers who believe keeping women in health and medical research careers is worth investing in. Their Mentoring Program aims to empower and support women to reach their professional goals and excel alongside their male counterparts, utilising our sharpest scientific minds to ensure a strong and diverse health science industry in Australia. The program will be a game-changing initiative for the health and medical research sector.

Further details of the Mentoring Program and other useful information about Franklin Women can be found at: www.franklinwomen.com.au.

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Program Kick-off cocktail event details

When: 22 June, 5.00–7.00pm

Who: Guest of Honour, the Hon. Tanya Davies, NSW Minister for Women, program participants, members of participating institutes and invited guests.

Where: University of Technology Sydney, Science Super Lab Foyer, Level 2 of the Vicki Sara Building (Building 7) on corner of Thomas and Jones Streets, Ultimo

Media Contacts:

Founder of Franklin Women and Serendis representative are available for interview.

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Bianca Havas, Program Director, Serendis Leadership Consultants 0403911900

Interview with participating mentees and mentors may also be requested through Institutes' Media Teams listed below.

Terry Clinton, University of Technology Sydney, 0419 293 261

Dr Meredith Ross, Garvan Institute, 0439 873258

The Kolling Institute, 0404 054 160

Jessica Bowditch, Centenary Institute, 0421 983 393

Elliott Richardson, University of Sydney, 0427 489 089

Sarah Hawkesford, HRI, 0438 654 628

Ellie Pavlov, Ingham Institute, 0459 257 256