

# More girls in STEM could yield a robust economy, according to industry experts

COOMBABAH, QLD, AUSTRALIA, November 12, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The past two years have required both resilience and tenacity of Australia's citizens, first in fighting the devastating wildfires that rampaged many businesses and homes, followed by COVID which is still seeing parts of the country experiencing brutal and sharp lockdown regulations. The need for economic recovery, not to mention mental health recovery, is massive. Throughout these traumatic events, Australia has lost much of its ability to attract skilled workers from abroad, leaving a potential skills shortage looming as another challenging possibility.

Now, more than ever, there is a need for dedicated workers in the STEM fields. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics make up the acronym "STEM", and these skills are critical to the economic growth and especially recovery (following COVID) of Australia.

"Research shows that 75% of the fastest-growing job opportunities require STEM skills (PwC Report April 2015), and industries are crying out for STEM skills to cover future resource needs which are not being met by traditional education," says Fiona Holmstrom, Co-Founder at STEM Punks, a company that provides award-winning STEM Education for school children.

"85% of the jobs that will exist in 2030 haven't been invented yet. These jobs are likely to heavily rely on robotics, automation, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, data science; all the skills that STEM Punks are teaching right now. STEM Punks provides the next generation with opportunities to be human-focused STEM leaders. This ensures we're meeting the future needs of Australia's economy in the digitising of industries such as construction, mining and energy, defence, agriculture, manufacturing, space and even tourism. Not only is this addressing the skills shortage, but it is also upskilling Australia's - and the world's - children and ensuring they are highly skilled and employable."



Fiona Holmstrom from STEM Punks

## Women (and girls) in STEM to Boost Economic Growth

If we're going to meet Australia's needs for economic recovery, we must look to its most fundamental industries. Evaluating the health of the STEM industry in order to ascertain its position and ability to contribute economically, we can see that it is critically lacking female participation;

"Five years after graduating, men with a STEM qualification were 1.8 times more likely to be working in a STEM-qualified occupation compared to their female peers".

"There is a significant gender pay gap between qualified men and women working in STEM. The gender pay gap in STEM-qualified industries was \$28,994 in 2020 compared to \$25,534 across all industries."

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"Everything we do at STEM Punks is about real-world problem-solving. Schools have the mammoth task of equipping the next generation with the skills to meet these demands. There's a widening gap between the kids who can access this knowledge and kids who can't. What STEM Punks does is to be part of the solution to fix this problem. By supporting the traditional education system with a world-leading and industry-linked STEM Program, we provide the skills needed and the pathways for students to pursue future STEM-related career pathways."

## The Woman Behind the Movement

Fiona's new goal is to attract more girls into STEM education and to give them the tools to build a lifelong career out of these skills, ultimately benefiting Australia and the entire employment industry.

"Getting girls into STEM is a full-time job on its own, outside of the rest of the business, it requires resourcing and funding but at its heart, it is a labour of love because it's all about the community. Robotics, AI, automation and data science all require STEM learning. Industries such as resources, construction, agriculture, manufacturing and aerospace would benefit enormously from having more females in their workforce," Fiona says about the task at hand.

"I am working at overcoming this challenge by utilising PR resources for outreach and awareness. The most important work I do to invite girls into STEM is to adapt the learning programs so that they appeal to girls and engage their attention better. Relevance is key. Ideas in this space include programs like 3D design, dance, innovation sports, and other creative outlets."

## The Future Fiona is Building

The STEM Punks app will be released in late 2021, the first of its kind in the world. The app will

run on both iOS and Android devices on a subscription basis. This educational app will make parents feel good about giving their children educational screen time.

“We also launched a new initiative recently called Innovation Sports which is a competition encouraging students to solve problems in a competitive way. Innovation Sports recognises the excitement and growth of esports, where students enjoy the buzz of competing, inclusion, and playing against peers. As educators, we understand how much esports has paved a new way for students to become ‘included’ and wear the school representative badge.

Innovation Sports takes this one step further by incorporating STEM Tools, Design Thinking, and Industry linked programs to promote fast-thinking, problem-solving and collaboration. We’re currently seeking corporate sponsors and trialing it with 10 of our partner schools across Australia,” Fiona says about the upcoming innovations.

STEM is for everyone. Boys, girls, young, old, and even those who have always believed they have an aptitude for creativity and not for the sciences. Fiona has created a business model that makes STEM accessible and equitable.

“Our business model relies on constant innovation to stay relevant; developing our STEM Education tools in IoT (Internet of Things), Drone Coding, and Autonomous Vehicles created immersive learning experiences with curriculum-linked learning outcomes, enabling us to reach a broader market.”

“Inspiring a new generation of innovators, young and old, is a mission we take seriously and see this as an important contribution to society. There is no shortage of ideas in the world and we see our work as helping to bring those ideas to life. Now through our free broadcasts and social media platforms, we are able to reach more people, fostering a mindset and culture that will solve the problems of tomorrow, today.”

Fiona Holmstrom of STEM Punks can be reached via the company website. Parents, schools, teachers and communities that are interested in joining the initiative or supporting the movement to include more girls in STEM can learn more by getting in touch with Fiona.

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