



EARNING OUR WAY THROUGH SCIENCE

Enabling disciplines: Enabling our future

The strength of the natural and physical sciences, including mathematics, is the foundation on which we will build much of our future.

These enabling disciplines have been, and will continue to be at the heart of our search for ways to solve, manage, mitigate or adapt to some of the great challenges that confront us as a nation and as part of humankind.

There are few challenges that are the province of one discipline alone – which makes it even more important not to lose sight of them all. One weak discipline and the foundation is shaky, several and there is the risk of no foundation at all.

Our capacity in the enabling disciplines will be strong when we encourage their advancement through the discovery of new knowledge, their use as we develop new and better goods and services, and their study at all levels.

Participation in the enabling sciences has declined amongst Australian students – and lower participation of young women in some of them is pronounced.

This is not a situation unique to Australia. Indeed, the indication is that this is an issue for several developed economies.

Changing that trend is not something these other countries are leaving to chance. They have chosen to be strategic, and governments have chosen to take action in the national interest, in order to seek to reverse the trend – or to ensure that the enabling disciplines are not diminished. Many are free market economies, too– but that hasn't stopped considered government intervention.

We must not sit back and expect something to come along in a timely way. We, too, must take a long-term strategic approach to support the whole STEM enterprise, and that will begin by maintaining our strong foundations in the enabling disciplines.