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Minister for Revenue and Financial Services
Minister for Women
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Minister for Jobs and Innovation
Senator for Western Australia

**DOORSTOP
ANNOUNCEMENT AT DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
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E&OE

Subjects: Funding for women and girls in STEM

JULIA BANKS:

It's a really special day to be here with Minister O'Dwyer and Minister Cash, in the heart of my electorate, the Centre of Excellence, Deakin University, announcing the Women in STEM Package. I can't tell you how excited I am to be here with my two colleagues and friends. And I'm going to pass to Minister Cash.

MINISTER CASH:

Thank you very much. And it really is an absolute pleasure to be here today at Deakin University, with my ministerial colleague the Minister for Women, Kelly O'Dwyer, and our fantastic Member for Chisholm, Julia Banks.

Well, we're here today to make two announcements. The first is that Girl Guides Victoria – an organisation that both Kelly and Julia are incredibly passionate about – has partnered with Deakin University, and has been successful in a funding grant under the Women in Science and Entrepreneurship funding, otherwise known as WISE, and part of the second round of the National Innovation and Science Agenda funding to work with Deakin University to inspire 40 Girl Guide leaders across Australia to go and undertake training with the 4,000 Girl Guides here in Victoria, to bring their awareness in relation to potential careers in STEM so that they know when they put their hand up they can go into science, technology, engineering or math.

But the second announcement that we're here to make builds on our Budget announcement. It is a \$4.5 million package in relation to women and girls in STEM. On International Women's Day this year, Kelly, our Minister for Women, had the opportunity to announce that for the first time ever the Turnbull Government in Australia is appointing an ambassador for women and girls in STEM. We are currently undertaking the recruitment process, and Kelly and I look forward to making this announcement later on this year.

We are working and listening to the sector. The sector have been telling us they want a decadal plan for women and girls in science. The Government is funding the Academy of Science to now put together that decadal plan. And Kelly and I look forward to receiving it by the end of this year.

But what we're also hearing from teachers, from students, and from parents is that they want their young girls to know that there is the potential for a career in STEM but they need a toolkit, they need to understand: how do I go about and inspire my young daughter? The Government is also funding the creation of a toolkit that will be able to be used by teachers, by parents, and given to students. Again, it is all about doing what we can, as a government, to put in place the right policies so that young girls know: when I leave school, can I have a career in STEM? Absolutely, yes I can.

Why are we doing it, though? Seventeen per cent of professors in STEM are women. They are fantastic women but we can do a lot more. And one of the statistics is this – when young girls aged between 9 to 11 are asked to draw a scientist, guess what they draw: a man. We know that is not the reality, we know also that when you look to the type of jobs that are going to be created going forward, 70 per cent, it's estimated, of those jobs will require some knowledge of science, technology, engineering and math.

So, the Government is very much focussed on increasing women's workforce participation – and Kelly and I are delighted that Australia currently has more women than ever in employment. But we also know we have an opportunity now to really influence policy in relation to getting more women and girls into STEM. And that's why it's absolutely delightful to be here today with Julia and with Kelly to announce our \$4.5 million investment in women and girls in STEM.

Kelly.

KELLY O'DWYER:

Terrific. Michaelia, can I thank you for the incredible amount of work that you have done on this particular package. And to you, Julia, for your really strong advocacy. From the get go we have been a Government that has focussed on increasing opportunity for millions of women in this country. And we've done that because we know that when we get women into jobs, when they participate in the economy, they have real choices. And as Michaelia has pointed out, it is critical that the jobs of the future, the jobs that will be created for my daughter – who turns three tomorrow – will be in the STEM space. Seventy per cent, as she has said, will have a focus of science, technology, mathematics, or engineering. And so, it is important that we encourage, that we inspire and that we involve women at the earliest opportunity in making choices that can help them with their career and with their economic engagement.

So, Michaelia, I want to commend you for a fantastic package. It's one that has been delivered through a lot of hard work and a lot of focus. And it's fabulous to be here with you, Julia, at Deakin University. You're such a fantastic champion for women in your electorate, and for women more broadly right across Australia. So, thank you.

MINISTER CASH:

Any questions?

QUESTION:

Can you please explain – just to clarify – how precisely this \$4.5 million STEM package will work, can you break it down for us?

MINISTER CASH:

Approximately \$3 million of that will go towards funding over the forward estimates for the Women in STEM Ambassador. Around \$600,000 of that will go to the Academy of Science, one of the preeminent bodies, obviously, who will be developing the decadal plan. There will be around \$400,000 provided in relation to the toolkit. And then the department is also going to be putting together a strategy across government to increase the number of women and girls in STEM.

QUESTION:

You're all about promoting women in STEM but what about promoting women in politics, such as Ms Prentice, who's been dumped?

MINISTER CASH:

Yes, absolutely, I don't think any of us would sit here and say that we don't need more women in politics. We absolutely do. But Kelly will take you through the proud history we have of women in the Liberal Party.

QUESTION:

Miss Cash, can I just ask – apologies – are you going to give to the Enid Lyons Fund?

KELLY O'DWYER:

First can I explain what that's all about. So, first can I say look, I was personally very disappointed to hear about Jane because I think she has been an incredibly hard working local member, and I think she's also been someone who's made a very significant contribution to the Government as an assistant minister. We do have democratic processes in our party and obviously a decision has been made in relation to that.

But can I say the Liberal Party has got an incredibly proud history when it comes to women. And we want to build off that strong foundation. The foundation is such that of the 24 ministers, and that is across party lines, who have actually served in the Cabinet, out of 385 – so, let me just repeat that again: there have only been 24 women Cabinet ministers out of 385 – the majority have actually been from the Coalition. And when you look at the number of ministers that have served, female ministers, again across party lines, the majority have actually been from the Coalition.

Now, we have had a number of incredible firsts, Dame Enid Lyons was the first woman elected to Parliament, and of course, she comes from the Liberal Party tradition. We've had the first female President of the Senate. In the current Cabinet, we have got the first Minister for Defence and the first female Foreign Minister as well.

So, I think the Liberal Party has demonstrated through direct action that women can serve at the very highest levels of government, and they can make a contribution. Can we do more? Absolutely. All parties can do more to encourage women into public life. And that is a message I want to send out there to anybody who's listening to this. If you are a young woman, no matter what your politics, I would encourage you to commit yourself to a life of public service.

And certainly from a Liberal Party perspective, as Minister for Women I was able to announce earlier on International Women's Day that I was establishing the Dame Enid Lyons Fighting Fund for women in the Liberal Party to encourage those women who were currently sitting members in marginal seats – and we've got one of the hardest working marginal seat members here with Julia Banks – to be able to support them financially in their campaigns. And also for those women who are standing in winnable

seats as well, there will be a fighting fund that will be able to encourage them financially in supporting them in their campaigns. I'm really pleased that so many of my colleagues have joined me in being able to make that commitment. My federal electorate conference has committed \$50,000 to the fund, and so many of my colleagues have also joined in that commitment. And I think that stands us in very good stead in a very practical way to encourage and to support women.

QUESTION:

Do you expect all your colleagues – MP colleagues – to contribute to the fund?

KELLY O'DWYER:

Well, I've certainly written to all of my Cabinet colleagues and I've received very enthusiastic support but obviously that's a question you can put to them.

QUESTION:

Are you going to contribute?

MINISTER CASH:

The answer to that is yes, but after discussions with my own state body, which is always appropriate.

QUESTION:

Isn't the problem here that women aren't being selected, not that they aren't being selected but rather they're - sorry, I'll start that again, isn't the problem here that women aren't being selected, rather than they're not running for pre-selection?

KELLY O'DWYER:

Sorry, that they're not being selected?

QUESTION:

So, they're running for pre-selection but they're not being selected, isn't that the fundamental problem here?

KELLY O'DWYER:

No. We've got many women who do in fact get pre-selected. And we've got many capable women in the Liberal Party. We've got a lot of women who hold marginal seats. And Julia Banks, I think, is Exhibit A of someone who has come from a stellar corporate career, has given that up in order to apply her experience and her background in the nation's parliament. We don't hold it against her that she's a lawyer because we've got three lawyers here. But she's a lawyer with really practical experience which is why she's here not only as the local member for this announcement but as someone who's had direct experience with the pharmaceutical industry, in the food processing industry and that is something that informs the way that you contribute to our policy discussions in the Parliament and in our party room.

So, we are very fortunate to have women not only of Julia Banks' calibre but women who have been engineers, people like Karen Andrews, we've got people like the farmers, like Nola Marino, we've got women of lots of different backgrounds and experiences. And we want to encourage even more to be able to make that contribution in the nation's Parliament. And certainly the party that does embrace that diversity is the Liberal Party.

QUESTION:

The head of the Women's Committee says the Liberals can't afford to go backwards when it comes to the number of women. Are you guys going backwards?

KELLY O'DWYER:

Well, I agree that you can't afford to go backwards, you always need to be forward focussed, but if you actually want to look at the score board on this, and Labor are really good on the talk, but when you actually look at the scoreboard the Liberal Party have got an enviable list of firsts. But also we have had the majority of women who have actually served around the Cabinet table, the majority of women who have actually served in the ministry but we want to build on that strong foundation to ensure that even more women have that opportunity to make that contribution.

QUESTION:

I've got one from Paul Murray, he wants to know why you're giving money to middle class women to go into politics instead of donating to women's shelters?

KELLY O'DWYER:

We've got an incredibly strong record when it comes to supporting women who are in very vulnerable positions. And Michaelia, who is standing here beside me, one of the very first announcements of the Turnbull Government was the \$100 million Women's Safety Package. Now, that had direct financial support for women's shelters to making sure that we could intervene to help protect women to make sure that they could be safe in their homes, in their workplaces, and in their communities. Now, that support is ongoing, we've committed more than \$300 million during our government to actually support women to be safe, and we will continue that very strong commitment. I'm going to be making an economic statement in spring that builds on that very strong foundation that Michaelia laid down as Minister for Women to talk about women's economic security. Because the next step is about saying: if women are economically secure, they have choices in this life. And I'm going to have a little bit more to say about that in spring because we want to make sure that millions of Australian women have choices about their future, they're financially secure, and that they can go on and lead their best possible lives. We are an aspirational party. We believe in giving women those opportunities and those choices, and as I said, we'll have even more to say, building on the strong announcements that have already been made about women's economic security later.

But let me also say this: the women who stand for the Liberal Party are not all middle-class women. I know you're using that in a very pejorative way, but let me say to you that we have women of lots of different backgrounds and experiences who in fact stand for us. Unlike the Labor Party, where every second member of the Labor Party – quite a number of them are men – seem to be former union officials. As I said, we've got engineers, we've got scientists, we've got small business people, we've got farmers. And in fact, as you can tell here, we've got a few lawyers as well. And all of that experience is important in making policy decisions, and I think it's really very notable as well that this year we have had, for the first time, two women who have served on the Expenditure Review Committee, which is the subcommittee of Cabinet, that puts together the component parts of the Budget. Michaelia and I have worked together with the Prime Minister, with the Finance Minister and with the Treasurer on helping to put together the Budget, which is why we've got such fabulous announcements as the one that's been made by Michaelia here today.

QUESTION:

Senator Cash, I've just got one. The charges against John Setka have been dropped. Is this embarrassing for the Royal Commission?

MINISTER CASH:

Absolutely not. That is a matter for Victorian Police. If you want to stand here and ask questions about justification of the CFMEU's behaviour, I think you'd be sadly misguided. The CFMEU are without one of the most notorious- in fact, they are the most notorious union in Australia. I think we're up to about \$14 million in fines that have now been handed out against the CFMEU for unlawful behaviour. If I recall, I think they're also Bill Shorten's biggest backer, and a vote for Bill Shorten won't be a vote for Bill for The Lodge; as we know, it'll to be a vote to install the CFMEU in The Lodge. So, absolutely not. That is a matter for the Victorian Police.

QUESTION:

But is it damaging for the legacy of the inquiry considering that we've had now further charges dropped?

MINISTER CASH:

Absolutely not, because at the end of the day, royal commissions provide evidence, as we've all seen. The Government responds to that evidence by way of implementing policy. That is exactly what the Turnbull Government did. It restored the ABCC. We introduced the Registered Organisations Commission. We have banned corrupting benefits between both employers and employees. We've put in place some of the strongest legislation ever in relation to protecting vulnerable workers, in particular those who are underpaid. So we have made the appropriate policy responses as a result of the findings of the Royal Commission.

QUESTION:

Sorry, just Kelly's [indistinct] question back to women in politics, please. So, has the state branch stepped in to ensure that you are not vulnerable to pre-selection?

KELLY O'DWYER:

Look, I've been a little bit amused by the commentary in relation to all of this. There's no question that I'm standing again and I have got very, very strong support from my branches and I was very surprised to hear any talk that I'd be challenged. But obviously, we live in a democratic party and a democratic process and that's obviously a matter for the organisation, but I know I have the very strong support of my branches in the party.

QUESTION:

Do any of you see [indistinct] state branch's role to actually ensure that there are women in the pre-selection process, that they are on the state ticket?

KELLY O'DWYER:

Well look, they're matters that you can put to the party organisation. Certainly, I'm taking the opportunity as I travel around Australia to meet with state presidents to talk to them about how they are doing when it comes to the number of women who are actually standing for the Liberal Party in Australia, and I look forward to continuing those discussions.

MINISTER CASH:

Thank you very much.

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