

MEDIA CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPT

RESPONSE TO THE STRATEGIC EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT 'AMBITIOUS AUSTRALIA'

TUESDAY 17 MARCH 2026

Jas Chambers, STA President

Science and Technology Australia welcomes this report 'Ambitious Australia'. It's an opportunity that is intergenerational in scope and the suite of recommendations, and there are twenty, should be seen as a package. Now that's a big ask, but it reinforces the ambition for change. We're open to answer any questions that you've got for the STEM sector.

Journalist

Having watched that press conference, do you have any confidence that it will be implemented as a package, or at all?

Jas Chambers, STA President

Yes, we have to be ambitious about this. The report is out there, it's here today, and it'll come down to implementation. So, I think that asking a lot of questions around that, but in terms of actual change for this system, it does require something that is as bold as has been outlined. We've been waiting for this for many, many years, 40 years, I would say, to come. And we were excited as a sector, to look at the recommendations, to work with government, to work with industry, and talk to them as well about what their part of the equation is as well.

Journalist

The government consistently talks about funding for science, for research and development, but at least from an anecdotal perspective, most of my friends who have studied science or something along those lines, have not managed to get jobs in that sector. It's extremely difficult. Do you think that any kinds of changes in this report will include those outcomes in terms of people actually being employed in the sector?

Jas Chambers, STA President

Yeah, well, I think that you need to look at the workforce statistics around what we need as a country. We know that we have, just in the coming years, in the next decade, a need for about 24% uplift from people with Bachelor of Science degrees alone. That's about 550,000 people that we need in the sector from those sorts of backgrounds. At the same time, we know there are people leaving the sector as well, and so it's a matching up of those two tensions. That's

what this report is about, and that's why it does need to be dealt with at a system level, because the changes that we require do need to be broad, they need to be sweeping, if we are going to make Future Made in Australia happen, and we consistently say that we want that to happen, then that's what we're going to need.

Ryan Winn, STA CEO

One of the things I'd say about the report is it has a really good, strong focus on workforce. The need around PhDs and the role of universities and industry to actually wrap around and create the career paths that are not just academic careers, but actually an R&D sector that spreads all domains. And this is where I think the report highlights the need for a full court press from not just government but actually the sector and universities and industry to really create those career pathways and what we need for the future.

Journalist

This report has arrived at a time of great disruption, accelerated disruption, lots of jobs displacement, all of these things. So just tell me sense of urgency wise, talk me through what the arrival of some of these new technologies mean?

Jas Chambers, STA President

Well, I think you're absolutely right. This report lands at a critical moment for us as society, as humanity and culturally, and that's why it is intergenerational in its scope to actually be able to make the changes that that we need. And I think that intergenerational element that does come through in the report is something we really need to pay attention to as a sector, and also as for our economy to make the changes that we need, we know that there's huge disruption going on right now in workforces around the country. So what do we need in terms of technology, science, engineering, mathematics, all those STEM sectors, what are they going to, you know, to create next for us? And so the collision of these things, I think, does require that systemic consideration. If we think about just to go to that intergenerational perspective as well. You know, we heard 35 years, 40 years ago, there was a shift in the economy. This is the shift now as well. Our economy is changing very rapidly. So we use this report, if we use the recommendations, and actually drive that for Australia. We've got an opportunity there. In terms of what the STEM sector can do. We've heard about the brain power of Australia's STEM sector. That brain power is currently not in places that we think it should be. It should be in the boardrooms. It should be talking to industry. There should be more politicians with STEM backgrounds, to the point that was made earlier about, you know, people don't get jobs in STEM. There are jobs in STEM, but there are jobs for STEM trained people across our economy, and that is absolutely critical to the uplift in the workforce that we need. So where are those people in our boardrooms? That's what we want to see, taking people from the field, from the bench and so forth, into executive, into boards, and driving some of the decision making that's been going on without them there. That's what we're looking for as part of this as well.

Read the STA media release: [A once-in-a-multigeneration opportunity to supercharge research and Development](#)

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