

## Menzies School of Health Research home to three superstars of STEM

**11 December 2018**

Three Menzies School of Health Research researchers are among the new round of 2019 Superstars of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) announced today by Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, the Hon. Karen Andrews. Menzies was just one of four research organisations in Australia to have at least three superstars selected to the program.

Associate Professor Heidi Smith-Vaughn, Dr Teresa Wozniak, and Dr Kalinda Griffiths were chosen to participate in the Superstars in STEM program run by Science and Technology Australia because of their ability to champion change for women in STEM.

Associate Professor Heidi Smith-Vaughn is the Head of Child Health Laboratory Research and career development research fellow. As a scientist working in Indigenous and global health, she is looking forward to being a stronger and more vocal advocate for women in STEM, particularly those in underrepresented populations.

“I want to have the difficult discussions about the challenges women face, so that we can work towards real solutions. I also want to be more effective in pushing back against the tide of fake and weak ‘evidence’, and misinterpreted data that endanger the health of our population. I hope to do this through Superstars of STEM by improving my communication skills, building my profile, and joining vibrant networks”, said Associate Professor Smith-Vaughn.

Dr Teresa Wozniak is a HOT NORTH career development research fellow where she is working on better understanding the health and economic impact of drug resistant infections across northern Australia.

Much of the impact of her research is at the health services and policy level and taking this work to the general public, through the Superstar of STEM program, is an essential step in people taking more control of their own health and wellbeing.

“In my current role, I am working alongside so many amazing and inspirational women who are dedicated to improving health outcomes in the tropical north of Australia and beyond. I want to use this opportunity to usher in the next generation of female scientists and support them towards achieving their goals”, said Dr Wozniak.

Dr Kalinda Griffiths is a Yawuru woman and honorary fellow at Menzies, also holding a Scientia fellowship at the Centre for Big Data Research at UNSW. Her work empirically measures complex health disparities in populations through existing data, with a focus on cancer.

“I am excited to be selected as a Superstar of STEM alongside a diverse range of extraordinary women, some of whom have inspired me to work in STEM. I want to draw attention the power of big data and discuss some of the issues in data governance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and research. I also get to stand up as one of the first Aboriginal women recognised in the Superstars of STEM program. This is an opportunity to promote equity”, said Dr Griffiths.

Superstars of STEM aims to smash society's gender assumptions about scientists and increase the public visibility of women in STEM. Science and Technology Australia created Superstars of STEM to create a critical mass of celebrity Australian female scientists and technologists - role models for young women and girls – and to work towards equal representation in the media of women and men working in all fields in STEM.

Professor Emma Johnston AO, President of Science & Technology Australia, said the women would no longer be hiding their scientific superpowers, and would share them with as many Australians as possible following the launch.

“When we launched the program last year, I said that the stereotypical scientist was an old man in a white coat,” Professor Johnston said.

“Thanks to the first 30 Superstars this is starting to change, and with 60 more announced today, we will be well on our way to permanently smashing the stereotype.”

ENDS

**Media contact:**

Shauna Mounsey, communications, marketing and media manager

Phone: (08) 8946 8680 | M: 0438 976 102 | Email: [communications@menzies.edu.au](mailto:communications@menzies.edu.au)

**Menzies School of Health Research**

Menzies School of Health Research is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving Indigenous, global and tropical health. Menzies has a history of over 30 years of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, joining with partners across the Asia-Pacific as well as Indigenous communities across northern and central Australia. Menzies collaborates to create new knowledge, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.