



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

**L'OREAL-UNESCO FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE CEREMONY**  
**Wednesday 1 December 2021**

**Rodrigo Pizarro**, Chief Executive Officer, L'Oreal Australia and New Zealand, and **all L'Oreal staff here this evening**

**For Women in Science Jury and Fellows**

**Aunty Carolyn Briggs**

**Distinguished guests**

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders with us this evening from other communities.

I am delighted to join you for this celebration of the L'Oreal-UNESCO For Women in Science Program, and to recognise the outstanding women who are your new Fellows.

I don't know about you, but across the last year or so, I grew very tired of the terms '*unprecedented*', as in '*we live in unprecedented times*', and '*pivot*', as in how everyone was '*pivoting*' in every aspect of their business and personal lives.

I much prefer the new catchphrases, as in we are '*opening up*' and that we are going to '*build back better and stronger*'.

I think I'll be slower to tire of this new batch of clichés. They hold such possibility.

We know that it won't be all 'plain sailing,' but we do need to **open up**. And we do need to **build back better and stronger**.

That leads me to what I suppose is another phrase we've recently been overworking. It is that '*nothing is more important than*', used as a prelude to whatever we want to emphasise as the next significant step in our recovery.

I can readily say that **nothing is more important than** ensuring that, in pursuing our economic and community recovery, we pay attention to the lessons learned from the depths of the pandemic, and that we profit from those lessons in this rebuilding phase.

And so, that brings me to this evening.

I can say with confidence that in the rebuilding of our nation and this State – **to build back better and stronger** – **nothing is more important than** ensuring that 100% of our talent pool is engaged in the process.

We need every woman as well as every man. We need their diverse perspectives. We need their combined productivity. We need their respective skills.

Let me pause right there to note that, as we have seen recently in sharp focus, it can also be said that **nothing is more important** to our future than science. Science in all its glorious and infinite forms and possibilities.

With a specific emphasis on science, and the engagement of 100% of our talent pool, we can set about solving the world's wicked problems. We have seen that in response to the pandemic.

In fact, it is hard to think of any sector that does not rely on an aspect of science for its improvement or success.

Yet, whether it is in Victoria or the wider world, we shall never reach our full potential in science unless we rely upon all our talent.

As many of you here know first-hand, although our young girls are every bit as bright and capable as our young boys, in any field of endeavour, including science, they continue to face roadblocks: some easy to discern, some more mysterious. We are all the losers from that.

It is against this backdrop that I thank everyone connected with the L’Oreal-UNESCO For Women in Science Program.

L’Oreal was certainly not ‘late to this party’. This Program, promoting the research of women scientists, was established almost a quarter of a century ago, and today has recognised some 3,400 women in 110 different countries, supporting them with funding towards their research and careers.

Others will speak in more detail about these generous \$25,000 awards, and the capacity for successful scientists to use the funds in any way that will give them practical assistance to pursue their research. For some, it will mean buying scientific equipment otherwise beyond their reach. For others, it might be for childcare costs, so that they are able to continue working in their labs.

I know that others too will speak in more detail about the fantastic scientists being honoured this evening. They traverse better understandings of our hearts, the global battery supply chain, epilepsy, nutrient profiles and anxiety.

I am conscious that such a brief summary cannot do justice to the expertise of each research program, but I do want to congratulate each Fellow, and emphasise that the whole community is genuinely strengthened when such brilliant minds are able to pursue their work, regardless of gender.

I am of course proud that two are located here in Victoria: Dr Mahdokht Shaibani, from Monash University, and Dr Pip Karoly, from the University of Melbourne and Seer Medical.

I congratulate them and their ‘fellow’ Fellows, and thank them for their perseverance and tenacity.

And, again, thank you to everyone connected with these awards. In recognising the achievements of early-career female scientists, you promote their careers, you highlight their work, help to normalise their presence in their fields and pave the way for younger women to follow in their footsteps.

Thank you in particular to Rodrigo Pizarro, Chief Executive Officer, L'Oreal Australia & New Zealand.

Finally, I am so sorry that I am unable to stay longer with you this evening but I wish everyone well and it looks like you are in for an inspiring evening.