



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Media Release

27 November 2013

Government's response to Science and Society Challenge is most encouraging

In response to today's joint announcement by Ministers Joyce and Parata, the Chair of the National Science Challenges Peak Panel, Sir Peter Gluckman acknowledged the strong commitment of the Government to address the challenge put forward by the Panel and work to further enhance science literacy, public understanding of and engagement with science and to further improve science technology, engineering and mathematics education (STEM).

"When the Panel considered the National Science Challenges, a common theme emerged that we believed deserved collective consideration and leadership by government if we are to be a more innovative society", said Sir Peter. "That was the need to further engage the community in science, to energise young people towards science and to promote STEM education with more innovative approaches". The Panel saw this as a challenge to Government, and today the Government has responded."

"I am delighted to see a much needed focus not only on enhancing the STEM sector, but also on the broader community," said Sir Peter. "This is an important opportunity to support the type of STEM learning that can captivate and train students likely to go on to science and technology -based careers, but also to support broader STEM understanding across society. So many of today's toughest decisions for a society – about public health; natural resources stewardship or communications technology for instance – require all of us to weigh both scientific evidence and social values. New Zealanders should feel equipped and able to engage meaningfully in that discussion."

This is not an issue that is unique to New Zealand. Comparable countries throughout the developed world have all made STEM and science literacy a top priority to boost their level of innovation and civic discourse. Some of the most innovative jurisdictions are adding subjects like entrepreneurship and ethics to their STEM curricula, ensuring linkages to the creative subjects, and reaching out to parents as students' best mentors.

Sir Peter has been asked to chair the reference group that will assist Government in developing strategies for moving ahead in these critical areas.

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