



The New Zealand Association of Scientists (Inc.)

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### *Press release*

## **New initiatives in science teaching a welcome step**

The Government has just announced two initiatives to improve science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) teaching in New Zealand schools. The New Zealand Association of Scientists applauds this move and echoes Minister Joyce's statement that 'Boosting the skills and achievement of our young people in maths and science are essential for their future careers and for New Zealand's economic growth and prosperity'. Dr Nicola Gaston, President of NZAS, said, 'More broadly, there is a need to boost understanding of science among teachers, students, and across the whole adult population as well, as it is the nature of scientific knowledge to develop beyond what any of us once learnt at school'.

There is an obvious and urgent need to advance science and technological literacy in New Zealand. Only recently, the head of Orion Healthcare described the huge shortage of technologically able workers in this country. 'High-tech industry requires highly trained people, and the production of this capability should be recognised as a key goal of our science system', said Dr Gaston.

Recent reports detailing a fall-off in year-8 student abilities in science and writing underlines the urgent need for improvement. Dr Gaston also commented, 'Fragmentation and uncertainty have become endemic in New Zealand science. Our government needs to recognise that their policy decisions play a role in shaping the attractiveness of a career in science. We would hope that these new education initiatives are a step towards telling our brightest young students that there are careers besides the professions of medicine and engineering, and that a science degree is the best training for the jobs of the future'.

The New Zealand Association of Scientists ([www.scientists.org.nz](http://www.scientists.org.nz)) is a nationwide association of practising research scientists spanning the universities, technical institutes, Crown research institutes, government departments, industry, museums, other science institutions, and independent researchers.

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