

To whom it may concern,

I am delighted to provide a letter of support to Tara Pattenden and her application for a Creative Sparks Grant. I am writing in my capacity as a PhD student at the School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering at the University of Queensland. I am studying how to leapfrog women from intersectional backgrounds (including race, ability, sexuality, gender etc) into STEM skills, leveraging hands on learning. In the course of my PhD studies, researching Makerspaces across Brisbane and neighbouring city councils, I have learnt of Tara's activities at Elektrolab. Tara is running the only feminist makerspace in Brisbane, and I believe, the only one in Australia. There are such feminist makerspaces in the USA and Europe, but an absence of such venues domestically. It is wonderful to see Tara, and the city of Brisbane, pioneering in this space.

A feminist makerspace, such as Elektrolab, allows women who normally miss out on building STEM skills through more formal channels such as university education, to engage with STEM through appropriate, accessible learning methods. The leading global research has revealed that in other contexts globally, women who engage in more traditional female making activities (eg sewing and craft) can segue into learning STEM skills by learning electronics and programs to create e-textiles. Tara's application is seeking to do exactly that. She is committed to engaging with women from intersectional backgrounds, and in having 60 women participate, as well as 1500 people engage with the resulting creations, she will build a broader skills base and appetite for STEM skills amongst our populations who are most likely to miss out. This will help broaden the overall skill set for Brisbane women and non-binary individuals, which is important to Brisbane's broader skill growth collectively. There could also be income generation possibilities for participants, who seek to sell future e-textiles they create as a result of the learnings in these workshops and grow businesses in this domain, perhaps even teaching these skills amongst their own communities. Further, these workshops may also reveal talents/passion for STEM skills in women who have previously had no exposure, allowing them to pursue further studies or employment in STEM oriented industries/roles they have previously believed inaccessible.

Entry level opportunities for women into STEM are largely missing in Brisbane and Australia. This initiative by Tara will break the status quo and be of immense benefit to Brisbane and our women, of all backgrounds.

Kind regards,



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