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Director's Blog - 28 August 2017

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Damir Kusen, President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, Frances Separovic and Margaret Sheil

While Michael is away, attending an [X-ray Crystallography Conference](#) in India, I am holding the fort at Bio21 in his absence.

In the past fortnight, arguably the most significant event that occurred at Bio21 and for me personally, was the [visit of the President of Croatia](#), Ms Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic.

Being of Croatian heritage, the visit of the President to Bio21 was quite an emotional experience for me, something that I would not have dreamed.

The fact that the president is a woman: the first female president of Croatia and the highest ranking female official to have served within NATO's administrative structure, makes it an even greater cause for celebration.

With a few notable exceptions – Angela Merkel, Theresa May and our own former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard - women in powerful positions are still a rarity in politics and in science.

Meeting the president on the day were, amongst others, our Provost, Margaret Sheil, the first female chemistry professor in Australia, and our Dean of Science, Karen Day.

Our own Leann Tilley, ARC Georgina Sweet Laureate Fellow, has established the '[Georgina Sweet](#)' Awards to promote and support female scientists who demonstrate excellence in quantitative biomedical science. This is one way, to encourage women to enter non-traditional fields of scientific enquiry, as are the [Rita Cornforth Lectureship](#) and [Margaret Sheil Leadership Award](#) recently established by the RACI for female chemists.

Mentoring is important at all career stages and I am especially grateful for the support that I have received throughout my career from men and women.

As Acting and Deputy Director, I've set myself the challenge to improve the opportunities for women in the Institute to rise to leadership positions. Associate Professor Uta Wille is forming a 'Women in Bio21' committee to advise us on how best to achieve this. We need men and women with ideas on our committee so, if you are able to contribute, please contact [Uta Wille](#).

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