**Financial support for Superstars of STEM program**

Thank you for taking time to read my application. I am very keen to apply for the Superstars of STEM program as it is the perfect platform for me to demonstrate my commitment towards science communication, community engagement and mentoring.

I have always been very well supported by my supervisor for training, engagement and professional development. However, 2020 has been a different year for not just people in general but particularly been tough for the higher education sector. Earlier in the year my supervisor financially contributed a significant amount to pay for my employment sponsorship visa in order for me to continue my research career at the University of Melbourne. I am extremely lucky to have a supportive supervisor who has put significant resources to enable me to stay in this beautiful country as a permanent resident this year. I have also been well supported to pursue training opportunities. In order to be equitable and fair to other employees who work alongside of me, I have decided to not request additional funds from my supervisor to support me for this program.

I am originally from India and moved to Australia to pursue a Masters degree at the University of Melbourne. Our student loans work differently from Australian student debt and we pay a high amount of interest towards the loan. Ever since I have been working full time in Australia, I have been contributing 60% of my monthly salary towards my education loan thus leaving limited funds for me to undertake any training and development activities.

I sincerely hope that my honesty is articulated in this cover letter. I understand that there are more people would be far deserving of this scholarship than me but I have attempted to be as honest and upfront as possible.

Many thanks again for taking time for reading my application.

Sincerely

Priyanka Pillai