



Australian Government



THE PRIME MINISTER'S  
PRIZES FOR SCIENCE

## MS VEENA NAIR

VIEWBANK COLLEGE, VICTORIA

2022 PRIME MINISTER'S PRIZE FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE

TEACHING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Ms Veena Nair is a leading educator in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics). She has more than 20 years' experience teaching science-based subjects across three different countries – India, the United Arab Emirates and Australia. Ms Nair began her teaching career in India, where she provided computers to low socio-economic schools and taught students how to code. This led to her discovering a passion for teaching. She is driven by inspiring students from a range of backgrounds to become interested in STEAM and improving diversity among the next generation of leaders in the field.

As STEAM Project Leader and Head of Technology at Viewbank College, Ms Nair has led the development of curricular and extracurricular STEAM projects, including several new electives including 3D printing, emerging technologies, engineering and integrated art and technology projects like wearables.

Ms Nair also encourages her students to take part in extracurricular activities to advance their STEAM knowledge outside the classroom. She has demonstrated to students the practical application of STEAM and how they can use their skills to make real impact in the world.

Ms Nair has helped increase the number of students studying STEAM subjects at Viewbank College, most notably the number of female students. The number of students who go on to study STEAM subjects at university has also increased under her leadership. She is passionate about showing her students tangible pathways for a career in STEAM. Ms Nair wrote to every university in Victoria and ultimately convinced most Victorian universities to recognise VCE Systems Engineering as a relevant bonus subject for undergraduate Engineering courses.

Ms Nair also collaborates with a variety of industry leaders and academics to introduce a broad variety of STEAM careers to her students, aligning technology and education. She encourages students to participate in the Swinburne Youth Space Innovation Challenge, a 10-week program that sees secondary students competing to create the best experiment to launch into space. The winning project is sent to the International Space Station with the help of industry partners.

Ms Nair also supported the Young Persons' Plan for the Planet program, a STEM-based enterprise development program that gives students the opportunity to engage with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals as changemakers at a global level. Through this program she led a team of Australian teachers to conduct STEAM workshops for teachers in low socio-economic schools in Mumbai, India.

Ms Nair convenes a biannual STEAM Futures Conference for industry specialists, teachers and students to discuss careers in STEM, new developments and school programs for students. She also established a Joint Vision for STEM committee including school and tertiary educators and industry experts, with the intention of developing strategies to make STEAM education and careers in STEM accessible for all students, especially females.

## Career highlights

- 2018 Nominated for Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Secondary Schools
- 2019 Convened inaugural STEAM conference at Viewbank College
- 2018 Educator of the Year Award, Design and Technology Teachers' Association of Australia
- 2016 Judge, Top Designs for VCE Systems Engineering, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)
- 2017 Part of review panel of VCE Systems Engineering subject on behalf of VCAA
- 2018 Grant recipient (\$10,000) for a Makerspace for Digital Technologies, Department of Education
- 2018 Finalist, India Australia Business & Community Alliance Awards
- 2021 Committee Member and Judge for Science Talent Search, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria (STAV)
- 2021 Speaker, Greenlight for Girls conference
- 2017 Member of the Northern STEM Network (Victoria)
- 2017-2022 Banyule Nillumbik Tech school Ambassador 2015-2022 Committee member for Design and Technology Teachers' Association Victoria