

Antarctic voyage

EXAMINER columnist Martin Stevenson's patronising remarks about the upcoming Homeward Bound Antarctic voyage have left many scientists speechless.

Leaving aside his belief in Antarctic polar bears, the author's most embarrassing gaffe is his ignorance of the challenges facing women in science.

Consider that more than half of Australia's science PhD graduates and early career researchers are women but just 17 per cent of senior scientific leadership roles are held by women.

Women are paid less, promoted less frequently and win fewer grants than men with similar qualifications – and these are just some of the reasons so many women choose to drop out of science early in their career.

We applaud the aims of the Homeward Bound voyage, with its strong focus on developing women's leadership skills for the science workplace and for influencing decision-making.

Science and innovation are Australia's future, and for us to have a truly vibrant future, we need all the best brains we have in science leadership – men and women.

– DR KATHERINE WOODTHORPE, Chair, Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre

Women make waves in research voyage

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AS PERFECT storms go, it doesn’t get any better than the news concerning the latest bunch of intrepid explorers heading down to Antarctica.

Not only is the team of 80 scientists female to a man (sorry, woman), but they’re steaming from Hobart for 20 days late next year to check out how climate change is affecting the frozen continent.

Gi-r-r-r-l power, global warming, come on, what part of that ideologically driven scenario doesn’t grab you?

The only better deal would be if they all stood on the ship’s poop deck and chorused: “What do we want ... a same-sex republic ... when do we want it ... now.”

These women are headed for that vast block of ice – OK, an entire continent – that warmists claim is melting so rapidly that not only have polar bears been forced to learn the dog paddle but bewildered natives on many Pacific islands are watching the water lap over the galoshes they have purchased in case of just such an eventuality.

And how do we know sea levels are rising? Well, put that down to peer-reviewed (and more importantly, taxpayer-funded) computer modelling and “the science” endorsed by a hand-picked 97 cent of furrow-browed boffins who reckon we’ve reached the planet’s tipping point.

Yet the curious feature of this junket is

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how an entire female team, drawn variously from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Norway, New Zealand, Britain and the US, are going to come to any other conclusions than, say, a whole bunch of qualified males.

Or even a mixed group of men and women, apart from the likelihood of the ice-breaker turning into a sort of ice-bound love boat.

In which case, when it comes to gin-and-tonic time, they won’t run out of ice – just lean over the side of the boat with a scoop shovel. Provided the ice hasn’t melted in as far as the South Pole.

Either way, the scientists’ findings are bound to be either (a) nothing to see here, folks, or (b) we’re all doomed, in five years tourists will be able to work on their tan at Mawson base before sipping pina colodas under the palm trees.

We’re tipping (b) is the “right-on” answer, if only to ensure continual climate change funding.

Still the question nags: why exclusively women as warmists? According to one report, it’s all about “working on skill-

building projects to create innovative strategies for climate change innovation”.

Going forward, these language-tangling gals can certainly mix it with the guys.

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Another question we have is whether these brainy ladies will photograph only girl penguins.

We must wish these intrepid persons Gaia speed, and hope they don’t get stuck in pack ice or anything.

For some reason, we’re still haunted by the picture of that ship of (mixed-sex) scientists who went to the Arctic last year to check out climate change and the allegedly melting ice cap.

Voyagers on the Greenpeace vessel MV Esperanza, who included British actor and eco-toff Emma Thompson, stood on the ship’s deck surrounded by huge snowdrifts and held up a banner reading: “Climate Change Is Real I’m Standing On It.” The ship got firmly wedged in ice.

Even a nuclear-powered Russian ice-breaker couldn’t get them out. It’s hoped this new women’s trip encounters no such perfect storm.

The ladies, God bless ’em.