



The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
csirossoe@industry.gov.au

22 September 2016

Dear Minister,

Government's new Statement of Expectations for CSIRO

Thank you for providing the opportunity to provide comment and respond to questions on a new Statement of Expectations for CSIRO.

The Community and Public Sector Union - PSU Group (CPSU) represents employees in Commonwealth government employment. The CSIRO Staff Association is a section of the CPSU and represents employees in CSIRO. We are committed to providing strong voices for our members in key public policy and political debates. The Staff Association has comprehensively contributed to past Government inquiries and reviews of CSIRO and the Australian innovation system. In this submission we will primarily focus on the questions in your letter to us dated 8 September 2016.

How should CSIRO benefit Australia through applied and public good research?

CSIRO should remain a predominantly Commonwealth funded organisation focussed on national research priorities and assisting Australian industry in the broadest sense. Funding to CSIRO should reflect the increasing scale of the future scientific challenges and opportunities of Australia. We recommend a bipartisan approach be taken in determining the level of funding for CSIRO, with at least a decadal commitment agreed by all parties.

Commonwealth government science should be viewed as an asset for preparedness to respond to economic, environmental and social change. Responding to digital disruption or climate change for example requires longer term scientific capabilities, most effectively deployed through CSIRO and other Commonwealth science and research agencies.

In relation to CSIRO, the Staff Association recommends that the Statement of Expectations should refer to research in the Pasteur's quadrant. This is a classification of scientific research that seeks fundamental understanding of scientific problems, while also having immediate use for society. It is neither pure basic research, which is better done with the university sector, nor pure applied research, which is better done with the private sector.

'Public good research' is a term that is interpreted differently by different groups. In CSIRO's context, we recommend that 'public good' refers to research that seeks fundamental understanding of scientific problems, while also having a well-defined use for society. Much of CSIRO's appropriation funding should be internally allocated to this classification of research.

Highly applied research at CSIRO should be predominantly funded by external revenue, particularly through industry.

Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding CSIRO's external relationships and engagement with target groups? Should CSIRO engage in different ways?

The staff of CSIRO and other Commonwealth science and research agencies are their most important asset. These talented and highly trained individuals are the primary channels of collaborations, so it is essential that staff are free to establish and promote relationships. The reality is that corporate culture in CSIRO has led to less opportunity for open and direct engagement. The Staff Association recommends that the Statement of Expectations provides greater flexibility for CSIRO staff on external engagement and public comment than general Australian Public Service provisions, but with clear responsibilities based on scientific integrity.

What do you consider CSIRO's future role should be in addressing the big issues Australia will be facing in the next ten to twenty years? How should these issues be identified and/or progressed?

CSIRO's overall role in the innovation system does not need to change to address the big issues Australia is facing. Instead, CSIRO requires a sustained period of stability of funding and agreed purpose from politicians and a more participatory and trusting organisational culture achieved through effective and inclusive leadership from management.

The Staff Association welcomes the Government's view that CSIRO should be at the centre of Australia's innovation system. This however can only be achieved through:

- No further cuts to Commonwealth funding, both appropriation funding directly to CSIRO and indirectly through grants and programs;
- Real increases of Commonwealth funding to CSIRO, reflective of the increasing scientific challenges and opportunities of Australia;
- Substantial improvements to staff consultation and participation in CSIRO's internal strategic planning, science prioritisation and implementation; and
- Greater trust and empowerment in decision making for scientists and staff coupled with abolition of the corporate culture.

The need for independence at CSIRO Board level is also paramount. The Staff Association has recommended to Government that one Board member position be elected from staff to help facilitate this. We have also recommended that an external independent review of the corporate management structure and processes of CSIRO be undertaken.

What do you consider CSIRO's expected role should be in addressing industry problems and/or increasing industry's productivity? How should these issues be identified and/or progressed?

CSIRO must continue to address industry problems but it should avoid the pitfalls of conducting purely applied research that Australian industry should perform by investing in its own R&D. In particular, CSIRO should not simply be used by Australian industry as a well branded research consultancy. Instead, we recommend that industry be encouraged to collaborate with CSIRO and invest in research in the Pasteur's quadrant. This way, industry can share in the reward of the application of the research in society and CSIRO can continue to build on its fundamental understanding of the scientific problem at the same time.

Other important issues of CSIRO Staff Association and CPSU members

Working conditions

The retention of and ability to attract staff is a watershed issue. Salaries in universities and in many industry sectors are increasingly higher than salaries in CSIRO or other Commonwealth science and research agencies. Despite this staff have continued to seek to work for CSIRO for reasons other than salary, particularly for job security and the scientific contribution that can be made to Australia.

The Government's bargaining policy, which is stifling the modest objective of CSIRO staff to retain current working conditions and rights in the Enterprise Agreement, has created uncertainty and despair about the future of work and careers in CSIRO. The Staff Association believes many more talented staff could voluntarily leave as a consequence and that CSIRO may also not attract the quality of staff required in coming years.

Diversity and inclusion

The Staff Association is concerned that CSIRO is not moving quickly enough to encapsulate diversity and implement inclusive practices. CSIRO has identified problems and investigated some solutions, but has not allocated sufficient resources and time. The Staff Association recommends that the Statement of Expectations recognises the need to improve diversity and inclusion in CSIRO and that the Government work to support programs in CSIRO which can fast track improvements.

Regional footprint

CSIRO, like the Bureau of Meteorology, is a national asset that should have a broad footprint, in particular to address problems and provide solutions to industries and communities in regional and remote Australia. The Staff Association recommends that the Statement of Expectations recognises the need to retain CSIRO's regional footprint.

The CSIRO Staff Association and CPSU welcome any opportunity to provide further information to support this submission. Please contact Sam Popovski via email on sam.popovski@cpsu.org.au.

Yours sincerely



Sam Popovski
Secretary
CSIRO Staff Association
CPSU - PSU Group