

CSIRO Staff Association

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A section of the Community and Public Sector Union



The Hon Karen Andrews MP
Minister for Industry, Science and Technology
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
By email

7 March 2019

Dear Minister,

CSIRO Staff Association Science Policy Priorities for Federal Election 2019

The CSIRO Staff Association represents the industrial and professional interests of staff working at CSIRO. Our Association has identified eleven science policy priorities for the upcoming Federal election (listed below). For the information of our members, we invite you to provide a written response to each of our priorities and list any other election commitments your party is making to CSIRO and its staff.

1. Steady growth funding for a decade

Cuts in Government funding in 2014 culminated in the loss of over 1 in 5 (or 1400) jobs in CSIRO. Currently CSIRO's staffing headcount is approximately 5800, 700 less than pre-2014 levels. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to commit to appropriation funding increases of at least 5% per annum (in addition to supplementation) for a decade, to restore CSIRO's capability, jobs and careers.

2. Government policy to guide, not direct, bargaining

CSIRO's last enterprise bargaining round was characterised by a regressive approach by Government, with attacks on working conditions and the independence of CSIRO's Board and Executive. CSIRO's salaries are now 10-20% behind Australian university salaries. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to recognise that under its *Act*, the Chief Executive of CSIRO is responsible for the terms of conditions of staff. A future Government and Minister should only guide and not direct CSIRO to apply the Government's bargaining policy.

3. No staffing cap in CSIRO

CSIRO has historically been guided by average staffing levels (ASL) set through Government budgetary processes. However, this year the Government is enforcing ASL as a hard staffing cap, meaning CSIRO cannot hire additional staff to perform work and fulfil contracts, even in instances where it has derived additional external revenue, including from government and industry. This is farcical and is undermining the achievement of CSIRO's strategy. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to commit to no staffing cap in CSIRO.

4. A staff-elected member of the CSIRO Board

CSIRO is an iconic Australian institution with its own *Act* and independent Board, and a mission to serve the Australian public and industry as a trusted advisor. However, unlike another iconic Australian institution, the ABC, the CSIRO Board does not have a staff-elected position. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to commit to creating a staff-elected position on the CSIRO Board to improve transparency and confidence in its functioning.

5. Increase in regional and rural capabilities

CSIRO's overall regional footprint is unique in Australia's innovation system. However, scientific and technological capabilities in regional and rural Australia have been cut and are constantly under threat, despite numerous achievements. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to develop and implement a plan to increase CSIRO's regional and rural capabilities and staffing levels, as a proportion of overall capabilities, within the next five years.

6. Enforcement of a science integrity charter in CSIRO

CSIRO has a current Charter developed and implemented by the previous Federal Labor Government. The Charter has been dormant and not enforced by the current Government or by CSIRO's Board or Executive. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to commit to enforcement of the Charter within CSIRO to improve science integrity and protections for all researchers and staff.

7. A new science integrity charter in the Federal public sector

The Australian public, now more so than ever, relies on agencies like CSIRO and BoM, to conduct research and provide information and advice without political or commercial interference. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to commit to develop and implement a science integrity charter to apply across the Federal public sector.

8. Requirement to address gender and cultural diversity

Women are underrepresented in CSIRO, particularly at senior levels, as are people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to include, as part of CSIRO's Statement of Expectations, the requirement to improve gender and CALD representation every year for the next five years.

9. Initiatives to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation

CSIRO has taken steps to improve the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in its cadetship and intern programs. Despite this, the pipeline from university graduates in science and technology is alarmingly low. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to develop initiatives, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to increase STEM participation and employment in CSIRO.

10. Reinforcing public good research relative to commercialisation

Under its *Act*, CSIRO assists Australian industry, but its broader purpose is to serve the Australian public, including by conducting public good research not undertaken by business. Most of the Government funding that CSIRO receives should be used for this research. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to include, as part of the Statement of Expectations, reinforcement of CSIRO's broader purpose, including the use of public funds, for the public good.

11. Additional R&D tax incentive for collaboration with CSIRO and public sector agencies

With its scientific breadth and geographic reach, CSIRO is best placed to assist industry around Australia to develop a range of scientific and technological solutions. The Staff Association calls on all political parties to commit to an additional 5% R&D tax incentive for business to collaborate with CSIRO or other Federal public sector agencies.

Please respond by COB Thursday 28 March as the Staff Association will be communicating your response with our members before the Federal Election, anticipated in May.

Yours sincerely,



Sam Popovski
Secretary