

24 April 2019

Mr Sam Popovski
Secretary
CSIRO Staff Association
csstaff@cpsu.org.au

Dear Mr Popovski,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Coalition on important issues facing your members. A response to your questions is attached.

This election will have real consequences for Australia's economy and our future.

Despite global headwinds, our economy is strong. This year, for the first time in more than a decade, the Government will deliver a Budget surplus.

A stronger economy means we can deliver on our plans to:

1. Create 1.25 million more jobs over the next five years.
2. Maintain budget surpluses and pay down debt.
3. Deliver tax relief to encourage and reward hard working Australians.
4. Guarantee increased investments for schools, hospitals and roads.
5. Keep Australians safe and our borders secure.

The alternative at this election is Mr Shorten. Labor's risky agenda includes \$387 billion of higher taxes – on retirees, housing, incomes, investments, family businesses, electricity and cars.

Thank you for communicating our response to your members.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Hirst
Federal Director

MORRISON GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CSIRO STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. Steady growth funding for a decade

The Morrison Government is committed to ensuring that the CSIRO continues to be a world-leading scientific institution that delivers solutions to the challenges facing Australia, including in areas like advanced manufacturing, space, robotics and supporting the agriculture sector.

The Coalition has invested \$97 million more in CSIRO than Labor did when they were in government. In the 2019-20 Budget, the total resourcing for CSIRO is increasing from \$1.66 billion to \$1.76 billion.

It was the Labor Party that left government with not a cent allocated to fund the operation and maintenance of the RV Investigator, which would have left it stranded at dock. We've funded it to deliver 300 days per year of merit-based access.

2. Government policy to guide, not direct, bargaining

It is not the case that public sector staff have considered the latest bargaining round as one in which it is difficult to reach agreement. Since agreements began to roll over for renegotiation under the Government's 2018 Bargaining Framework, a total of 43 agreements have received majority 'yes' votes from staff across 39 agencies and a further 23 agencies have gained pay rises under determinations. Together the 66 new employment arrangements compare to just one agency with an active protected industrial action and only four currently still bargaining.

The Fair Work Commission approved the CSIRO Enterprise Agreement (EA) on 7 August 2017 and the EA commenced operation on 14 August 2017.

Staff at GeoScience Australia are the most recent to support an Enterprise Agreement, recording 85.3 per cent approval on 27 March 2019, on the basis of 73.4 per cent participation. The overwhelming evidence at other agencies, including scientific agencies, is that the current framework is conducive to arriving at new terms that are agreeable to staff and agency leaders.

3. No staffing cap in CSIRO

Staffing levels for the CSIRO are the responsibility of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science on behalf of the portfolio. The Government sets a cap at the portfolio level for allocation across each agency within the portfolio to reflect the relative priorities for where staffing can be most effectively deployed. This does not reflect any change of policy concerning the requirement for each agency to adhere to its allocation of the cap.

The cap for the CSIRO in the coming 2019-20 year is slightly above the actual staff level that exists in the current year (namely the figure will go up from 5,190 to 5,193). The cap does not prevent agencies from engaging talent, rather it forces more reflective choices about where it makes sense to engage full-time permanent staff with ongoing cost overhangs, and where it makes sense to utilise short-term or outcome-based types of working.

4. A staff-elected member of the CSIRO Board

The CSIRO is a world class organisation that works with researchers, innovators and industry leaders to deliver outcomes of scientific excellence. As has long been the tradition, appointments to the CSIRO board are a decision for the government of the day. No compelling case has been made for the need for a change to expand the board to include staff or union representatives.

5. Increase in regional and rural capabilities

CSIRO's Board is the decision-making authority for CSIRO. Issues of focus, strategy and subsequent location decisions are matters made by the Board.

6. Enforcement of a science integrity charter in CSIRO

The Charter referred to dates back to October 2008. The Government notes it largely reflects the existing code of conduct and policies of CSIRO. It should be noted that the priorities, function, vision and directions for CSIRO were set out in the Statement of Expectations that was signed by the then Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science in November 2016.

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

The Morrison Government is open to considering a more detailed proposal from the CSIRO Staff Association on what they envisage might constitute a science integrity charter for the public service.

There is also an opportunity for the Association to raise the proposal in the context of the Review of the Public Service being led by David Thodey (<https://www.apsreview.gov.au/>).

Input can still be provided via the online conversation forums being run by the Review at <https://contribute.apsreview.gov.au/page/have-your-say> or via email (see <https://contribute.apsreview.gov.au/page/your-ideas>).

8. Requirement to address gender and cultural diversity

The Morrison Government is committed to gender equality in STEM – as evidenced by our over \$20 million investment in this space. This includes support for the establishment of the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) program to advance workplace gender equity and inclusiveness in science and technology organisations. CSIRO has been successful in its application for a Bronze Award through SAGE and we commend them on that achievement.

The Government notes that CSIRO's Board is the decision making authority for CSIRO; strategy decisions, including diversity matters, are therefore made by the Board.

9. Initiatives to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation

The Coalition Government's Indigenous education and employment programs have already had a remarkable impact with Census data showing that the number of Indigenous Australians with a job has increased by 23.3 per cent in five years.

The Government is partnering with organisations like CareerTrackers to support more Indigenous students complete university, move into employment and support their full potential – many in STEM fields. For example, the Government invested \$13.46 million into CareerTrackers' successful program.

In recognition of the importance of encouraging more women and girls into the STEM fields, the Coalition has already announced a new \$20 million Indigenous Girls' STEM Academy to be delivered by the CSIRO. This ten-year commitment will support Indigenous girls and women into STEM degrees through ongoing individualised student support, mentoring, summer school programs and work placements within the industry. The Indigenous Girls' STEM Academy commences in 2019 with an intensive STEM residential program, with an intake of 100 Year 8 girls per year and will offer an extension to the standard STEM curriculum.

10. Reinforcing public good research relative to commercialisation

The *Science and Industry Research Act 1949* clearly outlines the purpose of the organisation. There is no need to reinforce this in a Statement of Expectations given it is entrenched in law.

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

The Morrison Government supports greater collaboration between CSIRO and Australian industry to develop scientific and technological solutions, including through our \$200 million CSIRO Innovation Fund, but does not give priority to any one entity or agency over others through the R&D Tax Incentive.

The Morrison Government is committed to a range of other support measures to encourage greater levels of industry-research collaboration, including:

- more than \$700 million over the forward estimates to industry-research collaboration through the Cooperative Research Centres Program;
- new streamlined arrangements for research block grants announced in 2015 to provide stronger incentives for research-business collaboration, to encourage universities to increase engagement with industry and other end-users of research; and
- supporting initiatives that encourage businesses to invest in R&D through a number of measures, including the ARC Linkage grants, the Innovation Connections element of the Entrepreneur's Programme, incentives to work with the CSIRO, and a Global Innovation Strategy.