



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.
PO Box 90 Nedlands WA 6009
www.afgw.org.au

29 July 2014

The Hon Tony Abbott
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Abbott,

In January I wrote to you on behalf of the Council and members of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women to ask you to advocate for increases in science funding as the National Commission of Audits began its deliberations. We expressed our support for the views of Professor Les Field of the Australian Academy of Science that Australia is not investing nearly enough in science. We are deeply disappointed that rather than increase funding for research that is in the national interest your government has chosen to cut funding to CSIRO, not once, but twice within the last six months.

The most recent round of cuts will lead to the loss of thirty highly skilled personnel, disruption of its world-leading research involving the Square Kilometre Array and suspension of the Bolton Fellowship in astronomy. These cuts follow cuts in May to a range of research areas including colo-rectal disease, neuroscience and irrigation. We are particularly disturbed by cuts to research projects aimed at ensuring Australia's food security and preserving our international trade in commodities including cotton, wine, sugar, grains and fish.

AFGW is the national voice of graduate women. Since 1922 we have worked for the advancement of women and girls through education. Many of our members have successful careers in scientific fields, in particular agricultural science. Our late member Professor Nancy Millis was a Fellow of the Academy and her work is so highly regarded that they have initiated a new award for women scholars in her honour.

We note also comments by Noble laureate Professor Peter Doherty to the effect that cutting funding for science, technology innovation and education is damaging to our economic future. Sir Gustav Nossal, former Victorian chief scientist concurred, arguing that Australia needs to develop new industries that will contribute to our prosperity as the mining boom wanes. We are concerned that the lack of employment opportunities caused by these cuts will result in promising science graduates emigrating to countries with a more positive research environment – our members have already identified several outstanding researchers who have received AFGW scholarships in the past who are applying for positions in the US or Europe.

In view of the grave consequences of these cuts, we ask that you move to restore funding to the CSIRO immediately and move to increase funding to a level that is comparable to other OECD nations.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Madeleine M. Laming
President

Registered address:
10/27 Collingwood Street, Drummoyne, NSW. 2047

ABN 93 656 106 863
ARBN 135 684 990



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