



ACT Climate Change Council

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

The ACT Climate Change Council has the legislated responsibility to advise the government of the Australian Capital Territory on matters pertaining to climate change, its mitigation, and responses to adapt to it. As such, we rely on a variety of externally recognized expert sources. Of these, none has been more influential than the annual climate projections reports produced by the CSIRO in conjunction with the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM). In order to understand the efficacy of mitigation efforts and the necessary characteristics of highly-local adaptation measures, we must have Australian climate science reporting on Australian climes.

That is why we unanimously agreed at our meeting last week (12/02/16) of the ACT Climate Change Council to write to you expressing our deep concern over the recently announced cuts to climate science within CSIRO. In the immediate aftermath of the groundbreaking COP 21 agreement in Paris, this decision is regarded worldwide as a retrograde step in relation to action on climate change by Australia.

The members of the ACT Climate Change Council are Professor Barbara Norman (Chair), Professor Penny Sackett (Deputy Chair), Professor Will Steffen, Associate Professor Frank Jotzo, Mr Toby Roxburgh and Ms Dorte Ekelund. Further details on the expertise of the Council can be found on the following http://www.environment.act.gov.au/cc/climate_change_council.

Below are just three key points we would like to raise with you directly.

1. An ongoing, enhanced global scientific effort is required to inform governments on approaches to both mitigation and adaptation. With the bulk of the climate research capacity in the northern hemisphere, Australia is critically important as it contributes the largest climate science capacity in the southern hemisphere. The cuts to CSIRO will rip the heart out of that capacity. The deleterious impact of the cuts to CSIRO climate science will go far beyond our borders; it will significantly damage the international climate science capacity. Australia has a long and proud history of contributing our fair share to solving global problems. Just as we are expected to do our fair share in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we should also contribute our fair share to the international climate research effort that underpins climate action in all countries, including Australia.

2. Whilst substantial work on Australian climate science is done within the BoM and our nation's universities, long-term climate work and modeling naturally belong in the CSIRO. Universities not are resourced in either quantity or in the long-term, block-funded manner that is required to collect, maintain, improve, analyse and disseminate scientific information relying on data streams and complex computer modeling decades in the making. The expertise is housed at CSIRO for very good reason, and it is expertise that will largely be lost to Australia should the proposed deep cuts to CSIRO climate science be enforced. Lost will not only be those researchers who have invested the necessary years and decades of their lives to build world-recognised expertise, but also scores of younger scientists who will read their dismissals as handwriting on the wall of a nation that does not value their work. A great many will go overseas to pursue non-Australian climate science.

3. The media has also reported that funding for CSIRO's sustainable cities research (which was only recently established) would be "slashed." United Nations Secretary Ban Ki-moon stressed, at both the UN Sustainable Development Goals meeting (New York, September 2015) and again at the Paris COP 21, that cities will be a pivotal component of the solution to climate change. If anything, funding and research capacity should be increased in this important field of research, both to spur evidence-based mitigation and to prepare our growing cities for the impacts of climate change.

The ACT Climate Change Council is just one of hundreds of public stakeholder groups, public "customers," if you will, of the climate science division at the CSIRO. Others include individual farmers and fishers, emergency services providers, national resource management entities, other Australian sub-national jurisdictions, international science bodies, and our national defence forces. These groups rely on the work of the CSIRO for planning their future activities, services and investments in a changing, and ever-warming climate.

We ask that you give these points serious consideration in discussions with your Ministers, our primary national science organisation, and the whole of our innovation systems. Should you desire a more detailed description of the importance of CSIRO-based climate science on the work of our Council, we would be happy to provide a briefing to your office.

Yours sincerely



Professor Barbara Norman
Chair ACT Climate Change Council
Canberra

Cc: Mr David Thodey, Chairman CSIRO Board.