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1 March 2016

Professor Barbara Norman
Chair, ACT Climate Change Council
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Professor Norman,

Thank you for your letter received 19 February 2016 in relation to CSIRO's climate science research. I am responding on behalf of the Board of CSIRO, who in 2015 approved CSIRO's Strategy 2020. It is important to put CSIRO's recent announcement in relation to climate research into the broader context in which CSIRO has made the strategic decisions. CSIRO is tasked with delivering science across many fields, and serving numerous stakeholders. Importantly, CSIRO has a central role to play in the translation of science and technology into products and services that benefit Australia and enhance national productivity. It is for these reasons and against the background that the Australian economy is in transition, that in its 2020 strategy CSIRO has decided to put greater emphasis on delivering technology-enabled innovation that will re-invigorate existing industries and create new ones. With finite resources, growth in some areas necessitates reductions in other areas.

You write to express your Council's concerns in relation to CSIRO's decisions in relation to climate science. Firstly, I want to reassure you that we do recognise the national and international importance of the research that CSIRO, with its Australian and international collaborators, conduct in this field. I want to describe what has been decided in relation to CSIRO's forward program. Over the next two years, CSIRO's staff reduction across its two organisational units of Oceans & Atmosphere and Land & Water will be 115 persons. In Oceans & Atmosphere research, the adjustment will be largely in our Oceans and Climate Dynamics and Earth Systems Assessment programs. Even after the changes are implemented, CSIRO will employ well over 600 scientists working on ocean, atmosphere, land and water issues.

In your letter you express the concern that there continue to be strong climate science research capability in the southern hemisphere and that Australia contribute our "fair share" to the international climate research effort. CSIRO is very aware of the contribution both Australia and CSIRO have been making in this regard, for example reflected in scientific publication output. Australian research in the science fields of Environment/Ecology, Oceanography and Geosciences represents more than 5% of global output in these fields – reflecting a relative specialisation of Australian research of 1.5-fold or more as compared to the world average, for these fields. CSIRO's scientific output in the relevant science fields, involving extensive collaboration with both national and international research teams, represents approximately 17% of Australian scientific article output in these fields.

While this reduction has been a very difficult decision and will be regrettably painful for those directly affected, we believe CSIRO will continue to play a significant role in environmental science and taken overall, CSIRO is confident that Australia will continue to have a strong capability in climate science.

I understand and share your concerns for CSIRO's people who are impacted by these changes. These changes are never easy and we will actively work with each person impacted to look at options. As with your members, our scientists are passionate about understanding this global problem. We will be going through detailed consultation with our people working in the impacted areas to make sure we achieve the best possible outcome for them as individuals and the wider scientific community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Thodey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Thodey
CSIRO Chairman