



1 October 2013

BUILDING A SMART, PRODUCTIVE FUTURE

Science, research and innovation needs steady and purposeful support

The nation's top scientists and researchers have issued a call to policy makers for a strategic and stable plan for science and research that will stop us falling behind in our region and in the world.

In July this year, Australia's research and science community formed the Research Alliance, a broad-based grouping of scientific, research, university and public and private sector researchers, who came together to call for a strategic national research policy to build a stronger, smarter Australia.

Since then, the Research Alliance has grown to more than a dozen groups which include the peak bodies in science, higher education, social sciences and humanities, as well as our most eminent scholars from all four learned academies, and our most recent Nobel Laureate.

Following the federal election, the Alliance met formally for the second time and has resolved to continue advocating for research and science as the engine room of national prosperity.

Australia currently invests around 2.2 per cent of our GDP in research, putting us near the middle of the OECD table. But the stop/start nature of funding in the recent past means we are sliding backwards and will continue to do so unless action is taken. Australia should rightly aspire to be in the top half of the OECD table, and has more than enough research talent to justify such an investment.

Whatever the Government commits to research, the investment must be undertaken in a strategic, consistent way with a long-term vision for Australia. The Business Council of

Australia has also called for a research and innovation strategy – a three way partnership between government, business and the nation’s researchers for a more productive and innovative nation.

The short-term focus of past investment has left critical projects jeopardised, and very costly research infrastructure underutilised. The nation’s top researchers and innovative industries must be able to plan and get on with the job of tackling our biggest challenges and grasping the greatest opportunities.

The Research Alliance is interested in the big picture for Australia, and the central role science and all other forms of research can play in a flourishing future.

The Alliance is committed to a set of fundamental principles (appended below) that will secure a smarter, more productive and resilient future for Australia.

Media comment:

STA CEO Catriona Jackson, 0417 142 238

Australian Academy of Science Cameron Williams, 02 6201 9452 or 0401 814 767

Research Alliance Fundamental Principles

1) Investing strategically and sustainably

Governments must support planned, stable and appropriate investment in research over the long term, which is essential if we are to tackle large, complex problems and embrace opportunities facing Australia.

2) Building our research workforce – getting and keeping the best

To ensure we attract and retain the best researchers we must offer appropriate conditions. Career uncertainty means that many leave research or leave Australia to seek a stable future.

3) Building a productive system and getting the most out of it

Governments must set a stable and sustainable funding framework for infrastructure (buildings, equipment and the technical experts to keep them operating) especially for national facilities.

4) Being among and working with the world's best

Global collaboration is more necessary than ever with the rise of international research, commerce, communication and other systems that transform our lives and opportunities. Our best researchers must work with the best globally.

5) Bringing industry and academia together

When industry and researchers work together effectively we innovate and multiply our strengths. We must ensure there are clear and reliable policy incentives that facilitate deep and sustained collaboration between industry, public sector, university and research institutes. We must harness national talent to create knowledge, opportunity and new jobs.

6) Expanding industry research

Governments need to create an environment which encourages industry to invest more in research and which makes Australia an attractive place for international companies to undertake research. Innovation underpinned by research and development improves industrial productivity and is critical to ensuring strong growth.

7) Investing in our best research and our best researchers

Government has a clear role in setting priorities for research, and in supporting research which underpins discovery. The independent expert assessment process should be used to identify excellence and to coordinate the best researchers, research programs and groups.