



The Royal Society of Victoria

Founded 1854

Promoting science and science education

*Patron*

The Hon Alex Chernov AC QC, Governor of Victoria

*President*

Dr William D Birch AM BSc (Hons) PhD

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### Royal Society of Victoria statement on national Science Policy

**The Royal Society of Victoria urges the Federal Government to reinstate funding for science and technology and to develop a clear strategy for the future. A dedicated Ministry for Science and Technology would provide a focus and voice for such an approach.**

The RSV has been supporting science and technology since 1854 and continues to strive to inform the community on the critical importance of research across all disciplines. The Society strongly concurs with the views of the Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, in his address on the state of Australian science (*There are no free rides to the future*; The Conversation, August 13, 2014).

Professor Chubb observed that *“at the core of almost every agenda is science..... It is the almost universal preoccupation now shaping the world’s plans. It is a preoccupation that crosses all boundaries of language, culture and geography.*

*“We too need to recognise that it is the knowledge that science will offer, and the sensible application of that knowledge to agreed goals, that will build a stronger Australia.*

*“Bluntly, we are middle-of-the-road. Not better – not punching above our weight as we so often declare in a fit of misguided and unhelpful enthusiasm. Australia is now the only OECD country that does not have a contemporary national science and technology, or innovation strategy.”*

Professor Chubb outlined the need for bold initiatives based on four objectives: competitiveness; education and training; research; and international engagement.

Along with Professor Chubb, RSV Fellow Professor Suzanne Cory, retiring President of the Australian Academy of Science, and her successor, Professor Andrew Holmes, have both recently pointed to the absence of vision in our national science and innovation policy, and how that threatens the country’s future and prosperity (The Age, April 17 and May 31, 2014).

In an example of reduced expenditure of research and its repercussions here in Victoria, the recently announced Federal Government cuts to CSIRO’s budget have had an immediate and tangible effect with the loss of research positions at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong. Having such a world-leading laboratory forced to cut staff runs a significant risk of leaving Australia exposed to new infectious diseases, such as the current Ebola virus in West Africa (The Age, 15 August 2014). It also sends the wrong message to the international scientific community and threatens collaboration.

The RSV urges the Federal Government to reinstate funding for science and technology and to develop a clear strategy for the future. A dedicated Ministry for Science and Technology would provide a focus and means for engagement between government, researchers, business and industry.

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