CSIRO job cuts cannot proceed

“The news of the establishment of a climate research centre based in Hobart does little to allay the fears about the future of long term public good research in CSIRO,” says Dr Peter Craig, a former CSIRO Director of collaboration for Australian weather and climate research and Friends of CSIRO spokesperson.

“With 275 jobs still being lost, including 75 in the Oceans and Atmosphere Division, and around 100 in the Land and Water and Agriculture areas, it appears neither CSIRO nor the government has thought through the social and economic consequences of loss of this research,” he continued.

“The announcement by CEO Larry Marshall on 4 February represented a significant adjustment of the balance in CSIRO between long-term public-good research and shorter-term commercially-oriented research. The announcement of the climate centre does not change this. There is a fundamental question here about what the government and public should expect from its premier, publicly-funded research institution”, said Dr Craig.

Friends of CSIRO was formed around mid-March to oppose the job and funding cuts which CSIRO has been subject to in recent years. It has members in Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane, Sydney and Hobart and intends to campaign in the coming election particularly in marginal electorates.

Dr Ross Gwyther, a former CSIRO scientist and a founder of Friends of CSIRO in Brisbane, said, “Successive Australian Governments have made deep cuts in the CSIRO budget over the past few years. Now since Dr Larry Marshall has taken over the reins, the talk is of ‘customer’ focus and work with the fossil fuel industry, rather than public good research. This is not what the Australian public want to hear from CSIRO”.

“Friends of CSIRO will be meeting in Canberra and Melbourne next week to plan the next actions in the campaign against these cuts”, said Dr Gwyther. “And meetings will follow in Brisbane and other cities”. 
“The Prime Minister needs to direct CSIRO to stop these cuts and to reinstate the $111m taken from CSIRO in the 2014 budget. CSIRO has lost around 1300 jobs since then which is 1300 too many and it can’t afford to lose more”, he said.

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