31 August 2016

CUTS TO ARENA MEANS MORE CUTS TO CSIRO – Let’s Rebuild
CSIRO not kill it!

“The possible cut of $1.3b to the Australian Renewable Energy
Agency (ARENA) could be a fatal blow to CSIRO,” said Kathryn Kelly,
National Coordinator for Friends of CSIRO.

“If these cuts were to go ahead, CSIRO would lose $75m that it gets
from ARENA for renewable energy research, including losing
projects such as the National Solar Energy Research Centre at
Newcastle, the development of CSIRO heliostats, the world-first
production of Supercritical Steam from solar energy, the
development of world-class solar panel testing facilities and a test
bed for integration of renewables and energy storage into the grid.
Losing this funding would mean losing around 40 jobs at the
Newcastle CSIRO offices,” she said. “But many more jobs would also
be impacted,” she continued.

“The CSIRO funding also goes to 140 other researchers through the
Australian Solar Thermal Research Research Initiative working on projects
such as reducing the cost of solar thermal energy and research into
solar energy,” said Ms Kelly.

“If Labor goes along with these cuts, it will be agreeing to the
decimation of Australia’s renewable energy research capacity.
Moving ARENA to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation would mean
that only loans would be available and what these research projects
need for their long-term research is grants. This is a critical point and the Omnibus Bill should be rejected. There are other more sensible and equitable options for fixing the budget,” she said.

“CSIRO has just suffered a horrendous couple of years, culminating in the job cuts this year of around 275 staff. While Minister Hunt said on Q&A that he was allocating an “additional” $37m over 10 years to CSIRO, Friends of CSIRO has been informed that this is not actually “additional” money, but is money that has to be found for climate science within the CSIRO budget,” said Dr Ross Gwyther, Qld Coordinator for Friends of CSIRO. “Minister Hunt has misled the Australian public,” he said.

“After losing around 1500 jobs since the 2014 budget, how much lower can CSIRO go? Its reputation has been severely damaged and staff morale in most areas is at an all time low. It’s time to Rebuild CSIRO, not give it another life-threatening blow through cutting ARENA,” said Dr Gwyther.

Contacts:  Dr Ross Gwyther   0408 782 983
Kathryn Kelly   0417 29 984