



**Professional  
Scientists  
Australia**

# PROPERLY FUNDING SCIENCE AND R&D – IT'S IN OUR NATIONAL INTEREST

- Investment in science and R&D must be increased for us to remain globally and regionally competitive.
- Public support of science and engineering research is an investment that generates economic growth and encourages concurrent business investment.
- Under-investment in public science and R&D leads to national brain drain and compromises our potential for STEM-related productivity growth.
- In advanced economies, advanced science directly underpins between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of economic activity.
- When flow-on effects are considered, the impact of STEM fields amounts to over 26 per cent of Australian economic activity or about \$330 billion per year.

## WHY INVEST IN SCIENCE AND R&D?

### Investing in science and R&D is critical because:

- Investing in the science and research workforce is about investing in national productivity. Governments are in a unique position to create a policy environment which encourages industry to invest more in research and makes Australia a go-to destination for international companies to undertake research.
- A sustainable and vibrant STEM workforce is essential to almost every aim we have as a nation.
- The social benefits generated by Australia's public funding support of science are significant and investment in science and R&D over time outweighs the cost.
- Long-term strategically-based investment by both government and business is essential if we are to compete globally and in our region. This includes a balance of investment and research in non-mining business activities as well as in natural resources.

- There is a shift to knowledge-based jobs with the decline of the manufacturing and mining sectors and a knowledge-based economy is largely built on the STEM skills of its workforce. The Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) found that 75 per cent of the fastest-growing occupations require well-developed STEM skills and knowledge.
- Investment in science infrastructure that supports research across a range of areas yields benefits beyond their actual cost.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Even where funding is maintained, the impact of inflation means diminishing actual spend on science and R&D. With other nations increasing their actual spend, it becomes essential that we increase our public investment in science just to maintain our position and ensure we remain globally and regionally competitive.

Governments have a responsibility to act in the interests of the wider public in terms of public safety and public health and government budgeting needs to operate from a cost base which protects this position.

## WHAT IS THE CURRENT FUNDING SITUATION?

Australia currently invests 1.88% of GDP in R&D, well below the OECD average of 2.38% with business investment at its lowest levels since records have been maintained. Australia should rightly aspire to being in the top half of the OECD table and increasing funding to 2.5% would achieve that. Professional Scientists Australia calls on the federal Government to work toward increasing investment to 2.5% by 2025.

**THE FUTURE STARTS  
WITH SCIENCE**

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