



Ecosystem Science Council

WEB: www.ecosystemscienceplan.org.au

9 June 2018

Committee Secretariat
Inquiry into Funding Australia's Research
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA, ACT 2600
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Dear Committee Secretariat,

The Ecosystem Science Council would like to make a brief submission to the Inquiry, focusing on the need for sustainable funding for long-term ecological research.

The Council arose from the ecosystem science community's strategic planning process across 2013-2014, which resulted in *Foundations for the future: a long-term plan for Australian ecosystem science* (attached; see also www.ecosystemscienceplan.org.au). This strategic plan was formed from extensive national consultation across the research, industry and government sectors that clearly showed the extent to which industry, agriculture, tourism and resource extraction depend on functioning natural and managed ecosystems.

Australian governments have repeatedly recognised ecosystems and their sustainability as high research priorities. Australia has a proud history in ecosystem science, and we punch well above our weight for scientific impact; for example, eight Australian universities are rated 'well above world standard' in ecology and environmental science. However, unlike many other developed countries we lack a national system of long-term research to guide wise decision making. Long-term ecological research is needed because many fundamental ecosystem processes operate over decadal timescales. This is especially the case for our land of droughts, fire and floods, where extreme events are a dominant factor in ecosystem dynamics. The Council has produced a brochure outlining the importance of long-term research, which is also attached.

The Council has identified sustainable funding for long-term ecological research as a priority issue to be addressed. This is especially the case following the withdrawal of funding for long-term research from the TERN (Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network) NCRIS facility. The Council understands that the Australian Research Council's charter does not allow it to provide sustained, long-term funding for ecological research. One option for consideration by the Inquiry is an amendment to the ARC's Act to add a new funding stream dedicated to supporting long-term ecological research.

The Council would be pleased to provide any further information to the Inquiry if requested.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Glenda Wardle
Chair, Ecosystem Science Council