

Dear [Recipient / Committee Secretariat],

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to the Terms of Reference concerning funding and resourcing of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

CSIRO undertakes work of fundamental importance to Australia's long-term environmental, economic and social resilience. As the driest inhabited continent, Australia is uniquely exposed to climate variability and change. The work undertaken by CSIRO Environment to understand how climate change may impact our land, water, air, oceans, flora and fauna provides essential, publicly accessible knowledge that underpins how Australia mitigates climate change risks and manages its natural resources in the face of increasing uncertainty and system dynamics.

Public funding for CSIRO enables the delivery of public-good science that would not otherwise be supported through commercial or industry-driven models. Many areas of fundamental and applied environmental research — including climate system science, biodiversity monitoring, ecosystem services, oceanography and long-term environmental datasets — do not readily attract private investment, yet are critical to informed policy, regulation and land and water management decisions.

In this context, proposed job and program cuts raise concerns about Australia's sovereign scientific capability and the long-term erosion of institutional knowledge, data continuity and technical expertise. The impacts are particularly acute for the Environment Research Unit, where long-term monitoring programs, interdisciplinary capability and trusted advisory roles are difficult to rebuild once lost.

Sustained resourcing is also central to recruitment and retention across all career stages. Mid-career and senior researchers play a critical mentoring and leadership role, while early-career researchers rely on stable pathways to develop skills, independence and continuity. Ongoing uncertainty undermines workforce morale, capability development and Australia's ability to attract and retain high-calibre scientific talent.

While commercialisation of research has an important role, it should complement rather than displace CSIRO's core public-good mission. An over-reliance on short-term, externally funded or commercially oriented projects risks narrowing research scope and reducing capacity to respond to emergent and priority issues, including climate change impacts, agricultural adaptation, biodiversity loss and ocean health.

Finally, the independence of CSIRO's leadership in resourcing decisions must be balanced with clear government commitment to long-term capability, infrastructure and workforce investment. Stable, predictable funding is essential to maintain Australia's scientific readiness, credibility and ability to respond to future environmental challenges.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely,  
Petina Pert