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Finkel Report points to urgent need to increase scientific research capacity

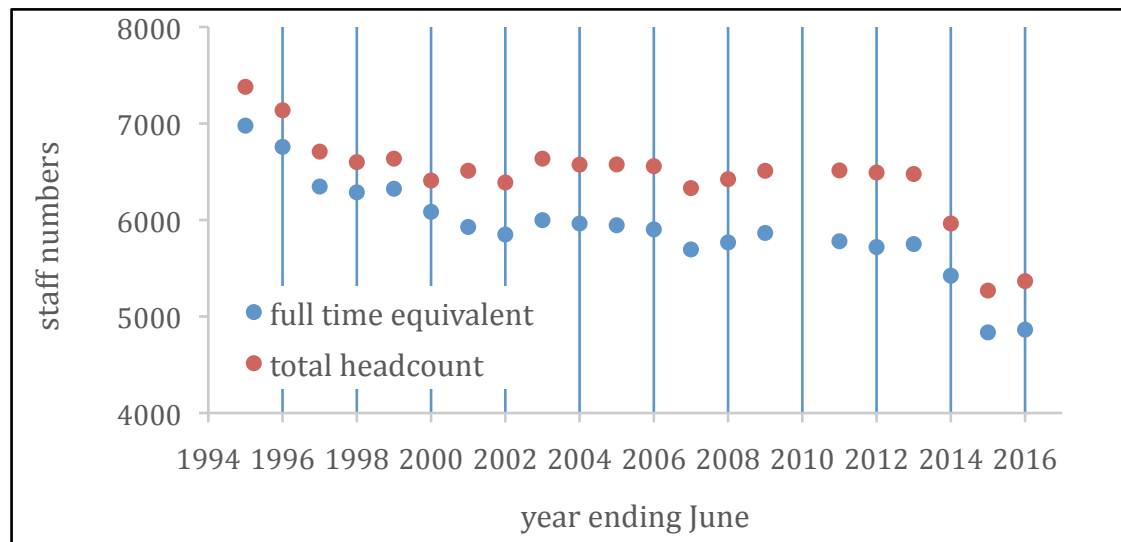
“The Finkel Report’s release is long awaited and recommends that the transition to a low carbon country be better managed to ensure security and reliability of provision of electricity for Australia.

“The Government must respond to the Report by directing increased resources to Australia’s research capacity,” said Dr Ross Gwyther, Qld Convenor for Friends of CSIRO.

“But one thing that is fundamental to almost all of Finkel’s recommendations is quality scientific research. Such areas as energy efficiency, managing extreme weather impacts on the grid, managing distributed power generation, managing frequency control, improving storage options, ensuring cybersecurity and the economics of climate change management options all need more comprehensive understanding and more innovative solutions.

“Only the best research can provide that knowledge and the right answers, but Australia’s ability to maintain its prominent role in science is being consistently eroded.

“CSIRO has been at the forefront of energy-related research in the past. **But the situation at the CSIRO is dire.** The graph below of CSIRO job cuts shows the continuing decline CSIRO has suffered over decades:



“Other important areas of research also require increased attention - health, air and water quality, biosecurity, pest management, species recovery, mine site rehabilitation - to name a few,” said Dr Maxine McCall, a former CSIRO researcher in nanotechnology.

“This graph should be a sobering sight for students wanting to become scientists working in this country. Successive job losses at CSIRO have seen some of Australia’s brightest and most talented scientists forced to seek opportunities overseas, or in jobs unrelated to their scientific training.

“The announcement by former Minister Hunt, that CSIRO would ‘receive’ \$37m over ten years for climate science to be found from its **existing**, already slashed budget, was no comfort to the decimated organisation.

“Most significantly and perhaps astonishingly, science per se did not feature in the Government’s 2017-18 budget, nor in its explanatory facts sheets.

“With the exception of astronomy which is seeing an increase in funding, other CSIRO areas will receive decreases in indexation, lowering funds available and requiring ongoing cuts.

“This is an appalling situation considering the many challenges that Australia faces. CSIRO has a track record of delivering on national challenges, and its long-term decline must be reversed immediately. Science should be at the forefront of increases in spending,” concluded Dr McCall.

ATTACHMENT: CSIRO staff numbers spreadsheet.

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