Science for Australia's Future

Julia Gillard and Labor
Let's move Australia forward

SCIENCE FOR AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

A Gillard Labor Government will keep Australia on the high road to prosperity by continuing to invest in science engagement and scientific research.

Our aim is to increase awareness of science in the Australian community, build skills in science and technology, and support the efforts of Australia's outstanding scientists to produce solutions for this country and the world. The pursuit of knowledge in all its forms – including in the social sciences and humanities – is the key to ensuring that Australia remains a high-tech, high-value producer paying good wages and offering a good standard of living. It will give us the savvy, creative and adaptable workforce we need to compete in a global economy increasingly demanding new technologies and ideas.

Science is important not just to our material wellbeing, but to every aspect of our lives – to our environment, to our health, to our understanding of ourselves and our place in the universe. Science will enable us to go on enjoying all the benefits of human ingenuity and modern industry, while conserving our resources and protecting our fragile planet. It is absolutely critical to Australia's future.

1. A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

No nation can build an internationally significant science capability overnight. It takes long-term commitment and long-term investment. Federal Labor has increased Commonwealth funding for research and innovation by 34 per cent since 2007, reversing more than a decade of neglect. We have focused on the future in initiatives like *Powering Ideas*, our ten-year innovation strategy, and the Education Investment Fund and the Super Science Initiative, which are building scientific infrastructure that will go on delivering returns to the Australian people for years to come.

Federal Labor will continue to take a strategic approach to science, for example by planning for Australia's future research infrastructure needs; by promoting networks and collaborations to make the most of valuable assets and concentrations of expertise; by preparing a Research Workforce Strategy to ensure we have the skills we need; and by providing secure, quadrennial funding to the CSIRO.

2. INSPIRING AUSTRALIA: A NEW STRATEGY FOR SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT

In keeping with this commitment, Labor will invest $21 million in Inspiring Australia, the country's first ever national strategy for science engagement. Australia's future prosperity and wellbeing depend on our ability to create and apply science. This isn't just a challenge for scientists; it is a challenge for the nation. We need workers who can handle advanced technologies, citizens who can make informed decisions about scientific questions, and communities that can use the products of science to increase opportunities and improve their quality of life. We need to encourage young Australians to study science and pursue science-related careers.

In order to achieve these goals, we need to get Australians more engaged in science, increase awareness, and deepen understanding – in line with the recommendations of *Inspiring Australia: A National Strategy for Engagement with the Science*s (2010). That is what Inspiring Australia will achieve. It will coordinate Australia's fragmented science communication activities and maximise their impact by harnessing business and community support. Inspiring Australia will complement the Education Revolution and *Powering Ideas*, Labor's innovation agenda for the twenty-first century. It will have four elements.

Recognising achievement. Labor will continue to run the Prime Minister's Prizes for Science, which play a vital role in raising the profile of science and alerting the community to the achievements of individual scientists and science teachers. Labor will also contribute to the Australian Museum's Eureka Prizes.

National Science Week. Labor will continue to support National Science Week, Australia's premier vehicle for bringing science and research to the people, right across the country. It is an annual, nationwide celebration of Australian achievements and capabilities in science. It aims to identify, engage, inspire and ultimately enlist and mobilise the best Australian talent in science and research. It provides hundreds of opportunities each year to get the community involved in science and to promote scientific careers among young people.

Unlocking Australia's full potential. Labor will support science events and activities in Australia's cities, regional and remote areas all year round. There will be specific programs for young people, outer-metropolitan and regional areas, and indigenous and remote communities, as well as programs integrating science into popular community events such as writers' weeks and music festivals. Activities will involve educators, industry, and physical and social scientists, and will build long-term partnerships and networks. Labor will also renew support for programs delivered through the Higher Education Research Promotion program.

Connecting with mainstream and new media. Labor will promote science through public, commercial and online media outlets, which are ideally placed to communicate Australian science issues and achievements to the public. Labor will provide targeted, on-the-job media training to improve the ability of scientists and researchers to work with the media. We will also support cadetships for future science communicators. This will boost science literacy in the media and the ability of journalists to make science meaningful to the widest possible audience.

3. ENGAGING THE WORLD

Labor will continue to strengthen Australia's links with the best international researchers and institutions. Australia produces an impressive 3 per cent of the world's knowledge, but that still means 97 per cent is produced elsewhere. This is why international collaboration is so important. Labor will forge closer partnerships with leading players such as China, Europe,

India, Japan and the United States; and with countries that have complementary capabilities such as Brazil, Canada, Chile, Indonesia, Israel, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, and South Korea. We will pursue multilateral collaboration through the OECD, mega-science projects, and other avenues. Labor will also work to improve Australia's access to major international research facilities, enabling our scientists to undertake research that requires infrastructure not available in this country.

4. AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE WITHOUT LIMITS: THE SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY

Australia and New Zealand have been short-listed to host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) – the world's most powerful radio-telescope, and one of the most ambitious science projects ever undertaken. The other candidate is southern Africa. The SKA is expected to generate $13 billion worth of economic opportunities over its fifty-year life – in supercomputing, fibre-optics, education, non-grid and renewable energy, construction, manufacturing, and more.

Australia and New Zealand are working with the international community to achieve the best possible SKA. We want to create an instrument that delivers maximum benefit to the global community by supporting maximum discovery. The site for the SKA will be chosen in 2012, and Labor will continue to work with the international community on the site-selection process.

FUNDING

Funding for Inspiring Australia will be fully offset over the forward estimates, consistent with the Government's commitment to return the budget to surplus in three years. Funding for other commitments is already included in the budget.

In addition to the announcement on 24 July 2010, there will be modest reductions in Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research programs totalling $21 million. This will include Enterprise Connect ($6 million), the Cooperative Research Centres Program ($7.5 million) and the Collaborative Research Networks Scheme ($7.5 million).

THE COALITION RECORD

- The Coalition do not have a policy for science and research.
- Under the last Coalition Government, Commonwealth spending on science and innovation fell by a quarter as a share of GDP.
- The Coalition have promised to cut funding for clean energy science by slashing the Carbon Capture and Storage Flagships Program and abolishing the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute.
- The Coalition have also promised to cut support for three of Labor's most successful initiatives aimed at promoting innovation (including scientific innovation) in response to climate change – the Green Car Innovation Fund, Retooling for Climate Change, and the Green Building Fund.
- Tony Abbott and the Coalition have stalled the R&D Tax Credit legislation in the Senate, deliberately denying Australian business a significant increase in support for R&D investment.
- Tony Abbott refuses to accept the reality of climate change and climate science.

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