

The New Zealand Association of Scientists (Inc.)
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New Zealand
1 July 2015



CRI redundancies tied to changes in government funding priorities

The New Zealand Association of Scientists (NZAS) is seriously concerned by news of upcoming redundancies at Landcare Research, a Crown Research Institute that specialises in the science of our land, soil, and biodiversity. The news, which broke this Monday on Radio NZ, suggests that 11 scientists are being lost from areas in which 'demand for research' is falling, and that new positions will be created in areas of priority set by the National Science Challenges.

"This is a sad illustration of the way in which government funding strategies can have major consequences for our national scientific capability" said NZAS President, Dr Nicola Gaston.

"When the National Science Challenges were announced, the NZAS was worried that they would become a default national science strategy," said Dr Gaston. "Two years on, our fears appear to have been realised, with the Challenges and further uncertainties arising from the CRI Core Funding Review now putting scientists' jobs at risk."

The NZAS has further concerns about the impact of declining government funds available to support public good environmental research projects, with contestable funds for this purpose now less than half of what they were five years ago.

Ongoing shifts towards ever more commercially focused research has serious implications for the balance of science that is carried out in New Zealand, and in environmental science this will have serious consequences for the extent to which we are able to manage and preserve our unique ecosystems and biodiversity.

The NZAS is dismayed that many excellent scientists and their expertise could be lost to New Zealand through short-term thinking and faddish changes in science funding.

The New Zealand Association of Scientists (www.scientists.org.nz) is a nationwide association of practising research scientists spanning the universities, technical institutes, Crown Research Institutes, government departments, industry, museums, other science institutions, and independent researchers.

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