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NZ Association of Scientists Deplore Reduction in National Knowledge.

Te Papa - The National Museum Te Papa Tongarewa - is restructuring and in the process it is making a number of scientists redundant.

The NZ Association of Scientists, a 78 year old independent Association that advocates for science and scientists, questions if this move is in New Zealand's best interests.

President of the Association, Dr Heide Friedrich, questions "Does this move take the Te Papa board to a position where it is ignoring some of its key duties? Importantly, we observe a lack of consultation and discussion about the consequences of this decision nationally and internationally."

New Zealand/Aotearoa acts as kaitiaki for a large domain of unique flora and fauna, yet has to do so with a small population-base. If we do not know what we have in that domain, then we are failing in our duties as kaitiaki.

Museum collections, and the quality and responsiveness of their curation, are essential for managing biosecurity, threatened and endangered species, and climate change. New technologies, including DNA and increasingly sensitive and non-destructive analysis, have multiplied the value of collections, but only when curation is adequate.

With dramatic changes in how we use and value our land and oceans and with a dramatically changing climate, the short-sightedness in not holding onto such capability and not building succession plans is questionable.

The value and pathways for the science of taxonomy are well-documented in a Royal Society of New Zealand Te Apārangi report from 2015 - and being reviewed by MBIE presently. To ignore this advice calls into question the Museum Board's perspective of their function and responsibilities.

Finally, Heide Friedrich raises the question "Is making these changes in opposition to the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Act 1992, which identifies a number of science activities that are principal functions of the Museum Board?"

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