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Recent news from Canberra - that Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) intends "substantial reductions in headcount" targeted at "Oceans & Atmosphere, Land & Water" (and two other units) - sent shock waves into the international climate research community. The numbers listed - 350 reductions over two years - compared to the known sizes of those groups portend an end to CSIRO's climate programmes. These cuts will sever vital linkages with Australian colleagues and to essential Southern Hemisphere data sources, linkages that connect Australia to the UK, the USA, New Zealand, Japan, China and beyond. Australia will find itself isolated from the community of nations and researchers devoting serious attention to climate change.

We read that these cuts occur in the name of innovation. We learn of intended new CSIRO directions in "food and agricultural products", "biodiversity and sustainability of agriculture, soils and water", "science to keep (our) people healthier", enhanced capability "to restore marine ecosystems", and the "application of environmental big data sets". One can hardly imagine a worse and more backward step toward any of those laudable goals than ignoring climate and discarding climate research.

We find this statement most worrisome: "Our climate models are among the best in the world and our measurements honed those models to prove global climate change. That question has been answered, and the new question is what do we do about it, and how can we find solutions for the climate we will be living with?" Does Australia, poised among Southern Ocean storms, Indian Ocean monsoons and Pacific Ocean El Ninos and cyclones, know its water future? Does it know, on regional and seasonal scales, its projected drought and heat wave vulnerability? Does it know the role of climate on evolution and transmission of human and plant diseases, on marine ecosystems and fisheries, and in driving global consumption and migration patterns? Does it have, uniquely among nations, knowledge and skill to make climate-smart investment, infrastructure and policy decisions over the next 10 and 20 years? Does CSIRO know how actions or inactions around the planet will determine the climate Australians will live with? Does CSIRO recognise that complex models and reliable observations - the basic materials of climate research - do not just 'start up'? Perhaps, in the afterglow of CoP21, nations consider the climate problem solved. We would have assumed that, based on its substantial intellectual resources and unique climate vulnerabilities, Australia would not make that mistake.

Young climate researchers, in Asia or Australia or Africa or the Americas, motivated to develop the daunting range of mathematical, observational, geophysical and ecological skills needed to understand and predict the earth system, know about start-ups, innovations, information technology, big data, blue and green economies, etc. They choose their climate careers in full awareness of long efforts and modest rewards because they care about our planet and about humanity. They will know and admire the researchers of CSIRO's ocean, atmosphere, land, water and climate programmes. Most of them will not see the abrupt abandonment of climate research as "an advancement path for growth".