



**Opening statement – Dr Larry Marshall, CSIRO**  
**Senate Estimates, Wednesday 28 October 2020**

Thank you Chair.

Given everything that's happened this year, I would like to provide the Committee with some brief information, particularly on COVID-19 and bushfires – two issues which have gripped Australia in 2020 and seen our scientists further galvanised to use science to help keep Australia safe.

To understand the virus and combat it, CSIRO scientists tested two vaccine candidates selected by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) who we partnered with eighteen months ago to prepare for just such a situation. That work enabled the acceleration of the first phase-three human trials for a COVID-19 vaccine.

We also used our state-of-the-art biologics production facility in Melbourne to scale up and purify the University of Queensland's (UQ) vaccine candidate for use in clinical trials.

To help understand the virus we've analysed its longevity on different surfaces, and tracked the emergence of different strains to ensure the effectiveness of vaccine candidates. Both critical to continuing to inform the best public health response.

To protect the public, and support our businesses we developed, with UQ, wastewater testing to pinpoint outbreaks in the community, on aircraft, and at major sporting events.

By arming our states and territories with data analytics, we are helping them understand and isolate hotspots so state borders can be opened, people can be reunited with their loved ones and the economy can get back on track.

We worked with industry to overcome shortages of critical protective equipment for frontline health workers, and established Australia's first "NATA"-accredited face mask testing facility, run by the CSIRO, to ensure Australians get the very best protection.

The fight against COVID-19 is not over, but this Committee can rest assured that their national science agency will not rest until it is truly over. But we won't rest for long because there are other battles to fight.

As we head into bushfire season again, we will once again draw on 70 years' experience to inform the government's response, working closely with Australia's brave firefighters, fire authorities, our university partners, and of course, impacted communities. Australian science, once again, will be on the shoulders and in the pockets of every firefighter, keeping them one step ahead of bushfires when they do inevitably break out.

While COVID-19 and bushfires have been devastating, they have also brought out the best in Team Australia driving unprecedented collaboration to fight a common foe.

The collaboration will continue as we look to overcome the seemingly insurmountable challenges that we still face across: our environment, food security and quality, health and wellbeing, our

future industries, energy and national security. Large, complex problems that can only be tackled by coming together in a Team Australia approach, which we are developing right now in the shape of a Missions program, along with universities, industry and the community. Twelve missions to build resilience and recovery in the face of adversity.

Business has undoubtedly suffered greatly this year. As they look to find the green shoots of recovery, we will be there with them, to ensure science and technology delivers for them. Working together, turning science into solutions for businesses large and small, Aussie ingenuity is creating manufacturing wonders that create job and advantage for Australia.

Finally, the government's \$459 million funding commitment will address the impact COVID-19 will have on our commercial activities and ensure our financial stability to allow us to continue to deliver all of the critical science to support the nation as we grow back our economy.

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