

Submission to Senate Economics Committee
Provisions of the Omnibus Bill relating to ARENA funding
September 3rd, 2016

Dear Senators

It has never been a more disappointing time to be an Australian!

Australia has for decades punched above its weight in matters scientific, medical and technological. This is not just because of the efforts of a few brilliant individuals. It reflects a societal support for education and innovation in science, engineering and technology and an institutional framework of universities and research centres supported by governments of all colours.

Until now.

Or at least until the arrival of the Abbott/Hockey juggernaut of budget slashing destruction, followed by the new brooms of Turnbull and Morrison, who despite early promise of support for innovation, seem trapped in the same rut of fixing their eyes on the Treasury bean counters' bottom line and not daring to look at the stars.

Two of the stars in Australia's constellation of scientific/technological/economic achievement have been CSIRO and ARENA. CSIRO and affiliated research institutions have been at the forefront of climate change research, for which they have received well deserved worldwide recognition. ARENA has built on the leading solar energy research carried out in this country to stimulate implementation of renewable energy solutions of benefit to millions of households and thousands of businesses.

Climate change risks are acknowledged as the most pressing problems we face as a nation and as part of a global civilisation. It is foolhardy in the extreme to jeopardise the stable research and innovation framework that has existed until recent years, through short sighted and ill-considered budget cuts to this nation's intellectual capital and its capacity to adapt to climate change.

The ARENA bill, in summary, proposes to wrench \$100 million from its next five years budgets. Has anyone calculated the negative multiplier effect on the economy, employment and Australia's international scientific reputation?

I trust, Senators, that your wiser heads will prevail over those of some scientific Philistines in the 45th Parliament.

Reject this Bill!