

## Brief History of the Position of Chief Scientist

In May 1989, the Government released a Science and Technology Statement which led to the establishment of:

- the Prime Minister's Science Council (PMSC);
- the Coordination Committee on Science and Technology (CCST); and
- the position of Chief Scientist.

Professor Ralph Slatyer was appointed the first Chief Scientist. He was employed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) as a full-time public servant and served in the position until 1992. Prior to his appointment as Chief Scientist in May 1989, Professor Slatyer was Chair of Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTEC).

The Office of the Chief Scientist, together with the Prime Minister's Science Council, the Coordination Committee on Science and Technology and ASTEC were part of the Prime Minister's portfolio.

From May 1989, the Office of the Chief Scientist performed most of the policy advising functions formerly performed by the Office of ASTEC. Thereafter, ASTEC became essentially an advisory body.

Professor Slatyer was succeeded as Chief Scientist by Professor Michael Pitman who held the position from 1992 to 1996.

In 1990, the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) programme was established within the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS), a division of PM&C. In 1994, the Chief Scientist and the CRC Programme were transferred to the Department of Industry, Science and Technology.

In 1996, the Chief Scientist position became part-time. PMSC was broadened to include engineering and, as a consequence, PMSC became the Prime Minister's Science and Engineering Council (PMSEC). In the same year, Professor John Stocker became the Chief Scientist. He produced the report *Priority Matters*, which led to the abolition of ASTEC and a broadening of PMSEC to become the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) in 1998.

When Dr Robin Batterham became Chief Scientist in 1999, he was appointed as a consultant, with a deed of appointment setting out roles and conditions. On 14 April 1999, the Minister for Industry, Science and Resources, the Hon Nick Minchin, advised the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard, that:

- a thorough and comprehensive process had been used to identify candidates, and to select the most suitable candidate for the position of Chief Scientist;
- the process included wide consultation with members of PMSEIC and with senior representatives of interested communities;
- he met short-listed candidates to discuss science and innovation policy issues; and
- he proposed that Dr Batterham be appointed Chief Scientist on a part-time basis.

The deed of appointment was signed by Dr Batterham and the Minister for Science, the Hon Nick Minchin, on 9 June 1999.

After the 2001 election, the Chief Scientist, CCST and the PMSEIC Secretariat were transferred to the Education, Science and Training portfolio. The Minister for Science, with the agreement of the Prime Minister, reappointed Dr Batterham for a second term of three years in May 2002.