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Government of South Australia

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Hon. Gail Gago, MLC
Minister for Science and Information Economy
GPO Box 1671
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Dkt No
File No
Action Officer
Indexer
Cc

Dear Minister

Re: The future of the Premier's Science and Industry Council

I write in response to your request dated 30/7/14 regarding the proposal to abolish South Australian Government Boards and Committees, subject to a review of their need and their roles.

After recent discussion of this issue with the Premier directly, I gained the view that he was supportive of the Council continuing. It is important that science, research and innovation are given a strong profile and priority. It is also important that a clear and direct link with industry is a continuing feature of the Premier's Science and Industry Council to ensure a consolidation and enhancement of the progress that has been made over the past two years in directing research priorities towards issues that are important to the State and industry. Clearly, many of the most important actions in the Investing in Science Action Plan relate to enhancing the economic and other returns to South Australia from our investments in this area. The on-going involvement is important to see this through to an optimal set of outcomes.

The Council provided valuable support in the development of the new Investing in Science Action Plan approved by Cabinet early this year. The State Government has assigned the role of providing independent reports to the Government on the implementation of the 41 actions in that Plan to the Premier's Science and Industry Council and the Chief Scientist. This was an important strategic decision as it enables the Chief Scientist and the Council to take a positive role in ensuring the successful implementation of all 41 actions. The Plan has important implications for our future prosperity and the request for independent reporting from a body such as the Council is a valuable positive influence in driving better outcomes. Retention of the Council is important for this reason alone. It will provide essential support to the Chief Scientist in undertaking this audit and reporting role.

The membership of Council and its three working groups was to be reviewed at the end of this calendar year. Given the general review of committees and boards it seems appropriate to bring this process forward for Council and there is scope to reduce the membership whilst retaining its capability. As indicated already, I would like to see the retention of the industry involvement and each of the current industry members have been very productive and should be asked to continue. Similarly, the provision of a rolling membership of the three most current Young Tall Poppies of the Year has been a great success with the current Council. Given an opportunity to these young people seems to be entirely consistent with the thrust to look at new ways to involve a broader range of people in communications with Government. All of these young people have been strong contributors to the Council and have generated new approaches to key issues – many of which have been taken into account in Investing in Science.

On the other hand, the concept of including the current Scientist of the Year on Council has been less productive in my view. These senior scientists are very busy people and tend not to have enough available time to devote the activities of Council. There are other options for them to provide their view to Government and I would suggest they not be included in future. I have discussed other options for reducing the membership with Dr Leanna Read and it may be most appropriate if these potential changes are discussed personally with you before settling on the final membership listing.

I have reviewed the role statements for Council and the working groups and these are attached. These role statements were developed in consultation with Dr Read. The three working groups cover the three main areas of activity for Council in the immediate future. They are:

- Industry – researcher links and driving outcomes from research
- Audit and reporting of the Investing in Science Action Plan
- Communicating important science related concepts to the community with a view to leading a change on culture with respect to science and its key role in sustainable economic development.

It has been the practice over the past (nearly) three years to work closely with the Economic Development Board and the Advanced manufacturing Council. This has been facilitated by joint membership (in the case of EDB) and through the Chairs attending each other's meetings where possible (in the case of the AMC). A current shared activity is to find a mechanism for developing new enterprises from opportunities arising from local research outcomes. The work of Professor Colin Raston (one of our first Premier's Professorial Fellows) is being used as an example case. In my view there is significant potential for this to be a successful feature of the South Australian economy in future, but it requires some new thinking with respect to how we transition from research outcomes to economic return. Other options are required rather than merely facilitating spin off companies or licensing IP, where the target is foreign investment generally followed by complete relocation of the economic action offshore. The current commercialisation pathways are not covering enough of the research outcomes produced and should not be seen as the best outcome. The Council, working with the EDB should provide the new direction and drive that is needed here.

In conclusion, it is my view that the main contributors to Council in its current term feel that the Investing in Science Action Plan has established a good framework for moving forward in alignment with the State's priorities. Regular communication with the Premier and the Science Minister, and their on-going strong support, such as I have enjoyed, is vital to achieve the success of this Plan. I remain optimistic that science, research and innovation will make an increasing and substantial positive contribution to the State's future.

Yours sincerely



Professor Don Bursill AM, FTSE
Chief Scientist



Dr Leanna Read
Newly appointed Chief Scientist

8 August 2014

PREMIER'S SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY COUNCIL

Audit and Monitoring Working Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE and SCOPE

The Premier's Science and Industry Council –Auditing and Monitoring Working Group provides an independent assessment and annual report to the South Australian Government on the 41 actions listed in Investing in Science: An Action Plan for Prosperity through Science, Research and Innovation. The working group is chaired by a Council member nominated by the Chief Scientist for South Australia.

VISION

To guide and champion the implementation of Investing in Science in addition to providing independent advice on the progress of the 41 actions listed in Investing in Science. Meeting the timelines for outcomes as expected by the Government is an important aspect of the independent assessment and reporting function.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the working group is determined by the Chief Scientist for South Australia. Other persons may be invited to attend specific meetings at the request of the Co-Chairs of the Premier's Science and Industry Council to provide expert advice.

MEETING FREQUENCY

At least 6 meetings per year are required to take place. Members will be remunerated for meetings as per the Department of Premier and Cabinet Circular number 16.

ROLE

Specifically the working party will:

- Assess and report at least annually to the Government on the implementation of all 41 actions in Investing in Science: An Action Plan for Prosperity through Science, Research and Innovation in an effective and timely manner
- In undertaking this task, the working party will evaluate the impact on priorities such as:
 - Increasing the attractiveness of SA as a destination of choice for researchers and innovative businesses
 - Building strategic research capability as well as industry and international partnerships
 - Investing wisely in publicly funded research and development
 - Investing in STEM skills to drive the States innovation and economic growth.
- Advise on new opportunities that arise from the implementation plans for Investing in Science

PREMIER'S SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY COUNCIL

Communication Working Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE and SCOPE

The Premier's Science and Industry Council – Communication Working Group provides high level, independent advice to the South Australian Government on the coordination of science awareness and science communication for the State. The working group is chaired by a Council member nominated by the Chief Scientist for South Australia.

VISION

To enhance substantially the level of community appreciation of the value and significance of science to our prosperity, and life style in South Australia. To champion the communication of science literacy to the general public, government and industry and enthuse and enlighten young people and their parents about the value of studies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) as a basis for a wide range of fulfilling career options.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the working group is determined by the Chief Scientist for South Australia. Other persons may be invited to attend specific meetings at the request of the Co-Chairs of the Premier's Science and Industry Council to provide expert advice.

MEETING FREQUENCY

At least 6 meetings per year are required to take place. Members will be remunerated for meetings as per the Department of Premier and Cabinet Circular number 16.

ROLE

Specifically the working group will:

- Develop communication strategies to influence public opinion, government and other key stakeholders such as industry and business on the value of science, research and innovation to the State;
- Develop strategies to engage young people and their parents in considering the value and advantages of qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) from a career and personal development perspective;
- Ensure buy-in from key ministers to promote the importance of investing in science and research for the benefit of South Australia
- Engage with existing science communication entities that can assist and facilitate the science communication objectives of Council.
- Assist Council in communicating its role to government and other key stakeholders.

PREMIER'S SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY COUNCIL

Industry Working Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE and SCOPE

The Premier's Science and Industry Council – Industry Working Group provides high level, independent advice to the South Australian Government (through the Council) on improving the connectivity and working relationships between the research sector and end users, particularly industry. The working group is chaired by a Council member nominated by the Chief Scientist for South Australia.

VISION

To guide and champion better alignment and active collaboration between the research sector and local industry, drive greater innovation within the State government and identify the research challenges faced by industry and the community.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the working group is determined by the Chief Scientist for South Australia. Other persons may be invited to attend specific meetings at the request of the Co-Chairs of the Premier's Science and Industry Council to provide expert advice.

MEETING FREQUENCY

At least 6 meetings per year are required to take place. Members will be remunerated for meetings as per the Department of Premier and Cabinet Circular number 16.

ROLE

Specifically the working group will:

- Develop and advise on systems or approaches that will increase active collaboration between research and development (R&D) entities and research users, particularly industry;
- Assist the Economic Development Board to develop systems that maximise the opportunity for the creation of new enterprises or enhance existing South Australian businesses through local research outcomes.
- Work with industry and research providers to identify challenges in better aligning the two sectors and develop solutions where appropriate.
- Provide advice and assistance to the Government in the development and implementation of innovation plans for Government agencies.