

## Media Release

1 May 2014

The Cooperative Research Centres Association is profoundly shocked by the Commission of Audit's recommendation to abolish the CRC Program, rolling funds into the Australian Research Council's Industry Linkage Program.

"I can't for a minute believe that Government will take on this recommendation" said Chairman of the CRC Association, the Hon Tony Staley AO.

"Cooperative Research Centres have very clearly given the Australian taxpayers outstanding value for money" said Mr Staley this afternoon.

"It is very interesting that the Commissioners have commented in making this recommendation that the ARC should take on longer funding periods. That's one of the features that has made CRCs so successful - seven years of funding to let researchers get on with the job".

"The ARC could provide longer funding periods but they can't provide the other major success factor of CRCs - the cultural drive from industry to convert research into innovation".

Mr Staley said he and the CRC Association's CEO, Dr. Tony Peacock had recently had very useful discussions with both the Government and Opposition in Canberra. "No one gave a hint of knowing anything that a recommendation like this might be in the pipeline. I really believe Ministers Macfarlane, Pyne, Dutton and many others including the Prime Minister have a good appreciation of how much the CRCs have delivered. The Commission of Audit clearly haven't worked at the level of detail to know that directing the money through a granting agency like the ARC would fundamentally change the nature of the Program".

The Cooperative Research Centres Program was initiated by the Hawke Government in 1990 and significantly expanded under the Howard Government. Outcomes from the Program have included the Day and Night Contact Lens, the Hybrid Cochlear Ear Implant, composite materials in the Boeing Dreamliner ailerons, the Meat Standards Australia Grading System for beef, vast improvements in the management of dryland salinity, the Universal Dig and Dump system which improved dragline productivity for the mining sector by 20%, the world's most widely used environmental management program for hotels, amongst hundreds of new technologies and services.

In March at Science and Technology Australia's event, Science Meets Parliament, The Minister for Industry, The Hon. Ian Macfarlane, had the following to say about CRCs:

*"The Australian Government is investing \$186 million to extend four existing Cooperative Research Centres and establish three new ones.*

*They will provide major benefits to industry and the community, in transport, health, data security and agriculture.*

*CRCs work so well because they bring together world class scientists and researchers with industry, the community and Government to create opportunities and develop solutions for Australia, Australian industries and the world.*

*The seven CRCs we have funded are industry driven and combine more than 130 organisations from across Australia and internationally, including 60 industry partners in Asia, Europe and the United States.*

*They include the Hearing CRC, which will continue to develop new devices, therapies and service delivery models to combat hearing impairment.*

*The Data to Decisions CRC will help Australia's defence and national security sector extract big data to reduce national security threats.*

*And the CRC for Sheep Industry Innovation will deliver affordable technologies to transform Australia's sheep industry.*

*CRCs are a truly joint effort, with a 20 year history of bringing the Government, researchers and industries together.*

*All up they have put more than \$15.4 billion dollars of grants and participants' cash and in-kind support to work for Australia."*

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