



Australian Government

Department of Industry,  
Science and Resources

# Revitalising Australia's Science Priorities

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Terms of reference

## Context

A vibrant and energised science system is essential to our national prosperity and the well-being of the Australian people. While we produce world-leading science in many areas, Australia lacks a contemporary national science policy framework. Our current policy frameworks – the 2015 National Science and Research Priorities and 2017 National Science Statement – were developed before events such as the global pandemic, the acceleration of the impacts of climate change and recent emergence of new technologies, and no longer reflect our needs or our ambition.

It is therefore timely to review and revise these policy frameworks, to better align efforts and investments in science to deliver greater societal, economic and environmental benefits for all Australians. This is an opportunity to foreground the importance of science and the many benefits it provides to Australians' daily lives.

## Objectives

The revitalisation of Australia's science priorities and statement will shape a long-term vision for the Australian science system. This process is intended to re-energise conversations across Australian science communities – in academia, industry, government – in pursuit of common goals.

In finalising the priorities and statement, views and feedback will be sought from the widest possible cohort of people engaged in Australian science, reflecting what the nation values, what our competitive and comparative advantages are and where our strategic interests lie. It will position us to address these priorities together, working collaboratively across sectors and disciplines.

The priorities and statement will together form a contemporary framework for embedding science into government decision making. This will enable the identification of opportunities across the science, technology, innovation and commercialisation system to better align effort and investment. It will help to shape investment and funding decisions and the infrastructure required for a strong and sustainable science agenda in Australia.

## Terms of reference

### Revitalised National Science and Research Priorities

Priorities are valuable as a signal-setting tool and provide clarity on the areas government considers important and help encourage activity and growth in these areas. The current set of National Science and Research Priorities, outlining 9 broad areas of focus, were released in 2015 and are due for review and renewal.

As a starting point, this government has identified 3 priorities that could form part of a refreshed set of Australian science priorities, to prompt a national conversation within the Australian science community:

- Supporting stronger action on climate change, including investments in renewable energy, reducing emissions, and transitioning to a net zero world.
- Elevating and investing in First Nations perspectives on science, technology and innovation.
- Harnessing the potential of emerging technologies and scientific research in pursuit of not only economic growth, but improving Australian wellbeing

In finalising the priorities, consideration will be given to how the priorities can:

- reflect the key challenges and opportunities facing Australia
- align with Australian Government priorities, such as the National Reconstruction Fund
- reflect Australia's competitive and comparative advantages
- inform and align government decision making and investment into the future
- provide greater certainty and focus for investment, including by industry
- be reviewed and updated to ensure they remain contemporary and responsive to Australia's needs.

## A renewed National Science Statement

A new statement will outline the government's vision for Australian science. It will reflect the updated priorities and consider how to address areas such as the following.

- **Enhancement of both local and international partnerships in pursuit of shared goals** – delivering national and international collaborations that reflect commonly held priorities.
- **The role of open access and data sharing** – reducing barriers to collaboration, and making Australian science more influential, visible and accessible to all.
- **A National Science Engagement Strategy** – connecting the public, research organisations and industry to enable and grow a STEM-skilled workforce and increase responsiveness of the science and technology sector to respond to the needs of industry, society and the economy.
- **The importance of scientific advice to inform decision making** – ensuring appropriate mechanisms for providing government with independent, expert scientific advice.

## Process

- The revitalised National Science and Research Priorities and the renewed National Science Statement will be finalised within 12 months.
- They will be delivered by a dedicated taskforce established within the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.
- Australia's Chief Scientist will lead a national conversation on the government's behalf to inform both the priorities and the statement.
- Extensive consultation will be undertaken with science, research and industry stakeholders. States and territories, and international partners will also be engaged.
- There will also be a public consultation process to ensure that all Australians have an opportunity to contribute.

- This work will complement other related reviews and initiatives, such as the review of women in STEM programs, strategies to support the quantum and robotics sectors, the review of the Australian Research Council and the development of a universities accord.