



Science, Technology and Education News from Australia, May 2018

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1. Science and Technology Developments

Swiss Embassy event on World Bee Day provided an opportunity to discuss honeybee health issues

Fifty years ago, Albert Einstein is quoted to have said: “If bees were to disappear from the globe, mankind would only have four years left to live.” On the occasion of the inaugural World Bee Day on 20 May 2018, the Embassy of Switzerland, in conjunction with the ANU Film Group, organised the screening the prize-winning documentary More Than Honey by the Oscar-nominated Swiss filmmaker Markus Imhoof. The documentary’s theme is the global threat to food production that is posed by the disappearance of up to 90% of bees worldwide. The film was followed by a panel discussion on honeybee health issues and their potentially disastrous consequences, moderated by Cormac Farrell, President of the ACT Beekeepers Association. The panelists were Professor Saul Cunningham, Director of the Fenner School of Environment and Society at ANU; Dr Ben McKee, Managing Director at Capilano Honey; Dr Amy Paten, Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Environmental Response Genomics at CSIRO. This event was part of a series of events in Canberra.

Click [here](#) to read the article.

Australia's largest windfarm wins planning approval

The Queensland government has approved the country’s largest windfarm, a \$1bn project to build almost 200 turbines in the shadow of the Bowen basin’s coalmines. The 800-megawatt Clarke Creek project, in cattle country north-west of Rockhampton, received planning approval on 5 June 2018. The company behind the project says it will create about 350 jobs during three years of construction and has the capacity to provide 3% of the generation required to power the entire state. It also includes a solar component. The Queensland government plans to reach 50% renewable energy generation by 2030. The energy minister, Anthony Lynham, said \$20bn in energy projects were in the pipeline, with projects worth \$4.5bn already under way or with finance committed.

Click [here](#) to read the article.



2. Education and Science Policy

Australia launches its first national space agency

On 8 May 2018, as part of the 2018-19 Budget, the Australian Government announced the establishment of an Australian Space Agency with ongoing funding starting at AUD 26 million over the next four years, in an attempt to help businesses win a greater share of the multi-billion dollar global space market and establishing a new industry with the potential to create 20,000 jobs. It will operate from 1 July 2018. The global space economy is worth around USD 345 billion, and growing at nearly 10 percent a year, and yet, despite the outstanding capability, Australia only accounts for 0.8 percent of the global space economy. Australia sees this as an opportunity to triple the size of its domestic space industry to up to \$12 billion by 2030. Space technologies are not just about taking people to the moon, they open up opportunities for many industries, including communications, agriculture, mining, oil and gas. Australia has strong capability in space-related industries as it is among the world-leaders in automated mining and precision agriculture, and has immense expertise as an advanced manufacturing nation.

For details see the website of the [Department of Industry, Innovation and Science](#) and the article in [The Conversation](#).

What the Federal Budget 2018-19 means for Science, Technology and Education

In a climate of uncertainty about the place of science and innovation in PM Turnbull agenda, the announcement of the 2018-2019 federal budget nevertheless suggests a continued commitment and stable budget for the main Australian research agencies over the coming years. Significant budget allocations to various ongoing and future projects have been generally welcomed by the scientific community. Most notably, the Federal Budget include budget allocations for critical national research infrastructure and medical research, respectively supported through a 12-year / \$1.9 billion *National Research Infrastructure Investment Plan* (including \$140 million to upgrade to the two most powerful computing facilities in the Southern Hemisphere) and a 10-year \$1.3 billion *National Health and Medical Industry Growth Plan* (including \$500 million for a *Genomic Health Futures Mission* to develop 'precision medicine' approaches to a wide range of diseases). Other notable elements of the Federal Budget include funding for research on rare cancers and diseases (\$248 million), for Antarctic science (\$56 million over 7 years), and for the establishment of a space agency and investment program (\$41 million over 5 years).

Read Australian Chief Scientist Alan Finkel's [statement](#) on the budget; the Group of Eight's statements on what the budget means for [research](#) and [higher education](#); and the Treasury's [budget overview](#).

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