

United Future's Research, Science and Technology Policy

Spokesperson: Peter Dunne MP

It is important that New Zealand maintains a strong (RST) sector, now more than ever. With significant issues such as climate change facing our energy, primary and export sectors, it is imperative that scientific research is given the required long-term certainty of funding to successfully meet those challenges. UnitedFuture believes that one of the key elements to New Zealand's ongoing economic and environmental sustainability will be our ability to maintain a skilled and experienced RST workforce.

It is UnitedFuture policy to:

- Establish an independent Office of the Chief Scientist or Science Council to directly advise the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and be responsible for ensuring that science is drawn on appropriately in all phases of government decision-making.
- Integrate the operations of MRST and FRST into the Office of the Chief Scientist as part of the drive to simplify funding mechanisms, with a particular emphasis on improving the effectiveness and coherence of the system.
- Develop a National Science Strategy that identifies New Zealand's science needs and directions, resource and capability needs and international trends in the medium and long terms.
- Increase government funding of Research, Science & Technology (RST) to at least the OECD average.
- Investigate ways to increase the amount of privately-funded RST. Government policy is to reduce public funding of research that benefits industry, assuming that producers will contribute directly, but it can be difficult to attract industry funding for projects with a longer-term horizon from industry, as they often seek more immediate benefits in productivity.
- UnitedFuture initiated business tax cuts in the 2008/09 year that will encourage greater long-term investment by companies in research and development.
- Simplify the different funding mechanisms for research. These have been allowed to develop in an ad hoc manner over a period of time to fill perceived gaps, but the result is a system that has become inefficient and difficult to navigate. Ensure there is no duplication of research.
- Review the scope and operation of the current range of CRIs, with particular regard to the balance between public good activity and commercial applications, and their relationship with other institutions such as universities.
- Increase the attractiveness of research as a career option and science PhD's by reducing the costs of study, through Universal student allowances, reducing course fees for those fields facing skills shortages, introducing bonding schemes that reduce student loan debt for those who are qualified in such

fields in return for a continuous period of work in New Zealand, and establishing a system of research scholarships between tertiary providers and the private sector.

- Encourage national research specialisation, bearing in mind New Zealand's size, as well as specialisation by institution. Focus to be on the following areas for the medium to long term:
 - Agriculture and horticultural efficiency
 - Biotechnology
 - Nanotechnology
 - Energy efficiency and substitution
 - Aquaculture
 - Bio-security and environmental degradation
- Support the Performance Based Research Fund, but seek greater efficiency in the collection, collation and review of performance indicators.
- Provide opportunities for researchers to gain knowledge of business practices and commercial applications.
- Reinstate research excellence as an important funding criterion by external peer review.
- Establish a national awards event for science and technology excellence to celebrate achievement and raise the profile of science and technology in