



**The New Zealand Association of Scientists (Inc.)**  
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**8 February 2010**

## **Media Release from NZ Association of Scientists**

### **Survey of NZ Scientists and Technologists Released**

The New Zealand Association of Scientists' (NZAS) just-released Survey of New Zealand Scientists and Technologists provides a detailed recent snapshot of working scientists in New Zealand, and builds on earlier surveys spanning the past 16 years to provide an evolving picture of the state of the science workforce in this country.

Overall, the survey results support the view that the time is ripe for significant change in the science system in this country, as has been signalled by the Government reviews of Crown Research Institutes (CRIs) and of research, science and technology priorities. The results of the latest NZAS survey provides hard information upon which to assess policy options and to press ahead with changes to a system that has been static for nearly 20 years.

Full details of the survey findings have just been published in NZ Science Review, the journal of NZAS, and are available on the NZAS web site at [http://nzas.rsnz.org/publish/contents/NZSR\\_67\\_1.pdf](http://nzas.rsnz.org/publish/contents/NZSR_67_1.pdf). The NZAS will be holding a one-day conference in June 2010, to review the findings of the survey, to consider the overall science environment in New Zealand, and to help lay out the road forward.

#### **Science as a career**

Less than half of practicing scientists in New Zealand would recommend science as a career to young people, according to the survey results. That fraction falls to around quarter amongst Crown Research Institute (CRI) scientists. NZAS President Dr James Renwick said that this indicates significant issues in the New Zealand science sector, and that the recent Taskforce review of CRIs is long overdue.

#### **Diversity of the science workforce**

Survey results indicate that while female and Māori participation in science has increased in recent years, there is still a long way to go. Māori made up 1.7% of the science workforce in the latest survey, compared to 0.7% in 1996. Around one in three New Zealand scientists and technologists are women, compared to less than a quarter in 1996. Most young scientists are female, however: women outnumber men by four to one in the under-35 age range, while over 60% of male science workers are over 45 years of age. More young (under 35) science workers tend to be employed in CRIs rather than in

Universities. Women tend to be paid less than men in science, as elsewhere, which is partly a reflection of the younger female demographic.

### **Concerns about the New Zealand science system**

Of most concern to scientists was the often intermittent nature of Government funding, followed by accountability and management issues. In fact, more than a third of survey respondents favour having a straight-out lottery for obtaining funding, rather than writing proposals and going through the present review system. Around two in five respondents spend more than 30% of their time on administration and compliance, as opposed to scientific research.

Most scientists feel a strong sense of obligation to the wider community, and to New Zealand. Sixty percent felt that science should be responsible to the concerns of citizens, rather than creating new knowledge for its own sake. Moreover, most scientists (57%) felt that New Zealand should be the prime beneficiary of local scientific advances. Despite this sense of social obligation and commitment to New Zealand, only a small proportion (26%) of scientists felt that New Zealand science is headed in the right direction.

### **Controversial issues**

The survey also polled scientists' opinions on thorny issues such as dangerous technology, genetic modification, stem-cell research, and nuclear power. Results demonstrate a broad consensus on the underlying science issues, as well as an awareness of associated risks.

New Zealand Association of Scientists ([nzas.rsnz.org](http://nzas.rsnz.org)) is a nationwide association of practicing research scientists spanning the universities, technical institutes, Crown Research Institutes of Science NZ, government departments, industry, museums, and other science institutions.

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