



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Science and Research**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 18 March 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Page** 2865  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Bandt, Adam, MP

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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr BANDT** (Melbourne) (09:43): I am sick of science and research being treated as a plaything by politicians. I am outraged that, every time the budget gets tight, governments see science and research funds as a honey pot to dip into. Along with many scientists, in Melbourne we cannot believe that funding for national collaborative research infrastructure could be used as a short-term, grubby political plaything and a tactical manoeuvre, when it should be part of a long-term, secure funding cycle. My electorate of Melbourne does some amazing research. In Melbourne, in conjunction with other areas, we are on the verge of developing devices that would deliver pain relief bionically. We are on the verge of developing the bionic eye. There are printable solar cells being developed as a result of partnerships with scientists and universities in my electorate. You may not know this; Mr Deputy Speaker, but since 2009, Australia makes more every year exporting health and medical research related products than we do from exporting cars. And that is certainly going to continue to be the case in the future as the car makers pull out.

In that context, we saw the previous government threaten \$300 million of cuts to health and medical research and extend increase funding by only a year. Then under this government, we have seen no minister for science—which has been finally remedied. We have seen cuts to research funding through universities of about 20 per cent. We have seen over \$110 million taken out of CSIRO. We have seen a project that is now underway being driven by the education minister and the industry minister, saying, 'Maybe some areas of research funding, like astronomy, do not make quite as much money as others so we should be redirecting funding away from those and to others.'

Now, as I alluded to before, we see that the education minister, Christopher Pyne, had the gall to say, 'I am going to take an unrelated piece of funding for 1,700 scientists and the infrastructure facilities that they rely on, and I am going to hold a gun to their heads and say, "That will not be passed unless you pass an unrelated piece of legislation for the university fees."' That is exactly the same as saying, 'I am not going to fund schools unless you pass the GP fee.' The two were completely unrelated and yet our government had no qualms whatsoever about holding a gun to the heads of scientists.

Our trading partners know that investing in science and research is essential in the 21st century. They are going upwards of three to four per cent of their GDP. Under this government, we are going to spend the lowest we have ever spent on science and research since they started keeping records. Do not be surprised if you see a geek uprising at this coming election as this government and its antiscience agenda is held to account.