



Ministers for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research

Innovation Minister > Senator the Hon Kim Carr

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CSIRO Science and Industry Endowment Fund

National Museum of Australia Canberra, ACT

In a room so full of distinguished people, it is difficult to know who to single out.

But I do want to pay particular tribute to those who – by creating CSIRO’s wireless local area network technology – have made the Science and Industry Endowment Fund possible.

On behalf of the Australian Government, I’d like to acknowledge your outstanding efforts to develop and promote this transformational technology.

You have made a tremendous contribution in the service of our nation, a contribution that has not been widely recognised – but I trust we can help to rectify that.

Special thanks, then:

- to inventors Diet Ostry, John O’Sullivan, Graham Daniels, John Deane and Terry Percival
- to the management of CSIRO, which had the faith and confidence to back the project
- to the commercialisation board of CSIRO – currently chaired by Dr Terry Cutler – which had the courage to pursue this through thick and thin
- and to Nigel Poole, Denis Redfern, Terry Healy and the CSIRO board, for their invaluable contribution.

If I had told my predecessor Simon Crean in 1991 that this project would involve a decade of court cases – taking on some of the world’s biggest names in computing and electronics – I’m not sure what he would have said.

Today we mark a significant milestone for scientific research in Australia.

While countries such as Germany and the United States have a history of endowments to support research, this hasn’t been the case in Australia outside the medical field – or at least not until now.

The Science and Industry Endowment Fund we launch today has been made possible by the success of CSIRO’s wireless LAN technology.

It will plough income generated by licensing this technology back into the innovation system – extending our capacity to solve problems and improve lives.

It will invest returns from one of today’s great discoveries in the great discoveries of tomorrow.

In recent times, CSIRO has sharpened its focus on Australia's biggest challenges and opportunities through its National Research Flagships.

Now we have another mechanism for targeting resources at the really big questions.

The Science and Industry Endowment Fund was created by the Commonwealth in 1926 – at the same time as the old Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

As Professor Boris Schedvin tells us in his history of the council, *Shaping Science and Industry*:

“... the Science and Industry Endowment Fund of £100,000 had been established to assist in the training of research scientists and the current research of those individuals whose work merited additional help. While the scheme was small by later standards, it did play a key role in piercing Australia's isolation.”

Up to twenty grants of £50 per annum were awarded from the fund each year, and many of Australia's scientific heroes were recipients.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research evolved over time into CSIRO – an Australian icon, and one of the world's great scientific research organisations.

The endowment fund didn't fare so well.

It did good things, but with limited funding, its importance faded as the years went by.

Now, eighty-three years later, we are bringing it back to life with a new injection of money, and a new mandate.

It is essential that we have the flexibility to support quality scientific research that falls outside the mainstream.

The Science and Industry Endowment Fund will provide that flexibility by focusing on special projects, some of which will be formulated under the guidance of the fund itself.

The fund will support research in universities as well as at CSIRO.

In fact, collaborative projects that bring researchers from different institutions together will be more likely to gain support.

CSIRO has primed the fund with an injection of \$150 million.

But this is only the beginning.

We want the Science and Industry Endowment Fund to become a great national resource, augmented by donations from industry and other benefactors who share our passion for science and our faith in its ability to make the world a better place.

Australia has never been able to match the endowment tradition of countries like the United States, but that doesn't mean we just give up.

The time has come for us to build our own tradition of private support for research that serves the public good.

This fund is the first step.

It will consider matching donations from industry and others for projects that meet the fund's strict national interest and excellence criteria.

When coupled with tax deductions, this will make it very attractive for business to invest in research of enduring value to the Australian community.

Today it is my pleasure to announce the inaugural grants from the fund, which are being made as a condition of CSIRO's gift with the approval of the trustee.

First, the fund will contribute around \$2 million to the joint endowment of a chair in wireless communications and associated appointments between Macquarie University and CSIRO over a period of seven years.

This will directly support the development of Australia's world-leading wireless capabilities.

Second, the fund will allocate \$7.5 million over the next two or three years to establish wireless LAN scholarships and fellowships in ICT, mathematics, engineering and other scientific disciplines.

This will include:

- up to seventy undergraduate scholarships and honours graduate fellowships
- and up to thirty postgraduate scholarships and postdoctoral fellowships.

Third, up to \$10 million will go to expanding research into wireless broadband at the CSIRO ICT Centre.

This funding will be used to develop technologies that take high-speed wireless access beyond the office and home – technologies that could potentially enrich Australia's new National Broadband Network.

It is no accident that today's launch takes place in the National Museum of Australia – an institution dedicated to celebrating our history and achievements, including many great feats of Australian ingenuity.

CSIRO's wireless LAN technology already ranks as a major Australian achievement, and it would be fitting to see significant objects related to the wireless LAN story displayed here.

CSIRO and the museum are already discussing how they can make that happen.

This could be the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Science and Industry Endowment Fund will generate more successes like wireless LAN, and more proud stories for the museum to tell.

It is an honour to launch it here today.

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