



Weekly Wire
News from East Asia and Pacific
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AUSTRALIA: Academy Divests from Direct Fossil Fuel Holdings

The President of the Australian Academy of Science has announced the withdrawal of its direct investments in fossil fuel companies in his speech. The President Professor Holmes said, “This is a small step that the academy can take, but it is a step towards discharging our responsibility as scientists, and as leaders in society.” The Academy’s divestment is likely to be in the millions of dollars and involves its direct investments in companies whose income was primarily from environmentally damaging or exploitative practices.

Source: <https://www.science.org.au/news/academy-divests-direct-fossil-fuel-holdings>

JAPAN: More Japanese Students Study in China than in the US

The number of Japanese students studying abroad peaked in 2004 to 82,945, and has declined since then to 57,501 in 2011. While the number inched up in 2012 to 60,138, the declining trend is continuing. Viewed by country, the number of Japanese students studying in the U.S. was 42,000 in 2004, but halved in 2011 to be 35% of the total. On the other hand, the number of Japanese students studying in China surpassed the one for the U.S. in 2012. The major factors for these changes would be: Japanese universities began to have more students exchange agreements with Chinese universities; Japanese companies began to try to hire those who have experience of studying in other Asian countries; very expensive U.S. university tuition coupled with the weakening Yen value; and the increasing number of the students in other Asian countries who wish to study in the U.S. makes the U.S. universities to decrease the number of quota for Japanese students.

Source: A summary translation of an Asahi Newspaper evening edition article – October 28, 2015

JAPAN: Possible Numerical Targets in the 5th S&T Basic Plan

The draft 5th S&T Basic Plan (2016-2020) was posted on the Cabinet Office website on November 2 to receive public comments until November 16. While waiting for the comments, the Council for the Science and Technology Policy (CSTP) is discussing an option of adding numerical targets for such items as: government R&D programs that cause seamless (from basic research stage through commercialization of technologies) innovation (number and amount of the programs, application number, successful PI number); Initial Public Offering (IPO) number for R&D-type ventures; Intellectual property, papers, and standardization in Information & Communication Technology areas; Gross Domestic Product; ratio for women researchers; ratio for tenured young researchers; Japanese universities in the top world ranking; Japanese share in the top 1% of papers and citation index; and mobility of researchers between industry-university-government. The possibility of presenting the numerical targets, including which items will have such targets, continues to be discussed by the time the draft 5th S&T Basic Plan be finalized at the end of December 2015.

Source: A summary translation of the Cabinet Office website & a Nikkei article-November 2, 2015

JAPAN: More Self-help Efforts

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) will propose all the national universities to increase its self-support funds by 1.6% every year until 2030 so that the self-supporting income in 2030 is expected to match

the amount to be provided by the government to the national universities without competition. Currently the national universities' self-support fund is 32.5% of the total university budget. Tuition hike would be required to meet the MOF proposal.

Source: A summary translation of a Nikkei article – October 23, 2015

[Background: The Japanese national universities were almost 100% funded by the government until 2004. The university reform in 2004 changed the national university status to independent entities to leave the autonomy to each national university. This has decreased the non-competitive government funds to them by 1% every year from 2004, and instead, to increase the number and amount of competitive research funds. This reform kicked off the national universities to apply for the competitive funds and try to find any funds from outside.]

NEW ZEALAND: Why do Governments Support Research?

The New Zealand Government has recently published the National Statement of Science Investment. The statement heralds a number of important changes particularly in the system of allocating public funding for science that hold considerable promise for science making a greater contribution to New Zealand and to New Zealand's capacity to make a greater impact globally. However, the ultimate impact will depend on subsequent funding decisions. Science systems in many countries are undergoing change for a number of reasons and it is worth reflecting on some of the drivers of this transition. The most contentious questions in developing public policy for science and innovation systems are how they should be funded, on what basis and how much? The answers to these questions might seem self-evident but are caught up with the much deeper question of what are the core objectives of public investments in science. If we examine the recent global history of state-funded science and innovation, it becomes apparent that the answers to these questions have changed over time and will continue to adapt and evolve.

Source: <http://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/2015/10/22/why-do-governments-support-research-sir-peter-gluckman/>