To :
Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Australia
Hon Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of Australia
Dr Alan Finkel, Australian Chief Scientist

8th February, 2016

Dear sirs,

In December, as the world's countries agreed to work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and continue research into climate change processes, Australia's CSIRO chief executive, Dr Larry Marshall, was planning a different strategy. He has just announced that since « the questions (on climate change) have been answered », further work in the area by CSIRO would cease.

Following the Paris conference and the latest IPCC reports, it is now more widely accepted that climate change is occurring and has anthropogenic causes, but the international consensus is that we need to strengthen our research capabilities in order to understand the mechanisms underlying these changes, and how regional climate modes will evolve in the future changing climate. Instead, the CSIRO will cut 350 positions in key research groups studying the processes contributing to climate change. Up to 110 positions in the CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere unit will be cut, with a similar cut for the Land and Water division. These jobs are dedicated to research in areas including greenhouse gas levels, sea level rise, ocean temperatures, ocean acidification and assessing what is required to keep global warming to two degrees. CSIRO scientists are international leaders in these fields, contributing to global studies and using their background knowledge to interpret these changes for regional Australian impacts.

Several of these CSIRO staff have worked on sea level rise and ocean dynamics with our satellite altimetry community over the last 20 years, including Dr John Church's group. CSIRO researchers are leaders in the global scientific community on these themes. Their work is based on building and refining long-term observation systems, models and analysis techniques. In addition to their long-term research, based on accumulated experience, these Australian CSIRO scientists are also key participants in international committees that help analyse and organise the data and models needed to understand the climate change processes.

Breaking up the long-term research program of this world-famous CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere unit is a catastrophic short-sighted management decision. In addition to the detrimental effect on research and accuracy of predictions for the Australian region, this decision will also impact on the international collaboration programmes, built up progressively over the last 20 years.

As members of the international satellite altimetry community monitoring sea level rise, we are greatly concerned by this decision, and ask that the CSIRO management and the Australian Government ensure that Australia's contribution to climate research be maintained and strengthened, and certainly not be reduced.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Pascal Bonnefond, CNES Jason Project Scientist
Dr. Josh Willis, NASA Jason Project Scientist ;
Dr John Lillibridge, NOAA Jason Project Scientist

Co-Chairs of the Ocean Surface Topography Science Team

Dr Lee-Lueng Fu, NASA SWOT project scientist.
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