

On Tuesday 17 March 2015, Professor Chubb was interviewed by Sky News journalist David Lipson

DAVID LIPSON: Professor Ian Chubb thank you for your time. There must have been something of a collective sigh of relief among the scientific community yesterday when Minister Christopher Pyne guaranteed that \$150 million dollars of infrastructure funding for research. But is that enough to guarantee these 1700 jobs into the future?

IAN CHUBB: It's enough to get them through the next financial year, and that's always been the plan. The Minister, I think, quite properly initiated a review of research infrastructure as a whole of which NCRIS (National Collaborative for Research Infrastructure and Strategy) is a very important part, and also institutional infrastructure. So there are two reviews going on. The main aim is to get the existing NCRIS through this, and the next financial year, so the government can take into account the outcome of the review.

DAVID LIPSON: The \$150 million dollars, we don't know where that is going to come from, would you accept that money coming from elsewhere in the scientific research space to fund this research?

IAN CHUBB: Well you can't do the research without infrastructure, basically that's a fundamental given for research these days. I think the issue for me for quite a while, and I've been saying for quite a while, is that this is a whole of Government issue. When you look at the federal departments that use the existing NCRIS facilities there are many. When you look at the businesses that use the existing NCRIS facilities there are many of them too. So universities are an important part of it, universities host many, but not all. But they are a very significant part of it. I think it's a whole of Government issue, and I think that hopefully when we find out where they found the money from it won't be targeted in on part of a user group, management group, or host group but it will take into account the whole government perspective.

DAVID LIPSON: So does there need to be a more long term funding model to give certainty to this part of research and science?

IAN CHUBB: There does. These facilities are used for the long haul. You can't switch them on and off. It's not an electric plug that you turn on or turn off when you go home. You've got a lot of talent, you've got a lot of skills, and you've got a lot of leverage from these facilities so they are an important part of the fabric of Australian research. Then there's the people who run them, manage them and provide the support that researchers need, and so on, so it's complex, but critically important. So we do need a longer term plan. Part of the outcome from the review process, I'm sure, will be recommendations for longer term perspective on this. You can't have stop-start stuff. You can't have what we've just been through every year, or every other year because they were put into a terminating programme.

DAVID LIPSON: Because in 12 months we might be back in this space again, wondering whether it will be funded into the future from then. How damaging is that for research and knowledge for that sort of uncertainty going on?

IAN CHUBB: It's certainly not the best place to be. I mean you would like to think that we could, after due consideration of a report that will come down towards the middle of the year, that the government would find a better way to do this than simply put in another band-aid of another year. I think the uncertainty is one of the biggest risks we have to manage when people's jobs, careers,

livelihoods, passions and their passions for research are all wrapped up in something that's on an annual funding cycle. I don't think that was the Minister's intention when he set up the review. I think he's looking for good, independent advice that will give him some options for future funding but in the longer term than we've currently seen in the last year or two. The government will get it in plenty of time to consider when they come up to the budget after the coming one.

DAVID LIPSON: Scientists must not have loved being used as a bargaining chip or their jobs in order to get university deregulation through?

IAN CHUBB: No, I suspect that they didn't. But it was the level of uncertainty created that probably affected them more.

DAVID LIPSON: Prof. Ian Chubb thank you for your time we'll leave it there for today.

IAN CHUBB: Thank you.