



Biotech Daily

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Daily news on ASX-listed biotechnology companies

Federal Election 2016: Promises, Evidence And Credibility

[FEDERAL ELECTION 2016 EDITORIAL](#)

Saturday's question boils down to: "Which political party is best for innovation in general and biotechnology in particular?" Voters need to weigh promises against performance.

The Liberal-National Coalition came to office promising no cuts to science research and development, but that was a broken promise, justified by a phantom 'Budget emergency'.

The 2014 and 2015 Budgets axed the Innovation Investment Fund, cut CSIRO and CRC funding and used the promise of a \$20 billion Medical Research Future Fund to justify cuts to Medicare and Health, but without a commercialization component to market inventions and return revenue. For the 'party of business' to forget rewarding investment is bizarre.

Labor and the Greens blocked the Coalition's 1.5 percent cut to the popular 45 percent Research and Development Tax Incentive, and that cut remains before the Senate.

The Greens promise to increase R&D spending to 3.0 percent of GDP by 2025 and 4.0 percent of GDP by 2030. Labor's target is 3.0 percent of GDP by 2030.

Both the Greens and Labor will retain the 45 percent R&D Tax Incentive, reinstate the Innovation Investment Fund and continue funding co-operative research centres.

Labor says it will reverse cuts, introduce new programs and it has specific investment policies.

The Greens say the MRFF should have funding from successful ventures and both the Greens and Labor oppose funding the MRFF by cuts to Health or Medicare.

Labor has been silent on commercialization and a funding feed-back loop.

But each of the contenders has serious negatives:

The Liberal-National Coalition promises simply cannot be believed. Apart from then Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's litany of broken promises, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's innovation promises resulted in media releases on Adelaide ship building, the car industry and 'landing pads' in California. Nothing has come from the MRFF.

Mr Abbott appointed Dr Larry Marshall, who cut CSIRO's climate change unit and Prof Anne Kelso who wasted \$3.3 million of the NHMRC's funds on sleep studies for climate deniers.

Had Mr Turnbull reversed those decisions he might have more credibility.

Labor earns points for the R&D Tax Incentive, but Senator Carr thinking the \$80 million a year Commercialisation Australia was a good idea is a worry. It was underfunded by about \$920 million a year, compared to competitor countries.

The Greens have the best 'big picture' policies, but there is an absence of detail.

Despite the 'hung Parliament chaos' rhetoric, innovation benefitted from the Gillard ALP-Greens-Independents Government.

Biotech Daily would like to see the Greens retain the balance of power to vet the Labor or Liberal-National Coalition promises.

A Labor-Greens Government previously served our sector well and there is little evidence that conservatives support innovation - it is counter to their culture.

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Editor