



28 October 2020

## **New Zealand Association of Scientists Submission on proposed changes to Science units at Massey University**

Tēnā koe Professor Geor

This submission is from the New Zealand Association of Scientists (NZAS) and this letter reflects the views of the Council. We are an independent association of researchers who work and advocate for science in New Zealand, increase public awareness of science and expose pseudo-science, debate and influence government science policy, improve working conditions for scientists, including gender and ethnic equality, promote free exchange of knowledge and international cooperation, and encourage excellence in science. The Association membership includes physical, natural, mathematical and social scientists ([www.scientists.org.nz](http://www.scientists.org.nz)).

We thank you for inviting our submission on the proposed reduction in Massey University's Science operations. We note that the two alternative plans both result in similar reductions of approximately one-third of science positions, yet the evidence provided publicly and to staff for the net benefits of such cuts is weak, and has not improved despite previous consultation. The negative consequences on students, careers, collaborations and diversity are almost certainly underestimated or unconsidered given the structure of the proposals.

We therefore have taken the unusual step of joining with other learned societies in requesting that incoming Ministers intervene to ensure that Massey University acts with the accountability and transparency expected of a public institution. Currently, we find that the processes and proposals undermine all five elements of the legislated definition of a New Zealand university.

Please see the [open letter](#) (attached), which we will not repeat here. We reiterate that, “We agree that the threshold for Ministerial intervention is indeed very high, but find clearly that it has been crossed.”

We take this opportunity to highlight the likely consequences to the nation of cuts of this magnitude in a university with Massey's size and excellence in both fundamental sciences and the applied natural sciences, including those relevant to agriculture and horticultural industries of the future.

We call on you to reconsider Massey's options and find a pathway that is acceptably transparent, has better outcomes for the nation, and reinstates the discourse and stable decision-making expected in academic institutions.

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Troy Baisden', written in a cursive style.

**Professor Troy Baisden**

President NZAS on behalf of New Zealand Association of Scientists Council