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FASTS Welcomes New Ministers

The peak body representing 60,000 scientists and technologists has today welcomed the announcement of Julia Gillard as Education Minister and Senator Kim Carr as Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

The President of FASTS, Professor Ken Baldwin, said FASTS congratulates Julia Gillard and Kim Carr on their well-deserved appointments.

"Labor sketched out some important initiatives in education, science and innovation in the lead up to the election and we look forward to working with them to ensure they are implemented in a constructive and effective way."

"The big challenges include proper resourcing of universities, and addressing skills shortages at all levels in science, engineering and mathematics."

"Senator Carr has demonstrated a strong interest in innovation and science issues for many years and we are delighted his deep knowledge of the sector has been recognised by the Prime Minister."

"Bringing industry, innovation and science and research into the one Department has the potential to re-invigorate a somewhat tired policy area by bringing supply and demand-side policy issues together."

"Science and technology remain central to Australia's future social, environmental and economic prospects and ensuring more dynamic links between industry and public sector science and research is a critical challenge."

"FASTS would be very concerned, however, if science and research simply become subservient to industry policy. There is a strong view in the science and research sectors that public policy has been constrained by an over emphasis on short-term commercial outcomes".

"This was a key focus in the recent Productivity Commission report on science and innovation which advocated a greater focus on preparedness and risk minimisation as an outcome of science and innovation," concluded Professor Baldwin.