
Changes in the Earth Sciences

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Changes in attitudes to funding and organisation of earth sciences research and research training in Australia reflect world wide changes in attitudes to research of any kind.

From a company point of view, to stay competitive it is essential to develop a culture of continuous improvement. Technology, research and development, and business strategy must be integrated across the whole corporation. Outcomes are being measured against business and technological objectives. Partnerships need to be developed between the researchers and their customers.

In the public sector, the CSIRO Priorities exercise, the Key Centres of Excellence and the Cooperative Research Centres are all manifestations of the same trend.

In earth science in particular, there will be increasing emphasis on research in particularly Australian problems -

for example, the regolith with particular attention to soil and water quality for agricultural purposes, and to its overall character insofar as it impedes successful exploration.

Many explorers are no longer satisfied with conventional "recipe" search models, but want site specific models capable of change and evolution as new information is obtained. To develop such models, explorers need to be part of the research process, not separate from it. The kind of research explorers are most likely to support is that which fits most closely with business objectives.

Earth sciences also have a crucial emerging role in reconciling the development and conservation approaches to sustainable development. The clients will be either industry or "national interest", insofar as the whole community, including industry, is expecting well informed land use decisions.