



Science & Technology AUSTRALIA

STA Election Strategy

2018/2019

Overview

For more than 30 years, Science & Technology Australia (STA) has advocated for the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sectors. In 2018, with a Federal election looming, STA will work with its 60+ member organisations to ensure science stays on the political agenda.

STEM policy in Australia is lacking prominence - the National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA) was the latest initiative to bolster STEM in Australia through strategic, long-term planning, but since its proposal in 2015 there has been little done to maintain its relevance and updates it to fit with an evolving research sector.

Our aim is that major parties should compete to win votes on their STEM agenda and commitments; and that voters should consider their candidates' support for STEM when deciding their vote.

To achieve this, STA will work collaboratively with its members –setting the national tone for conversations around STEM, while empowering member organisations to reinforce these messages at the grassroots level.

This campaign will be non-partisan, always favour evidence over opinion, and should not include direct criticism of any party (rather we will work collaboratively and pro-actively to advocate for change where it is needed).

It should also be noted that specific details or targets may be useful for members to promote, but STA's aim is to **get science on the agenda**.

The next election could take place any time between August 2018 and April 2019, and the campaign itself may be between 4 and 12 weeks (an average of 6 weeks). The more notice we have, and the later it is called, the better STA will be able to prepare for our campaign.

This strategy outlines our objectives, aims, and the activities STA will facilitate to achieve them.

Objectives:

The campaign aims to elicit the following election promises from the major parties:

- I. A whole-of-government plan for science and technology
- II. A strategy to equip the future Australian workforce with STEM skills
- III. Strong investment in both fundamental and applied research
A commitment to creating policy across all portfolios that is informed by the best available evidence

Specific policy actions

STA will ask parties to commit to these three broad election promises, with the expectation that they may not be adopted but will spark discussion and provide opportunities for members to nuance the issues as is relevant to their discipline/sector.

- Commit to making Australia a top 10 global investor in research and development (aiming for 3% of GDP).
- Commit to assigning a Federal Cabinet Minister to the Science portfolio.
- Commit to establishing a 10-year plan for research and development (building on NISA in 2015 and the Science Statement in 2016), with 5-year funding plans and a long-term vision for stronger Australian science and technology
- Commitment to scope Research Future Fund to compliment work of the Australian Research Council (ARC)
- Commitment to increase federal research funding grants annually by a minimum of CPI
- Commitment to no cuts to federal institutions such as the Bureau of Meteorology, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the CSIRO

Timeline

Preparation

- May 2018 – STA Presidents and CEOs forum to set foundations for Strategy
- June 2018 – consult STA members on Campaign Strategy
- August 2018 – finalise Campaign Strategy and circulate to all members
- November 2018 – first suite of campaign materials ready for distribution (election brief and template candidate letters)
- January 2019 – second suite of materials (including first set of videos) ready for distribution
- February/March 2019 – updates to materials and all resources finalised (including final set of videos)
- May/June 2019 – evaluation of campaign undertaken

During the election

Once the election is called, STA will provide a comprehensive brief to all members, including materials and timelines. Assuming a six week campaign, STA will conduct the following activity:

Week 1

- Distribute all materials and provide first campaign update to members
- STA to begin online campaigning, first set of marginal electorate case studies released
- Election survey results collated

Week 2

- State specific activity begun (local media and case studies)
- STA to begin traditional media activity
- Second set of marginal electorate case studies released

Week 3

- Member highlights (specific election messages from STA members shared)
- Online campaign expanded through advertising, final set of marginal electorate case studies released

- Election survey follow up

Week 4

- Member highlights (specific election messages from STA members shared)
- Election survey results distributed to members (if available)

Week 5

- Public promotion of election survey results
- Opinion pieces placed in traditional media
- Election survey result made public (if available)

Week 6

- Comprehensive online campaign in lead up to election day

STA will also distribute weekly updates to members, to provide new resources and materials, track the major parties' announcements and commitments, and provide current suggestions for further activity.

Focus areas

Following member consultation and the creation of our *Vision for an Innovative and Prosperous Nation*, as well as our work to canvas members at the President and CEO Forum in May, the following focus areas have been identified:

1a. Investment (research and development)	1b. Investment (Infrastructure)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Striking a balance between fundamental and applied research (emphasis on improving support for fundamental) - Bipartisan support for minimum target of 3% of GDP spent on research and development - A research future fund (non-medical), designed to complement the ARC (similar to the way the MRFF compliments NHMRC) with a focus on translational research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long term support (10 year plans; at least 5 year investment) – building on announcements made in 2018 - Funding for capital works, maintenance and skilled staff - ongoing - Leverage NCRIS
2. STEM in the workforce (Education, diversity, career security)	3. Evidence based policy (science minister, health, environment)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education (resourcing, teacher training/qualifications, better representation for STEM in VET) - Better job security for STEM professionals - STEM skills for all Australians - Promotion of, and access to, alternative non-academic career pathways - Strategic approach to research training based on demand - Promoting diversity and inclusion at all levels - National STEM education strategy – from kindergarten to post-graduate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Science Minister in Federal Cabinet - Departmental STEM advisors, review of current structure and potential additions - Better use of evidence to inform formulation of all policy - Better science literacy amongst public servants - Embedded committees/working groups to conduct fore sighting on STEM issues – to empower Australian policy makers to be ahead of the curve on issues relevant to STEM (i.e. genetics, big data, robotics, Artificial Intelligence, etc.) - APS actively recruit researchers
4. Public confidence in science (science communication)	5. Engaging industry and applying research (funding and IP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved Science communication – sharing local stories of Australian STEM success and engaging traditional media - Better stories about science – working with journalists and media outlets to cover STEM more accurately, and with STEM professionals to speak more effectively in public about their work and their sector - Support for more science in popular culture, achieved through government grants or quotas for public broadcasters (with a focus on gender equity) - Promote stronger outcomes in STEM education - Maintain support for PMs Prizes and National Science Week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and reform IP, and provide better education for researchers regarding its application - Sustained investment in the application of research by the government and private sector - Addressing university funding structures to allow for specific funding or projects that fund/incentivize the direct application of research. - Encouraging internships and work integrated learning, and embedding them in university STEM degrees - Reskilling or up-skilling people in the workforce (STEM and non-STEM)

These focus areas will not only inform the creation and structure of our campaign content, we will seek to have the major parties outline their position on each of these issues through the Federal Election Survey and throughout their public election campaign.

Specific details or targets may be useful for members to promote, but STA's aim is to **get science on the agenda**.

Activities

Three areas of activity will be prioritised during the election campaign. The first aims to distil the collective will of the STA membership, the second to empower individual organisations to highlight priority issues for their sector or discipline, and the third to amplify the collective priorities of the STEM sector throughout STA member organisations' communications.

STA activities will include the production of sharable content for social media, websites, newsletters and more, aimed at reflecting the collective objective of the STEM sector – defined through STA member consultation. This will carry the 'Solve it with Science' branding and focus on the objectives highlighted above. Activities will include:

- **Solve it with Science Campaign**
STA will launch and maintain the 'Solve it with Science' campaign. We will use targeted advertising, social media activity, traditional media placements, and amplification through members' channels to establish an election landscape where STEM issues are more likely to gain traction. The key messages for this campaign will focus on achieving the main objectives and focus areas outlined above.
- **Federal Election survey**
STA will survey all major parties (The Coalition, Labor party, the Greens and the Central Alliance) to gauge their support for STEM in Australia. The questions will be based on surveys done in the past, and the campaign objectives outlined above.
- **Video case studies**
Targeting marginal electorates, examples of science and technology making positive impacts in unconventional ways will be shared online. They will have two main objectives: to attract the support and interest of local candidates, and to mobilise and inspire the voting public to consider their candidate's/party's support for science when deciding their vote. These case studies will be shaped with the objectives and focus areas outlined above in mind.

Additionally, STA will work to develop [supporting resources](#) that will focus on catalysing and empowering members to advocate for their specific sector or discipline. STA will craft this material so it can be delivered or tailored by each individual organisation to suit their own priorities and issues (identified prior to the election). These resources will include:

- **Clear outline and timeline for activities during the election campaign**
This will enable us to coordinate messages and ensure STA and its member organisations are consistent and cohesive in our approach to communicating our priorities.
- **Regular campaign updates**
STA will be in touch with members to share updates on the campaign and opportunities to get science on the agenda during the election. These will include talking points, statistics, key messages, and other relevant information.
- **Digital content**
STA will provide editable written content, images, banners, animations and videos, which will be customisable to communicate members' election priorities.
- **Templates for communicating with MPs/Senators/candidates**
Candidates will value national messages, but having these reinforced in each electorate and by local STEM professionals, will significantly magnify the impact of our campaign. Template letters and social media content will be provided by STA to be shared amongst STA members' staff, members and/or stakeholders.
- **Resources to brief members/staff/stakeholders**
Where the opportunity arises (at events, meetings, AGMs, online), STA will provide resources (PowerPoint template, suggested presentation outline or a member of staff) to facilitate a brief for members' staff, members and/or stakeholders. This will empower STEM professionals on the ground to speak with their local candidates, and to use their personal networks to amplify our shared messages.
- **Influencer lists**
This will include key media, social media and advocacy contacts and targets to engage with over the course of the campaign.
- **Access to STA staff and advice**
Please get in touch at any time for advice and support from STA staff, we are happy to provide direction or share our experience to ensure your organisation can make the most of all opportunities that arise during the campaign.

Some recommended [member activities](#), to enable the most effective and timely response to an election being called, are listed below should be completed before 31 July:

- Identify top 3 priorities for your organisation
- Assess capacity to engage (social media, traditional media, mobilising members, contacting candidates, etc. etc.)
- Reach out to STA for support
- Identify case studies to help STA share the value of STEM in Australia
- Engage with initiatives that challenge policies not based on evidence (e.g. offer expertise to support the Conversation or ABC's 'Fact Check' activities)

Evaluation and Analysis

Prior to election day (approx.. two weeks out), STA will conduct a thorough analysis of the parties' promises as they relate to our main objectives before the election, publicising them for the information of voters.

Once the election is complete and the result final, we will publish regular updates on the government's progress towards their promises and our goals. We will also touch base with relevant Ministers, MPs and Senators to support them to keep meet these commitments.

At the conclusion of the campaign, STA will also prepare a report for members, to capture the campaign's penetration of science and technology issues in the media and online.

To facilitate this, STA member organisations are encouraged to share their successes with STA, such as:

- Meetings with candidates/Parliamentarians
- Content placed in the media
- Successful social media activity
- Statistics around the number of members/staff/stakeholders involved in the campaign

To measure the impact of the campaign material, for the purposes of building on and improving any future national campaigns like this, STA will assess the following:

Traditional media

STA will set up comprehensive media monitoring to capture the media's coverage of issues relating to science and technology during the election campaign. We will also report on the number of pieces that mention STA, the STA Board, or STA Executive.

Social media

We will also collect and summarise data on the audience reach achieved for campaign materials shared online. We'll aim to capture this for members too, and provide a report on the cumulative impact of our messages.

Interactions and engagement with candidates

We will ideally monitor and report on all interactions with candidates during the campaign. Much of this will rely on members sharing their own success with the STA team, so that we can accurately and meaningfully measure our impact.