



The New Zealand Association of Scientists (Inc.)

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Press release

Kiwistar abandoned - for what?

The New Zealand Association of Scientists is disappointed that Callaghan Innovation has pulled the plug on a promising high-value manufacturing venture, Kiwistar Optics.

This seems very much at odds with the vision of Sir Paul Callaghan, who argued that New Zealand's future lies in exploiting niche high-value manufacturing opportunities.

That his namesake Crown agency, Callaghan Innovation, would abandon Kiwistar, one of the world's leading suppliers of optical equipment for astronomy, beggars belief.

As the Fonterra contamination scare illustrates, New Zealand needs more of these ventures rather than fewer. With such a strong dependence on our primary sector, our economy is dangerously exposed to volatility in the demand for tourism and food products.

Sir Paul argued that New Zealand must diversify its economy by using science and innovation to generate new high-value manufacturing companies. He did not believe we could build economic diversity by concentrating solely on existing industries – he argued that we needed to develop and grow new sectors of the economy. It is ironic then that Callaghan Innovation's strategy to focus solely on existing industries is so at odds with Sir Paul's vision.

Earlier this year, the Association's President, Professor Shaun Hendy, noted that 'We will be able to tell if Callaghan Innovation is on track in a year or two by whether it has been able to significantly grow the numbers of scientists and decrease the number of bureaucrats who work there.' Sadly, it seems, the bureaucrats appear to be winning.

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