

**Economics Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio  
2016 - 2017 Additional Estimates  
2 March 2017

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**AGENCY:** COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

**TOPIC:** Blue sky science

**REFERENCE:** Question on Notice (Hansard, 2 March 2017, page 67)

**QUESTION No.:** AI-141

Dr Marshall: Under CSIRO Strategy 2020 we have significantly increase the funding of pure science, blue sky science. There was less than \$4 million in 2014 and it is now over \$17 million. It will gradually ramp up, assuming our plans hold, to more than \$40 million over the strategy period. That is a really important investment.

Senator LUDLAM: Is that a tenfold increase?

Dr Marshall: Yes, from 2014, roughly.

Senator LUDLAM: On notice, can you provide us with the particular areas of research. Blue sky is very—

Dr Marshall: I was just going to mention something to you.

Senator LUDLAM: Go ahead.

Dr Marshall: We also created a health group. By 'health' I do not mean 'medical'; I mean keeping people healthy. Our analysis has shown that there is significant economic benefit in keeping people out of hospital and preventing them from getting sick. So that is a significant investment in public good and pure, blue sky science. You may not be aware of this, but CSIRO also designed, built and manages five of Australia's seven landmark national research infrastructures. That consumes a very significant portion of our appropriation. Given the nature of that—it is made available collaboratively to everyone on a basis of merit—it also is a public good. So there is a lot of investment that goes into public good that has not really changed. Some has increased. We have also restored funding to education, health, pure science and national infrastructure. Depending on your definition of 'public good', you could argue that half of what we do qualifies under that definition. Probably a better definition is national benefit. CSIRO has a mandatory test that we apply to all of our investments to ensure that they are going to deliver a national benefit. That dates all the way back to the 1916 and Billy Hughes. If we do not believe it is going to benefit the nation then we do not do it.

Senator LUDLAM: You can take this on notice because I am keen to move on and I know the clock is ticking. Can you provide us with your expectations—by category, if you can—of what you would do with that tenfold increase in research that you were describing to us just before.

**ANSWER**

The funding referred to above by Dr Marshall is corporately-administered funds for CSIRO's Future Science Platforms. Details of the objectives of these can be seen at <https://www.csiro.au/en/About/Future-Science-Platforms>.

These Future Science Platforms were initiated in 2016 and the current platforms are:

- Probing Biosystems
- Digiscape
- Synthetic Biology

- Environomics
- Deep Earth Imaging
- Advanced Integrated Materials

In addition to the Future Science Platform program, CSIRO continues to have a corporately-administered research fund of approximately \$20 million per annum, which supports postdoctoral, postgraduate students and science leaders in the business units through competitive funding programs that are run through the Research Office.