

**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:** Aboriginal rock art

**REFERENCE:** Question on Notice (Hansard, 2 March 2017, page 83)

**QUESTION No.:** AI-26

Senator SMITH: My questions go to a number of articles that appeared in The Sydney Morning Herald in recent times concerning the CSIRO scientific work relating to Aboriginal rock art on the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia. Can someone help me with that?

Dr Mayfield: I can answer that.

Senator SMITH: Dr Mayfield, are you familiar with the two articles, one on 13 February and the other on 19 February?

Dr Mayfield: Yes, I am aware of the articles.

Senator SMITH: Would you like to make a general comment about the accuracy or otherwise?

Dr Mayfield: We believe that we have done the appropriate sites that have been delivered to the contractor that was requested there, and we stand by the science that has been done.

Senator SMITH: Why should people trust your assertion that the CSIRO can stand by the scientific work that you have undertaken? I do, but I am interested in convincing others.

Dr Mayfield: The nature of the work that was undertaken was to a scope of work with the Western Australian government on protecting the Burrup rock art. We delivered to those contracts. The methodologies that were applied were peer reviewed by an independent group, and we have applied those with internal peer review as well. So we have applied peer review process.

Senator SMITH: So an internal peer review process and an external peer review process?

Dr Mayfield: There is external peer review from the working group that was both on methodologies and on review of results published. We always do an internal review process as part of our work, anyway.

Senator SMITH: Is it appropriate for you to make available on notice who conducted it or the individuals who were involved in that peer review process, internal and external?

Dr Mayfield: Yes, we could provide that on notice.

**ANSWER**

Regarding the external peer review process, an answer to Senator Smith on the same topic has been provided to the Environment and References Committee as part of their inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Rock Art of the Burrup Peninsular.

The scientific peer review process for scientific publications is commonly operated on a confidential basis (indeed, it is highly unusual for the authors of scientific papers to be informed as to the names of the peer reviewers who evaluate their papers).

CSIRO's own review process was based on the review process used by quality international journals. The reviewers are assured that their names will not be provided to the authors. The reviewers were leading international experts in relevant fields from Europe and the USA.