

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry Portfolio
Additional Budget Estimates Hearing 2013-14
27 February 2014

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY

TOPIC: Science Infrastructure

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Joe Ludwig

QUESTION No.: AI-149

1. What plans/research has the department undertaken regarding investment in science and research related infrastructure?
2. What science/research related infrastructure programs have been cut/discontinued since 7 September 2013?
3. What is the contribution of investment in science/research infrastructure to Australian growth? If this has not been examined, why not?
4. Have any science/research infrastructure projects been examined since 7 September 2013?
5. Do the criteria by which infrastructure projects are judged include contributions to Australia's intellectual capital? If not why not?
6. Has the minister been briefed on science/research-related investment in infrastructure?
7. How many staff/portion of staff are assigned to science/research related infrastructure?
8. Which departments/agencies has the department had meetings with regarding investment in science related infrastructure?
9. If there are no science/research-related infrastructure projects why not?

ANSWER

Under the Administrative Arrangements Order signed on 12 December 2013, science and research responsibilities, including those related to infrastructure, were divided between the Department of Industry and Department of Education.

With respect to science and research infrastructure, the Department of Industry administers optical astronomy functions through the Australian Astronomical Observatory and metrological functions through the National Measurement Institute. These divisions conduct research, and construct, develop and maintain and operate science/research infrastructure specifically in support of their legislated functions. Additionally, the department is responsible for the Australian arm of the Square Kilometre Array and is responsible for a project considering the future ownership of the Australian Synchrotron (in consultation with the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation which operates the facility).

The Department of Education has carriage of matters related to research infrastructure more broadly and would therefore be able to respond more broadly regarding the management of programs, investments, reviews and decisions on research infrastructure.

The portfolio science agencies operate and maintain a range of science infrastructure on behalf of the Commonwealth. Examples include: the Marine National Facility; the Australian Animal Health Laboratory and the Australian Telescope (CSIRO); the OPAL nuclear research reactor, the Bragg Institute and the Australian Synchrotron (ANSTO); the National Sea Simulator (AIMS); and the Global Navigation Satellite System Networks of Continuously Operating Reference Stations, the Geophysical Network Project and a national network of geomagnetic observatories (Geoscience Australia). Investments in and management of science/research infrastructure managed by portfolio science agencies external to the department have not been considered.

1. The planning of current Commonwealth investments in science/research infrastructure at the national scale is guided by the *2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure*. It articulates priority areas for national, collaborative research infrastructure.

The Australian Astronomical Observatory undertook a strategic review that defines the organisation's goals for the period to 2015 and beyond. The review is grounded in the *Mid-Term Review of the Australian Astronomy Decadal Plan 2006–2015*.

2. None in relation to the aforementioned particular science/research infrastructure agencies or programs within the Department of Industry.
3. The *2012 National Research Investment Plan* (the Plan) provides details of the rationale for research investment and how Australia benefits from research, including through productivity growth. The Plan outlines how the Australian Government provides support for science and innovation for various purposes including for the provision of research infrastructure. The *2007 Productivity Commission Review of Public Support for Science and Innovation* reported in detail on the economic impact of public support for science including through infrastructure.
4. The Department of Industry has not examined any science/research related infrastructure projects since 7 September 2013.
5. Yes. With regards to specific infrastructure projects, the Department's analysis of the benefits of involvement in the Square Kilometre Array project includes consideration of the project's potential contribution to developing Australia's intellectual capital.
6. Yes. The Minister for Industry, the Hon Ian Macfarlane MP, has been briefed on a range of issues, including science/research related infrastructure.
7. The following numbers reflect the staff engaged with particular science/research infrastructure agencies or programs within the Department of Industry. Currently, the National Measurement Institute has 420 FTE, the Australian Astronomical Observatory has 82.14 FTE, the Australian Square Kilometre Array Office has 11.6 FTE and the Australian Synchrotron has 1.6 FTE.
8. In relation to the Synchrotron, meetings have been held by the Department with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. The Australian Astronomical Observatory has met with the Department of Education.
9. Not applicable.