

Senate Environment and Communications References Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Inquiry into recent trends and preparedness for extreme weather
Public Hearing
11 April 2013, Canberra

WITNESS: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

TOPIC: Changes to betterment rules

REFERENCE: Hansard 11 April 2013

Senator MILNE: Dr Stafford Smith, we heard evidence earlier today that one of the problems is that the rules that were written around Commonwealth funding to assist recovery are that there is to be no betterment. So you give people money to build the same road to the same standard in the same place that it was washed-out—and then it gets washed out again. Or if some facility goes the Commonwealth provides the money but they have to be rebuild it the same. That seems a completely ridiculous proposition. When the Attorney-General's Department was writing the rules about funding recovery, were you at CSIRO in your adaptation capacity consulted about what sort of rules need to go around the money so that we don't just put money back into the same thing that failed last time and will fail again?

Dr Stafford Smith: I would have to take it on notice to check whether we were specifically consulted on that, but I can certainly say that the director of our Climate Adaptation Flagship, Andrew Ash, was on one of the committees in Queensland after the 2011 floods and certainly had quite a bit of input on precisely this issue. My understanding is that the rules have changed a little. We are in fact at the moment in the midst of a study exploring the potential benefits from essentially a more or less proactive stance to adaptation, but if you like, betterment, in the short term. We do not have the results from that yet, but I think that somewhere over the next six months we will have some quite solid data there on what the potential benefits of different levels of proactive anticipatory sort of planning like that might be.

Answer:

CSIRO is not aware of any advice being formally sought by the Attorney-General's Department regarding changes to the policy; however, there was at least one meeting attended by the Director of the CSIRO Climate Adaptation Flagship with officers of the Attorney-General's Department where the topic was discussed informally, and several meetings attended by either the Director or Science Director of the Flagship at the then Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency where the topic was discussed, in some cases with officers from the Attorney-General's Department present. These discussions occurred at various times during 2011 and 2012.