

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE GREAT BARRIER REEF 2050 PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM 21 SEPTEMBER 2018

REFERENCE: Written questions on notice

QUESTION:

1. At the hearing, Senator Keneally asked:

Senator KENEALLY: Dr Allan says she asked why he didn't include CSIRO—and this is in response to an email from Dr Marshall regarding the Great Barrier Reef Foundation funding announcement. Her response was: 'Spoke to Minister Josh last night. Asked why he didn't include CSIRO.' Do you know how Minister Josh responded to Dr Allan's query as to why CSIRO was not included?

Dr Marshall: No, Senator.

Senator KENEALLY: You didn't have a conversation with Dr Allan to ask her?

Dr Marshall: No, Senator.

Senator KENEALLY: We might that put on notice for Dr Allan.

How did Minister Frydenberg respond to Dr Allan's query?

a. Why was this not included in the original email?

ANSWER

CSIRO has been advised that there was no further discussion between Dr Allan and the Minister. The Minister responded to the question via a text message that advised that the decision was part of Government policy.

QUESTION:

2. At the hearing, Senator Keneally asked:

Dr. Roth: ... That's something that CSIRO has introduced into this research. Our present understanding and our present data are showing that this is proving to be effective.

Senator KENEALLY: Is that peer-reviewed research?

Dr Roth: I'd have to take that on notice.

Is the research into COTS eradication programs peer-reviewed?

ANSWER

A manuscript outlining the COTS eradication research has been submitted to a scientific journal for publication. Peer review is part of that publication process, and this is currently in progress.

QUESTION:

3. What is the level of CSIRO involvement in reef science? a. How many staff are involved in reef science?

a. Where are they located?

b. What are the types of skills and capabilities your scientists bring to reef science?

c. Internally, what level of funding do you allocate to reef science?

ANSWER

- a. Over the past 3 financial years, 10.70 full-time equivalents (FTEs) have been allocated to reef projects.

These staff were based at: Adelaide; Atherton; Brisbane; Cairns; Canberra; Darwin; Hobart; Melbourne; Sydney; Toowoomba; and Townsville.

- b. Much of CSIRO's reef-related research is conducted through the Land and Water (L&W), Agriculture and Food (A&F) and Ocean and Atmosphere (O&A) Business Units, with smaller contributions from Data61 and the Manufacturing Business Unit. This broad research portfolio includes a very diverse set of scientific disciplines and skills sets:
- A&F: agronomy, livestock sciences, agricultural systems modelling, spatial and GIS analysis, soil science, bio-economics;
 - L&W: geomorphology, hydrology, rangeland ecology, catchment modelling, GIS and spatial modelling, terrestrial remote sensing, social science, psychology, environmental economics, freshwater aquatic ecology, landscape rehabilitation, evolutionary biology, genomics, data visualisation and management;
 - O&A: marine and coral ecology, oceanography, marine GIS and spatial modelling, complex systems modelling, fisheries ecology, climatology and climate science, marine monitoring technology and systems, data visualisation and management;
 - Data61: robotics, automation, AI, innovative data acquisition systems, risk and uncertainty analysis;
 - Manufacturing: material sciences, automation.
- c. Over the past 3 financial years, CSIRO appropriation provided to reef projects has been \$20 million through the internal science investment planning processes for each of the business units listed above.

QUESTION:

4. How will the CSIRO – and other public science agencies – be embedded in helping the Foundation manage reef science investments over the course of the partnership?

ANSWER

CSIRO's current engagement with the Foundation in relation to the management of reef investments is as follows:

- CSIRO has one officer on a part-time secondment to the Foundation from July to December 2018. The role of this officer is to assist and provide advice in the design and preparation of the Foundation's investment program.
- CSIRO officers with relevant domain and technical expertise participate in various activities of the Foundation, including participation in working groups and reference panels.
- CSIRO provides targeted input to briefings and workshops of the Foundation.

CSIRO is unable to comment on how the Foundation consults with or engages other agencies.

QUESTION:

5. Does the controversy around the grant to the Foundation highlight the importance of the role that public science agencies can play – particularly with regard to the public trust and confidence that they have – in leading scientific exercises, rather than corporate foundations for publically-funded science?

ANSWER

CSIRO's primary functions and role are to carry out scientific research for Australia and to encourage the application or utilisation of the results of research to assist Australian industry, in order to further the interests of the Australian community and contribute to the achievement of Australian national objectives.

CSIRO is one of Australia's leading research institutions, as is evident in the international and domestic standing of its scientific publications. The most critical research challenges facing Australia are increasingly complex and require a broad-set of skills to resolve. CSIRO's proven track record is founded on impartiality and scientific integrity, and an ability to bring a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing complex problems. CSIRO remains committed to collaborating with the best and brightest, regardless of their location or affiliation, where that expertise can contribute to delivering science and the functions CSIRO delivers for the benefit of our nation.

In relation to the role of scientific agencies in leading scientific exercises, it is of course normal for CSIRO to conduct much of its science in collaboration with other scientific groups. It is also quite routine for CSIRO to then take that science output into delivering its' role as a trusted scientific advisor to government, community and industry on scientific and national challenges. When CSIRO provides its advice, CSIRO takes into account the particular industry and commercial context, and if relevant also government policy.

CSIRO is unable to comment with respect to the potential role of corporate foundations.

QUESTION:

6. How many Chairman's Panel weekends have the CSIRO attended?
- Where have previous events been held?
 - When were these events held?
 - Are you invited to bring a guest?

ANSWER

Dr Larry Marshall has attended 3 Chairman's Panel weekends. CSIRO does not have any record of the former Chief Executive, Dr Megan Clarke, attending a Chairman's Panel weekend.

- The 2016 meeting occurred on Hamilton Island, the 2017 meeting occurred on Lizard Island and the 2018 meeting occurred on Hamilton Island.
- The Chairman's Panel weekends have occurred in late May each year.
- Yes.

QUESTION:

7. At the hearing, Senator Keneally asked:
*Senator KENEALLY: How much is that? Dr Marshall: I will just confirm that.
Dr Mayfield: It is of the order of \$15,000. Senator KENEALLY: It is \$15,000?
Dr Mayfield: I will just double check that.*
How much does the CSIRO pay to be a member of the Chairman's Panel?

- a. Does this figure include any amount that pays for Dr Marshall (and a guest) to attend the Chairman's Panel weekends?

ANSWER

Payments made to the GBRF were provided in response to Question 2 of the Questions asked by the Committee dated 15 August 2018.

The membership fee includes one night's accommodation for the Chairman's Panel weekend. Other travel costs are additional.