

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry and Science Portfolio
Additional Estimates 2014-15
26 February 2015

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: GEOSCIENCE AUSTRALIA

TOPIC: Geoscience – Staffing

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Ketter

QUESTION No.: AI-46

1. 2014-15 budget papers state that Geoscience Australia (GA) is reducing from 716 staff in 2013-14 to 620 staff in 2014-15. Has this reduction target been met?
2. If so, how is it been met?
3. How many voluntary redundancies?
4. How many compulsory redundancies?
5. What has that reduction meant to the workload of the agency?
6. Given the important role of Geoscience Australia in providing pre-competitive geoscience information to address greenfield exploration challenges, do you anticipate less exploration activity from reduced Geoscience Australia activity in this area?
7. Were Geoscience Australia consulted on the Government's Exploration Development Incentive (EDI) scheme?

ANSWER

1. Yes (the average FTE for 2014-15 is 602).
2. This has been met through a combination of voluntary redundancies and not filling non-essential vacancies.
3. 90 for the period March 2014 to January 2015.
4. Nine Geoscience Australia employees sought to be redeployed rather than accepting an offer of Voluntary Retrenchment. Three of these were successfully redeployed to other APS positions. Two people have ceased employment after being unable to be redeployed. Four remain working within their redeployment period and their employment will be ceased if no redeployment opportunities are secured
5. The entity's workload has been adjusted to reflect the change in available resources.
6. Geoscience Australia has not reduced its activity in this area. However, if Geoscience Australia ceased providing precompetitive geoscience information in greenfield areas, it is likely that there would be less exploration in those areas because the technical risk perceived by companies may be regarded as too great.
7. The Exploration Development Incentive scheme is a fiscal incentive to explore in greenfield areas. As such it is complementary to the "lower technical risk" incentive provided by precompetitive geoscience information. Geoscience Australia was asked for initial input in regards to technical definitions and aspects. Geoscience Australia was also asked to provide comments on the draft EDI, however we provided no comments, as it is in essence a policy matter.