

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

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

TOPIC: Appointment – International Adviser

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 26 February 2015, page 100-101)

QUESTION No.: AI-9

Senator KIM CARR: So, there is no reduction in red tape. It is the same body with the same people, same function and same cost.

Ms Beauchamp: There is quite a reduction in red tape in forms of reducing the amount of time—

Senator KIM CARR: The minister does not have to write a letter to the cabinet secretary. Is that the difference?

Senator Ronaldson: Will you please let the secretary finish. She is a quarter of her way into her answer.

Ms Beauchamp: CSIRO has determined the business needs of their organisation, quite rightly, and it is up to CSIRO and the CSIRO board, and indeed the CEO, to determine what sort of technical advice they need to pursue their functions.

Senator KIM CARR: That is exactly what happened before. The only difference is the minister is not nominating the membership of the advisory committee. Is that right?

Mr Roy: We do not have the details with us today. We can provide on notice the size, the composition of the committee and that sort of information.

Senator KIM CARR: I appreciate your doing that but I think the proposition I am putting to you is correct, that the statement that the government made about this matter in MYEFO is a farce. It has nothing to do with efficiency. It has nothing to do with cost reduction. It has nothing to do with changes in function. The only thing that I can think of that has happened is that the international adviser position on the committee has not been filled. Is that right?

Mr Roy: I would have to take that on notice. I do know that the board has appointed a new chair and appointed a small number of positions at its last meeting.

Senator KIM CARR: What has happened to the international adviser?

Mr Roy: I do not have the answer to that.

Senator KIM CARR: You are not going to tell me that that is the big efficiency improvement: you are not going to have an international adviser? Maybe that is it. Maybe that is the point I am missing here.

Senator Ronaldson: I think the question in relation to the international adviser can be taken on notice.

Senator KIM CARR: Astronomy is an international business, isn't it?

Dr Marshall: Yes.

Senator KIM CARR: It really is. It would be somewhat odd if you did not have an international adviser. Would that be the case? Is that the efficiency that you have cut the international bit out of the international engagement?

Senator Ronaldson: The question in relation to that position was taken on notice.

Senator KIM CARR: I take it the position is still being pursued; is that right? There are a lot of blank faces here.

Mr Roy: We do not have the detail, so we will take it on notice.

ANSWER

Under the new arrangements for appointments to the Australia Telescope Steering Committee (ATSC) (see the answer provided at AI-7) the composition of the ATSC is unchanged. Membership comprises three Australian-based astronomers, three overseas-based astronomers (the International Advisors) and two representatives of the broader stakeholder community, complemented by (three) ex-officio members appointed by the ATNF Director.

Consistent with the current terms of reference, the CSIRO Board has effected the following appointments to the ATSC:

- Three new members, replacing members whose terms had completed (CSIRO Board meeting on 8-9 October 2014).
- The appointment of a new Chair from within the current members (CSIRO Board meeting on 4-5 December 2014).
- The appointment of a further three new members to the Steering Committee, including a new international advisor. (CSIRO Board meeting on 23-24 February 2015). Once confirmed, these new appointees will replace Committee members whose terms completed at the end of 2014 and will ensure that the composition of the Committee continues as outlined above, including three international advisors.