

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2014-15
2-3 June 2014

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: CSIRO

TOPIC: Staffing Changes in Neurosciences, Clinical Medicine and Agricultural & Environmental Research Areas

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 2 June 2014, page 20-21)

QUESTION No.: BI-7

Senator CARR: What is the effect of withdrawing from neurosciences and clinical medicine? How many people are you taking out of that area?

Dr Clark: I will take that question on notice.

Senator CARR: What will the job losses be, in terms of environmental research, and that includes agricultural-research areas?

Dr Clark: As I mentioned, our managers are currently working through—

Senator CARR: Would you take that on notice?

ANSWER

Neurosciences and clinical medicine

At this point in time, CSIRO has forecast some staffing reductions in the vicinity of approximately 40 FTE, as a result of stopping research projects in the areas of advanced colorectal cancer, dementia and stroke. Some CSIRO staff with generic skills in biological sciences will be redeployed to other non-clinical areas of research in CSIRO; however, clinical directed research in these areas will be wound down. CSIRO has some existing commitments (such as the finalisation of the current stage of the Australian Imaging, Biomarker and Lifestyle cohort study (AIBL)) which it will honour and some of this work may be taken up by existing collaborators.

CSIRO is still working with partners across the government and university sectors to determine more accurately what impact (if any) changes to funding programs in other portfolios may have for their collaborations with CSIRO and our industry partners. CSIRO is unable to provide detailed information on staffing changes in this area until this information is resolved.

Environmental Research

The full staffing implications of CSIRO's Annual Direction Statement and the 2014 Federal Budget are currently being worked through.

CSIRO has indicated that we will cease urban water research currently conducted in Melbourne and 18 staff members have been advised accordingly that they are potentially surplus to requirements.

The organisation will continue to deliver whole of system scale capability to support the management of Australia's ocean territories and coasts and, consistent with the national interest, to the world's oceans and coasts. CSIRO will also continue to deliver excellent science in support of marine industries, especially with our longstanding partners in fisheries. To support this focus, CSIRO will reduce overall investment in marine biodiversity, especially research currently conducted on bathymetry and marine habitat mapping, and will integrate currently separate work in climate and climate adaptation, which will require some reduction in research capabilities. Accordingly around 30 staff with marine and atmospheric research capabilities have been advised that they are potentially surplus to requirements.

We will reduce total investment in social and economic sciences and in terrestrial biodiversity with a focus on rationalisation of effort as previously disparate groups are brought together in CSIRO's new Flagship structure which came into effect from 1 July 2014. We are in consultation with our staff about these changes and the details in terms of staffing impacts are currently being worked through.

Agricultural Research

CSIRO will be reducing its investment in forestry genetics and genomics (around 10 staff) because of the relatively low level of external industry investment support compounded by a downturn in the pulp and paper business in Australia. In addition, rising costs within the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) together with a tighter budget environment will mean a reduction of around 12 staff within the microbiology and general virology areas. This will not impact on CSIRO's obligations and bio-vigilance for the agriculture sector. There will be staff reductions of approximately 10 FTE in the areas of livestock parasitology, grains science and bioproducts. The full impact of staffing changes in these areas is still being worked through.