

**Economics Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio  
2017 - 2018 Budget Estimates  
31 May – 1 June 2017

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

**TOPIC:** Amalgamating with the National Measurement Institute

**REFERENCE:** Questions on Notice (Hansard, 1 June 2017, page 8-9)

**QUESTION No.:** BI-13

Senator KIM CARR: Dr Marshall, has CSIRO been asked about amalgamating with the National Measurement Institute?

Dr Marshall: Amalgamating?

Senator KIM CARR: Absorbing, amalgamating, taking over, joining with—whatever language you would like to use.

Dr Marshall: That is interesting because, as you know, NMI used to be part of CSIRO and is still co-located.

Senator KIM CARR: I do know that.

Dr Marshall: We have had a long discussion with the department over the options for NMI.

Senator KIM CARR: What was your advice to the department?

Dr Marshall: That CSIRO stands ready to support the national interest as best we can.

Senator KIM CARR: Did you say yes, you want to take it over?

Dr Marshall: It is not a question of wanting to take it over. We stood ready to support that important facility however best we could.

Senator KIM CARR: So you said no?

Dr Marshall: We did not say yes or no.

Senator KIM CARR: I am told you said no. Is that not correct?

Dr Marshall: No. We just provided support.

Senator KIM CARR: You just said nothing?

Dr Marshall: NMI is largely housed inside Lindfield, which is a CSIRO site. We were happy to support it, as we always have, but equally not unhappy to have a transition to ANSTO if that is what the department decided.

Senator KIM CARR: You had no opinion?

Dr Marshall: We just wanted to give the best capability to the nation. If we could do that we would have done it. It is up to the department to decide, on balance, what the best thing is.

Senator KIM CARR: When did this occur?

Dr Marshall: I think we had a long discussion last year.

Senator KIM CARR: Do you recall when last year?

Dr Marshall: Not off the top of my head.

Senator KIM CARR: Could you perhaps find that out for me?

Dr Marshall: Certainly.

Senator KIM CARR: Would it cost the CSIRO money to take it over?

Dr Marshall: As with everything, it takes money to run the facilities. In our case, of all of our facilities, the five of the seven landmark national facilities and all of our other facilities and infrastructure, it costs about \$300 million including depreciation, so it is a significant economic cost.

Senator KIM CARR: But the national measurement site is in need of repair, isn't it?

Dr Marshall: I did my cadetship at Lindfield in the 1980s. It is quite a robust site.

Senator KIM CARR: It is concrete.

Dr Marshall: Concrete and brick—very solid.

Senator KIM CARR: It is robust, all right, but it has a few problems, doesn't it—the building itself?

Ms Bennett: The buildings on Lindfield are ageing and they in our property plan for upgrade.

Senator KIM CARR: Significant upgrade, I recall.

Ms Bennett: It will be a costly upgrade to many of those buildings.

Senator KIM CARR: How much?

Ms Bennett: We are still finalising that. I would have to take on notice specifically in relation to Lindfield, because there are other moves involved, as I have indicated, like moving from Marsfield to Lindfield. I had better take that on notice specifically for the cost of Lindfield.

Senator KIM CARR: But if you were to take over the National Measurement Institute you would be responsible for cleaning up that building too, wouldn't you?

Ms Bennett: Some of the buildings the National Measurement Institute occupy are indeed CSIRO buildings, where CSIRO staff are already. They have some specific fit for purpose, such as some of the high voltage electricity testing and things like that.

Senator KIM CARR: They have chemical laboratories as well, don't they?

Ms Bennett: They do indeed, as does CSIRO.

Senator KIM CARR: And they are also in need of refurbishment, aren't they?

Ms Bennett: Agreed. The buildings on that site that CSIRO and NMI occupy are in need of upgrade.

Senator KIM CARR: How old are they?

Ms Bennett: I do not know precisely, but it is their mid-life, so I am thinking in the order of 20 to 25 years. I will correct that if I am materially wrong.

## **ANSWER**

A number of formal and informal meetings at different levels explored the option of consolidating NMI functions within CSIRO in the 2014-15 year. Discussions related to property matters continued through 2016 in some of the regular meetings held between the CSIRO and the department executive.