

**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:** CSIRO

**TOPIC:** Outposting to regional centres or capital cities

**REFERENCE:** Questions on Notice (Hansard, 1 June 2017, pages 14-15)

**QUESTION No.:** BI-18

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Again congratulations to CSIRO on the work you do. I think all senators, all parliamentarians and in fact all Australians recognise the great work that CSIRO does, so thanks for that. I just want to get a feel for where your officers are based and why they are based there, recognising that you have budget constraints and that it is never easy to run a big organisation, particularly a big scientific organisation like yours. Do I get the feel that you are centralising people back into the capital cities, when years ago CSIRO used to be widely diversified in its locations?

Dr Marshall: Before I pass to my chief operating officer, who handles strategy on property, I would just say that CSIRO has a strategy that dates back at least one CEO. In the capital cities, we have multiple sites, and part of our strategy is to try to consolidate, where it makes economic sense, when we are already in a city. But that is different to our rural strategy.

I just wanted to add also, when you mentioned the great work, and I meant to do it when Senator Carr was talking about AAHL, that over Christmas and New Year this year the scientists at AAHL worked day and night all through the holidays to help with the prawn issue in northern Queensland. It was just a remarkable contribution. People in the organisation do this often, but that was a particularly challenging period. I just want to say thank you and take the opportunity to thank them, because I know they watch this. It was really above and beyond the call of duty.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: If I have a complaint, Dr Marshall, it is that you do not recognise and publicise as well as perhaps you should some of the great work that your guys do. You have given one instance of that which I was sort of referring to, but it happens in many other ways too, so thanks for that.

Ms Bennett: We have 59 sites in Australia. As Dr Marshall has said, the current intention in the property strategy is twofold. We certainly are looking to consolidate within a city. I could take Canberra. We are moving down from about five or six sites to two. That is our intention. That enables us to have critical mass as well as some saving on the capital and operating expenditure of the properties.

We remain committed to our philosophy of co-location, so, in addition to driving to a practical consolidation for CSIRO, we also look to take advantage of every opportunity to co-locate. For example, at Townsville, we are co-located with the James Cook University. Really, those are the two fundamental pillars that we look to: not to be alone but to be collaborating with institutions and universities as much as we can at every location.

Of our 59 sites, 21—that is 36 per cent of our sites—would be outside the capital cities.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: So 38 are in the capital cities.

Ms Bennett: Correct.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Why do they have to be in the capital cities? I am talking in the broad here. I have raised it with the Secretary of the Treasury, and, if you happened to hear ABC radio this morning, you would have heard me saying a few things.

Ms Bennett: Perhaps I would start from the other respect. As we have discussed previously and again traversed this morning, CSIRO have developed our reach over nearly 100 years, so in some

sense we start from the position of being where we are. The logic for doing that was based through our past, and we continue to look for opportunities to co-locate and be close to universities. For instance, one of the more recent moves we have done has been to take ourselves off an independent site in Belmont and move to be closer to Deakin University in order to continue to undertake fibre research, for instance.

Part of the rationale for where we are, be it in a capital city or be it in the regions, is very much looking across the system to ensure that we can play our part as part of a greater critical mass. We are where we are because of and including legacy. We simply do not have the funds, the ability, for—nor from a people perspective should we contemplate—a move for the sake of a move. Not only are we working closely with collaborators at sites; we also have in many cases major infrastructure that is very expensive to move, and those other collaborators rely on us being there for that infrastructure. So we look mindfully when making a decision about location.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: I do not for one moment diminish or underrate the work you have done in northern Australia, with a lot of the northern Australian development issues, but do I get the feel that your outposts in the north particularly, and within regional Australia, generally have lessened and that, over a period of time, there have been more people relocated back to the capital cities? Is that accurate, or have I got the wrong feel on that?

Ms Bennett: Senator, I would not have the figures to confirm that. The comment I would make is that, through the evolution of the type of science we do, sometimes we would contemplate closing a particular location. For example, we continue to do and expand the work we do with James Cook University at Townsville. It does ebb and flow, but I certainly do not have figures to be able to confirm your assertion.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Could you just take that on notice. I do not want you to spend a lot of your very valuable time doing it, but if you could, for the last 10 years, give me a feel for whether my feel is correct—have you gravitated towards the cities? I understand that you have 49 in Townsville at JCU and elsewhere.

Mr Roy: That is accurate.

## ANSWER

Data related to CSIRO's regionally based staff by State is provided below as Headcount data and as a percentage of total CSIRO staff.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Headcount</b>											
NSW	320	332	325	331	327	320	324	307	262	278	289
NT	17	16	11	11	10	10	12	11	5	4	2
QLD	175	174	153	129	131	128	135	125	114	116	116
SA	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VIC	410	408	398	373	360	343	332	318	308	310	368
WA	2	3	0	2	6	7	10	10	14	22	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>813</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>793</b>
<b>Percentage of CSIRO staff</b>											
NSW	5.05%	5.17%	4.99%	4.96%	5.02%	4.93%	5.00%	5.15%	4.97%	5.18%	5.21%
NT	0.27%	0.25%	0.17%	0.16%	0.15%	0.15%	0.19%	0.18%	0.09%	0.07%	0.04%
QLD	2.76%	2.71%	2.35%	1.93%	2.01%	1.97%	2.08%	2.10%	2.16%	2.16%	2.09%
SA	0.06%	0.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
VIC	6.48%	6.35%	6.11%	5.58%	5.53%	5.28%	5.13%	5.33%	5.85%	5.78%	6.64%
WA	0.03%	0.05%	0.00%	0.03%	0.09%	0.11%	0.15%	0.17%	0.27%	0.41%	0.32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.66%</b>	<b>14.59%</b>	<b>13.63%</b>	<b>12.66%</b>	<b>12.80%</b>	<b>12.45%</b>	<b>12.55%</b>	<b>12.93%</b>	<b>13.34%</b>	<b>13.60%</b>	<b>14.30%</b>

Note: All figures provided are as at 30 June except for 2017 which are provided as at 31 May 2017