

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

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: CSIRO

TOPIC: Cost of redundancies for climate science

REFERENCE: Questions on Notice (Hansard, 1 June 2017, page 24)

QUESTION No.: BI-22

Senator RICE: Some questions were taken on notice before about the number of climate scientists that CSIRO had before the cuts. My recollection, being actively involved at the time, was that I think there were 140 climate scientists prior to February last year.

Mr Roy: That rings a bell—across two programs we were talking about particularly at the time.

Senator RICE: But it was particularly those 140 climate scientists. So we are heading back towards the levels that were there of about 140. Dr Marshall, given the turmoil that the organisation was put through last year, was it worth that turmoil and the huge loss in staff morale? There was a plan to cut 90 of those 140 jobs, but now things are fortunately looking much rosier again.

Dr Marshall: On rough numbers, from memory—because, like you, I was very involved as well—I think there were 65 people in Oceans and Atmosphere whose positions were at risk. I think we ended up mitigating—

Senator RICE: I think it was up to 100 in total that we were looking at initially. And then it went down from there.

Dr Marshall: Sixty-five is what I remember from the planning, and we lost about 57 people instead of 65. Some of the mitigations that we did were by moving people from Oceans and Atmosphere into areas like agriculture. A great outcome—the reason I mention this one—is that the combination with the climate modelling capability in agriculture was able to produce a new tool to help farmers predict climate variability. As you know, farmers make money maybe three years in 10 and lose money the other seven. So the ability to predict when more fertiliser or irrigation is going to help increase yields is really valuable. It is a great example of the national benefit of that type of climate modelling. So it was a great opportunity to move some people into some different areas and deliver greater impact from the science.

Senator RICE: A number—however many—were finally lost. Can you take on notice the cost of the redundancies for those positions.

Dr Marshall: Certainly.

ANSWER

The total number of redundancies planned in Oceans & Atmosphere in March 2016 was 74, however this was reduced to 54 through mitigations. 29 redundancies within climate science programs have now been effected. The cost of those redundancies (redundancy benefit and in lieu notice period payments) is \$2,884,588.76.