

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio
2016-17 Supplementary Budget Estimates
20 October 2016

AGENCY: CSIRO

TOPIC: Ginninderra agricultural and horticultural testing station in the ACT

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 20 October 2016, page 85-86)

QUESTION No.: SI-14

Senator RHIANNON: Thank you. I want to move on to another issue. Can you provide an update on the proposal for housing at the Ginninderra agricultural and horticultural testing station in the ACT?

Ms Bennett: Yes. On 19 August last year CSIRO announced its request for the National Capital Authority to designate the Ginninderra site as urban area, as the site is much greater than our research needs. We have undertaken extensive public consultation regarding our intention to divest the site. We have commenced a process to identify a suitable development partner to progress with the next steps in the planning for the development of the site. In May 2016 we released a request for expression of interest to the market for potential development partners to identify themselves. The responses have been evaluated, and our next step will be to move to a formal request for proposal from the market.

Senator RHIANNON: Thank you. What consideration is being given to the potential toxic chemical contamination in the area? Reading their list, there are quite a lot of nasties there. I understand some of them are carcinogenic—DDT, malathion and dioxin.

Ms Bennett: We have undertaken extensive environmental reviews so far on the site. Observations, including from external experts, have indicated that over 99 per cent of the site is absolutely suitable for proposed residential redevelopment. There are a few areas that are being identified as needing potential remediation, and these include some asbestos, a small amount of hydrocarbons in the vicinity of former underground storage tanks and some hydrocarbons and pesticides in the vicinity of a former herbicide shed. We have employed an external, suitably qualified environmental consultant and have voluntarily appointed an EPA-approved auditor to assist us in determining and presenting a final report at this point in time. That report will be due—we expect to receive comments by the end of October.

Senator RHIANNON: Can you supply a list of what the toxic chemicals that have been found on the site are, please—not just the word 'hydrocarbons', but what they actually are, please.

Ms Bennett: I can certainly tell you what we know, but I would stress that at the moment the reports coming back to CSIRO are not identifying, to use your words, a large degree of 'toxic chemicals' on the site. But I can certainly take it on notice and provide you with the information we have at the current time.

ANSWER

Environmental consultants CH2M Hill completed a site wide environmental investigation of Ginninderra in early October 2016. The summary of the chemicals found through this investigation is attached.

CH2M Hill have assessed the potential for toxic health effects associated with the identified chemicals by comparing the measured concentrations to health screening levels (i.e. published acceptable levels in soil and groundwater). The majority of the chemicals listed are not assessed by

CH2M Hill as posing potential toxic health effects and are listed because they may pose potential ecological effects, or screening levels were unavailable.

Where chemicals were assessed by CH2M to pose potential effects, it is possible that more detailed risk assessment would conclude that health or ecological effects are unlikely. The potentially impacted areas of the site are generally localised and limited to infrastructure that will require removal/decommissioning as part of site redevelopment (e.g. a former fuel storage area, a chemical storage shed and building footprints). Any contamination which requires remediation following removal of infrastructure will be remediated as part of site redevelopment.