

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

AGENCY: CSIRO

TOPIC: Environmental impact statement

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

QUESTION No.: SI-15

Senator RHIANNON: Thank you. Has an environmental impact statement been made?

Ms Bennett: As I have indicated, at the stage we are at: we have undertaken over the last two years voluntarily various environmental studies, including a stage 1 environmental assessment in February 2014; a stage 2 environmental assessment in May 2015; a targeted environmental site assessment, which was completed in February 2016; and a site-wide environmental investigation, which is being undertaken, as I have indicated. We will not be required to do what I think you are referring to as an impact statement until later in the process.

Senator RHIANNON: Are the reports that you have just mentioned publicly available?

Ms Bennett: I would have to take that on notice as to whether they are. If I may come back to the comment you made about some of the chemicals: the only herbicides and pesticides found were applied to research trials. They are for the general management of weeds and insect pests. They are commercially available products. At no time have we undertaken research in the development, formulation or testing of any new or experimental herbicides. No experiments specifically involving dioxin are recorded as having been carried out at the site. The environmental consultants are testing for a broad suite of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides in the soil, surface water and sediment. The initial report is that it has not found any concentration at elevated levels. Dioxin has not been specifically tested for as it has not been indicated to be a contaminant of concern at the moment.

Senator RHIANNON: How long has the CSIRO had the site? Was it since 1958?

Ms Bennett: I am not sure I have that date. Yes, you are correct—since 1958.

Senator RHIANNON: What I am trying to understand—and you could take this on notice—is the comprehensive register of works that have been carried out on the site since then. I note that you said that you have not tested for dioxin, but there are reports around that there is dioxin in the soil. So I am just trying to resolve that in terms of what your material says, which you would hope would be comprehensive and thorough, and what is out in the public domain at the moment, because there is growing concern.

Ms Bennett: Let me clarify: the reason, at the moment, that dioxin has not been specifically tested for is through the work of the environmental consultants. It has not been indicated as being a contaminant of concern. So it is an informed decision based on the advice of the external consultants. Senator, I will try and get you the information that you are asking for to the best of our ability.

ANSWER

There is no single register of research undertaken on the site.

CSIRO has “Field Station Records” available for the period 1962 – 1978 which contain summaries of research projects carried out at Ginninderra. They are currently not publically available.

These records indicate that three research projects on the use of herbicides occurred. This research related to the suitability of commercially-available, commonly used herbicides in controlling

particular weeds and did not involve the testing of experimental herbicides. The three projects were:

1. July 1963: “Studies on skeleton weed – chemical control” - Describes the use of phenoxyacetic acid type herbicides, including 2,4-D
2. May 1964: “Diquat and paraquat for barley grass control in mature Lucerne stands” - Describes use of Diquat dibromide and paraquat di (methyl sulphate)
3. September 1965: “The effect of fallow herbicide sprays and cultivation on the yield of wheat in the presence of skeleton weed” - This report describes experiments using 2,4-D.

Environmental consultants CH2M Hill is currently in the final stages of completing the site-wide environmental investigation, which will consolidate the findings of the previous reports as well as including any new findings from their own independent analysis. A summary of the report will be made publicly available after the auditor completes their review, and the Auditor’s report has been submitted to the relevant authorities. An extract from this report is provided in answer to question SI-14.

The reports referenced during the hearing are as follows.

Report	Publically Available
Stage 1 Environmental Assessment (AECOM, Feb 14)	Will not be publically available
Stage 2 Environmental Assessment (CH2MHill, May 15)	Will not be publically available
Targeted Environmental Site Assessment DRAFT (CH2MHill, Feb 16)	Superseded by SWEI Will not be publically available
Site Wide Environmental Investigation (CH2MHill, Oct 16)	An extract will be released after final Auditor’s comments received and report updated.
Environmental Site Auditor’s Report (ERM, estimated late Nov 16)	To be released after submitting to the relevant authorities