

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

AGENCY: CSIRO

TOPIC: ATNF and NCRIS

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Carr

QUESTION No.: SI-89

1. What is the role and importance of CSIRO's Australia Telescope National Facility assets?
2. What is the source of funding for the various components of the ATNF?
3. How important is funding from Astronomy Australia Limited (AAL) – funding that flows from NCRIS?
4. What are your current costs for
 - a. ASKAP
 - b. Parkes
 - c. ATCA (Narrabi)
 - d. Other factors like shared costs
5. Have you received a budget or a draft budget for the 16/17 financial year from AAL?
 - i. How much funding will you be receiving for 2016/17?
 - ii. How does that funding compare to previous years?
 - iii. What explanations have you been given for the funding changes?

ANSWER

1. The Australia Telescope National Facility (ATNF) provides access to radio astronomy research facilities for Australian and international astronomers. Observing time is awarded competitively on the basis of scientific merit. The facilities are world class in productivity and scientific impact and are unique in the Southern hemisphere. Australia's Southern hemisphere location gives radio astronomy a strong competitive advantage with a far better view of the Milky Way. The ATNF facilities have maintained Australia's strong position internationally in radio astronomy research and innovation – a position which Australia has held for more than half a century.
2. ATNF Telescope operations are funded with CSIRO appropriation as well as NCRIS funding administered by Astronomy Australia Limited. In addition, the Breakthrough Foundation (USA) is providing funding for the Breakthrough Listen project at Parkes.
3. In 2016-17 AAL funding of \$3.2m provides 20.9 per cent of the direct costs of operating the ATNF Telescopes.
4. The budgeted costs for these facilities in 2016-17 is:
 - a. \$8.5M for ASKAP
 - b. \$2.2M for Parkes
 - c. \$2.9M for ATCA
 - d. \$9.4M for shared costs not specific to an individual telescope.

5. Yes, CSIRO has received a budget from AAL, but the contract is not yet finalised.
 - i. Funding for 2016-17 is expected to be \$3.2m .
 - ii. Funding in previous years was \$4.7m in 15-16; \$4.5 in 14-15; \$1.4m in 13-14.
 - iii. The rationale for AAL's decisions should be directed to AAL.