

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing
26 February 2009

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

TOPIC: Commercial Ready

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard 26 February 2009, E120-121)

QUESTION No.: AI-58

Senator ABETZ—...I asked, I think it was last time, whether CSIRO had undertaken an assessment of reduction in income from outside sources as it relates to the Commercial Ready program being cut, axed, whatever term we want to use. I think we have agreed and established in the past that CSIRO was the beneficiary of collaborative type arrangements with projects that had been in receipt of Commercial Ready program funding and, when it drew up its budget for the May budget last year, it was not aware of the government's decision to axe the Commercial Ready program. And, if I recall Dr Garrett's evidence at the time, that was not factored into the budget considerations in relation to income from external sources. Are you able now to give us some idea as to the impact of that on the CSIRO's budget?

Mr Whelan—Senator, yes, you did ask me questions on that and you asked me some questions on notice. At the time we were not able to identify the impact. We are still unable to do that. There are a range of factors that impact our research and services revenue. On the face of it, we look likely to achieve our research and services budget this year. At the end of January we had secured more than 93 per cent of that research target through contracts. At this point in time it does not look like it has had any impact, but I cannot precisely quantify that other than to say that, at this point in time, we appear on track to achieve our external revenue budget for this year.

Senator ABETZ—Right, but would you agree with this proposition: if the Commercial Ready program had not been axed, CSIRO's income from external sources would be greater than it otherwise is?

Mr Whelan—I can not speculate on that, Senator. I do not know.

Senator ABETZ—Mr Whelan, can you please take on notice how many projects the CSIRO has collaborated with and obtained income from projects that have been at least partially funded by the Commercial Ready program over the last three years?

Mr Whelan—We would certainly apply our best efforts.

Senator ABETZ—Right, thank you.

Mr Whelan—If I could just clarify, we may not be able to provide all of the data you are seeking because we are not necessarily going to be aware that our partners have received money from Commercial Ready, but where we are aware, I am happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

CSIRO is aware that it has conducted R&D projects over the period of financial years 05/06 to 07/08 with eleven commercial partners who obtained Commercial Ready support. It should be noted that CSIRO would not necessarily be aware that a commercial partner has Commercial Ready support (except where the partner is a spin-out company from CSIRO).