

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
28 and 29 May 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION (CSIRO)

TOPIC: FOI Requests

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 28 May 2012, page 21)

QUESTION No.: BI-10

Senator COLBECK: Were FOI requests made to CSIRO in late 2011 and early 2012 by a former employee who had been with the organisation for 11 years? Do the answers to those requests show that 12,528 pages of internal Outlook emails into those appointments were written about them between 1998 and 2009? Is it also right that almost all of those pages to which the employee has not been privy were generated after May 2006 when he first made his complaints about the practices of at least one CSIRO manager?

Mr Whelan: No. I am not aware of that level of detail, although I would be happy to make an inquiry to that effect.

Senator COLBECK: So in respect of the information I have, this employee had something like 500 pages worth of emails and calendar appointments generated about him in the first eight years of his employment. But another 12,000 pages worth were generated in the last three. That is an extraordinary use of resources.

Mr Whelan: Depending on the individual's circumstances, it is not entirely surprising. If the individual had a workers compensation case that required medical assessments and turn to work programs, there would have been detailed plans developed. They would take up many pages. They would have been reviewed. I think you are referring to individual emails. Often those emails are forwarded and copied. That would result in the same number of pages being replicated a number of times. On the face of it, I am not sure that I would be concerned about that. It would depend on the nature of the individual's employment history and his circumstances.

Senator COLBECK: So those circumstances would drive the generation of this information?

Mr Whelan: Yes, Senator. As you would imagine, employees of CSIRO are not in the business of writing emails or preparing reports just for the fun of it. They generally do it in response to a need or a request. I can only imagine from the details you have provided me today that there was a range of factors that required that information to be prepared. As I indicated to you, I would be happy to take the detail on notice and confirm the figures you have quoted.

ANSWER

Q. Were FOI requests made to CSIRO in late 2011 and early 2012 by a former employee who had been with the organisation for 11 years?

A. Yes.

Q. Do the answers to those requests show that 12,528 pages of internal Outlook emails into those appointments were written about them between 1998 and 2009?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it also right that almost all of those pages to which the employee has not been privy were generated after May 2006 when he first made his complaints about the practices of at least one CSIRO manager?

A. Yes.