

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012
19 October 2011

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

TOPIC: CYBERNOSE PROJECT

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Colbeck

QUESTION No.: SI-86

1. When did CSIRO begin work on its Cybernose project?
2. How much has CSIRO invested in total in its Cybernose project?
3. Is it correct that the wine and grape industry – which the project is intended to benefit – has not devoted a cent to the Cybernose project?
4. How has the extra \$2.1 million in funding for the project announced by Minister Combet in 2010 been used? What tangible benefits has this funding generated?

ANSWER

1. In March 2004.
2. As previously advised, in answer to Question on Notice BI-75 from the 2011 Budget Estimates, CSIRO is currently involved in commercial negotiations for the possible commercialisation of the Cybernose technology. In that context, the provision of information regarding the development costs of the technology could potentially prejudice CSIRO's negotiating position.
3. It is correct that the wine and grape industry has not invested directly in the Cybernose Project, although it has invested substantially in a related project. However, it is not correct to say that the Cybernose Project is intended primarily to benefit the wine and grape industry. Since mid-2007, the proximal focus of the Cybernose Project has been detection of explosives and other threats of civilian, law enforcement and defence significance.
4. The funding announced by Minister Combet in 2010 was for a contract with the Department of Defence as part of the Capability and Technology Demonstrator (CTD) Program. The CTD project commenced in December 2010 and will be completed in December 2013. To date three milestones have been achieved. The aim of the project is to construct and test a "Demonstrator" of a device that will detect explosives and allow Defence to assess its potential to detect and defeat Improvised Explosive Devices. Two physicist/engineers and one post-doctoral yeast biotechnologist have been recruited to work with the pre-existing CSIRO Cybernose team on delivering these goals. Funding received to date has enabled the construction and testing of prototype subsystems, discovery of sensors, purchase of specialised hardware and the placing of an order for a major sub-component to a high-tech Australian SME. The funding has enabled the development of new patentable intellectual property underpinning these advances.