

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: CSIRO
Output Group: CSIRO

DEST Question No. E191_06

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

LOPTEx

- (a) You argue strenuously that CSIRO has a successful track record in commercialisation, yet this real example appears to be ignored. Why?
- (b) You also claim that CSIRO is keen to recognise the achievements of its research staff, particularly those who produce "the goods". What public acknowledgement has been given to the research team that developed this invention?
- (c) Can you confirm that CSIRO has deliberately down played the success of this system because wool industry money was involved in its development but that it has been cotton rather than wool mills that have taken up the technology?

Do you think that playing that sort of game does justice to CSIRO, to the staff of the research team or to the taxpayers who underwrote the vast majority of the development costs?

- (d) Can you confirm that, as of February this year, CSIRO continued to downplay the success of the LOPTEx sorter in the cotton industry, yet at the same time was trying to get a share of some of the \$26.5 million that had been allotted to a co-operative cotton research centre?

How do you reconcile these two positions?

- (e) What steps will you take to ensure that this real success story, and those CSIRO scientists and technicians who achieved it, are accorded the acknowledgement that is properly deserved?

Answer:

CSIRO has provided the following response.

LOPTEx commercialisation – CSIRO Textile and Fibre Technology

- a) It is incorrect to say that this technology has been ignored. As stated in the previous response (E190_06), this technology was acknowledged and publicised at the time it was developed and licensed (in the 1980's to mid 1990's). This has been an example of where commercialisation has been successful and this technology has been of value to the cotton industry.
- b) The team members were rewarded within their career by merit promotion based on the R&D success. By the time the technology had generated substantial royalties and became a commercial success, the team had retired from CSIRO.

- c) CSIRO has not played down the success of this technology. The royalties earned have partially offset the original R&D costs and have been re-invested in research for the benefit of the Australian natural fibre industry.
- d) There is no connection between the commercialisation of the Siroserter technology and CSIRO's research for the Australian cotton industry. CSIRO continues to work on behalf of the Australian cotton industry through a variety of projects and as part of the Cotton Catchment and Communities CRC. There has been no deliberate downplaying of the Siroserter technology by CSIRO.
- e) This technology is a technical and commercial success in the cotton industry.

This success was primarily due to the licensee who recognised the market need in cotton which is a completely different to wool, the market segment that was originally envisaged.