



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Industry,  
Science and Resources**

Senator Jess Walsh  
Chair  
Senate Economics Legislation Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Walsh

On reviewing the Proof Hansard of the testimony given by the department at the Senate Estimates hearing on 10 November 2022, we find that some of the information provided to the Committee would benefit from clarification and correction.

The following exchange occurred between Senator McDonald, Dr Steve Hill, Chief Scientist and Dr James Johnson Chief Executive Officer:

**Senator McDONALD:** Finally, I have been really concerned, as I get around the country and talk to young people, about how few people are studying geology, mining, engineering and necessary careers. I think that the Minerals Council 30 minerals futurist edition that they put out is a terrific document. I've been ordering boxes and boxes and delivering them to the schools right across the north. But what engagement have you got with the education department, with trying to inspire more young people to come into this terrific industry?

**Dr Johnson:** Thanks for the question, Senator. It is an important issue. I'll start by saying it's broader than simply the geosciences. It's STEM in the broad. We as a nation have a challenge at keeping students, who probably in early primary school are all fascinated by it and interested in science and STEM subjects more broadly, into their teens. But we do have an outreach program. My colleague the Chief Scientist for Geoscience Australia, Dr Hill, will speak to some of our outreach programs.

**Senator McDONALD:** Terrific, thank you.

**Dr Hill:** Thank you for your question. Yes, we're very proud of our engagement with schools and our education program at Geoscience Australia. We see that as a key part of the future, not only for Geoscience Australia but also for geoscience and what it contributes to the country into the future. One of the key parts of our activities at Geoscience Australia is through our education centre, where we have a combination of schools that visit. We see all the schools that come to Canberra on their excursions and we host a large number of those schools every year at Geoscience Australia in our education centre. We're also very active in producing online materials. That was really important during COVID. Then we also have programs where we go out into regional and remote areas and communities and help lead education programs through there.

**Dr Johnson:** Senator, I'll just add some granularity to that. Through the education centre, over its 20-year history, we've had over 150,000 school students through. In the years leading up to the pandemic, we were over 10,000 students a year. We're gradually building back up now. Since 2000, we've had around 4,000 students, but we're gradually boosting those numbers. So it's a very deliberate effort to engage students in the earth sciences.

The statistics noted by Dr Johnson were incorrectly read out. Please see the following clarification of the statistics.

The number of students visiting Geoscience Australia's Education Centre since the pandemic in 2020 have been steadily increasing. In 2020, there were 1,480 students who visited the centre, this grew to 3,491 in 2021 and so far in 2022 there have been 4,133 students visit the centre.

I apologise for any inconvenience caused and ask that you alert other members of the Committee to this correction.

Yours sincerely

Dr Steve Hill

Chief Scientist, Geoscience Australia

25 November 2022