

Environment and Communications References
Answers to questions on notice
Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Portfolio

Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ24-000075
Hearing Date: 24 April 2024
Division/Agency: People Division
Topic: AAD Chief Scientist recruitment cost
Hansard Page: 6
Question Date: 24 April 2024
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Duniam asked:

Senator DUNIAM: What was the cost of round 1 recruitment?

Ms Campbell: I don't have that with me.

Senator DUNIAM: Mr Hanlon, you're the CFO. Do you?

Mr Hanlon: No, I don't have that.

Senator DUNIAM: Do you have a rough idea of what these processes normally cost? You said it was in line with APS recruitment processes as a standard process.

Ms Campbell: There would have been costs for a recruitment panel and for a scribing service for the panel and for an executive search. I can certainly take that on notice. I don't have that to hand.

Mr Sullivan: But it wasn't out of the ordinary for a position of this nature.

Senator DUNIAM: What is 'the ordinary' for a position of this nature?

Mr Sullivan: I've set myself up there.

Senator DUNIAM: You have.

Mr Sullivan: I've got no idea, to tell you the truth, but I know that, in terms of the process itself rather than the cost, this wasn't an extremely costly process in comparison. We can take that on notice.

Answer:

1. The cost for recruitment can vary due to components such as different service providers, advertising mediums and executive search services.
2. The total cost of the Australian Antarctic Division Chief Scientist recruitment round was \$33,075.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ24-000076
Hearing Date: 24 April 2024
Division/Agency: People Division
Topic: AAD staffing update
Hansard Page: 8
Question Date: 24 April 2024
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Bilyk asked:

CHAIR: When you say 'natural departure', was there any expectation or hope that those contracts would be renewed by those individuals but were not?

Dr Souter: In all cases that I am aware of, conversations with those individuals occurred as to whether they had a desire to extend their contract. I'm not aware that anyone expressed that desire. I will happily clarify that to make sure that that's accurate.

Senator BILYK: Does that leave a gap? Because they're not three-week contractors; they're quite often long-term contractors, and they haven't chosen to renew their contracts. Does that leave a skills gap somewhere?

Ms Campbell: Sometimes it does. I think we talked about this in one of the previous hearings. We use contractors for a range of reasons. Sometimes there's a gap when people leave, and we look to replace them. I've certainly got some examples of that in our training team, where we've had some turnover and we're looking to fill those jobs. For other people who are on contracts, when the work naturally finishes—and I think we have a lot of non-ongoing staff, for example, in the Science Branch, who are working on remediation of oil spills and insurance money. That is a fixed-term project, so when that project comes to an end those staff contracts will come to an end as well. So it really varies.

One of the things we have been working on in the division is converting what was when I first started less than 12 months ago, but coming on to 12 months, a high proportion of non-ongoing and insecure workers into ongoing positions. We've achieved that.

Senator BILYK: How many is that?

Ms Campbell: I don't have the numbers. Senator BILYK: Could you take that on notice. Ms Campbell: We can have a look at it.

Senator BILYK: Over the last 12 months, how many have moved from contract-based to permanent staff?

Ms Campbell: Yes, we can have a look at it. I think we answered that for one of the questions on notice, but we can update that.

Mr Sullivan: We can just update it.

Senator BILYK: Maybe you could update it, yes.

Answer:

Between the period 1 March 2023 and 24 April 2024, 18 Australian Antarctic Division employees who were on on a non-ongoing or labour hire contract were issued with an ongoing letter of employment. This included 10 non-ongoing employees and 8 labour hires.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ24-000080
Hearing Date: 24 April 2024
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)
Topic: Geoscience funding
Hansard Page: 20
Question Date: 24 April 2024
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Duniam asked:

Senator DUNIAM: I've touched on this previously, and there was a question on notice, No. IQ23-000321, around changes to expenditure that might have flowed from the overspend given the nature of the internal budgetary management that goes on, understandably. I wonder about the funding agreement, or the contracted arrangement, with Geoscience Australia around the \$15 million to help operate the Digital Earth program. Has there been any change to the funding available under that particular program, as it's profiled and in terms of total expenditure?

Ms Campbell: My understanding is that we don't have a financial arrangement with Geoscience Australia. We work to provide them access to Antarctica to deliver their services, and that work continues. Is that correct?

Ms Buchanan: I can take any detail on notice for you, but my understanding is that there has been a portion of funds provided to GA for the Digital Earth program. But I'm not aware that there was a strict agreed schedule around that funding. I can confirm that for you on notice.

Senator DUNIAM: So there is funding to go to GA from the AAD as part of an arrangement—you've just confirmed that?

Ms Buchanan: I'll take that on notice and confirm it.

Mr Sullivan: In terms of the amounts, we'll take it on notice.

Senator DUNIAM: But there is funding flowing from AAD to GA, yes?

Ms Buchanan: My understanding—and I will confirm it on notice—is that there had been some funding provided to GA.

Senator DUNIAM: Okay. Was there an agreement about quantum and profiling of that funding—

Ms Buchanan: I'll have to take that on notice.

Senator DUNIAM: and, if so, can you take that on notice and provide us with a copy of that. Indeed, if there's been any change to the quantum or profiling of any funding around that, can you include what the reason for that would be.

Answer:

In mid-2023, Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) contracted Geoscience Australia at a cost of \$750,000 to produce a project proposal for delivery of Digital Earth Antarctica.

In October 2023, Geoscience Australia delivered the Digital Earth Antarctica project proposal to AAD which outlined a phased approach with staged deliverables and costings. The AAD is reviewing the proposal and will continue to work with Geoscience Australia on options to deliver Digital Earth Antarctica.