



Thursday, 09 April 2009

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: isi.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Madam/Sir,

Inquiry into long-term meteorological forecasting in Australia

The PSU Group of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) represents over 200,000 employees in the Australian Public Service, the Australian Government public sector, the ACT Public Service, the Northern Territory Public Service, and other sectors including telecommunications, call centres, employment services and radio and television broadcasting. Our members in the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) have been bargaining with management for the past nine months for a new Collective Agreement on pay and conditions, replacing the current Agreement which expired on 31 December 2008.

The CPSU welcomes the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation instigating this inquiry into long-term meteorological forecasting. In this initial submission we wish to raise our significant concerns about the impact of funding cuts on BoM's capacity to deliver high quality, efficient, effective and innovative long-term forecasting services.

Accordingly CPSU recommends that in its final report the Committee should

- *Address the need for BoM to be funded to maintain staffing levels that preserve efficient, effective and high standard long-term forecasting;*
- *Recognise that BoM must encourage a culture of innovation within its own organisation, by co-operating with employees to identify best practice in the delivery of quality services.*

We are currently surveying CPSU members to finalise our more detailed supplementary submission to the inquiry. We are surveying not only members in BoM, but other Australian government agencies that utilise the Bureau's forecasts. These include the Departments of Environment, Agriculture, Climate Change, Science and Innovation, and Treasury. The CPSU's survey is at: https://www.cpsusurveys.org.au/BOM_inquiry.asp

Adequate Resourcing

Budgetary measures such as accrual accounting, the additional 2 per cent efficiency dividend, moves towards project rather than ongoing funding, and a lack of supplementation for pay increases all combine to create serious funding pressures for the Bureau. CPSU members are particularly concerned that, while

the range and quality of services provided by BoM has increased dramatically in recent years, due to funding constraints no commensurate increase in staffing has occurred. Our members are committed to delivering efficient and effective public services, and firmly believe these can only be achieved through adequate public funding.

Sources of Innovation

The Inquiry Terms of Reference refer to the need for innovation in long-term meteorological forecasting methods. CPSU believes that current funding pressures damage BoM's capacity for innovation. With reduced staffing levels BoM will have fewer motivated, skilled and experienced employees. This will compromise the integrity of the Bureau's observational data, and reduce its capacity to extract value from the high standard climate change monitoring tools it has developed. Innovation opportunities and essential services will be severely curtailed under such circumstances.

The Inquiry also seeks to examine '*strategies, systems and research overseas that could contribute to Australia's innovation*'. CPSU members support the Bureau in seeking knowledge and insights on the best means of delivering services. However public sector agencies should also look to their own employees for contributions to innovation. CPSU members are willing to work with government to identify new methods for the efficient and effective delivery of quality public services. The Bureau and its employees, working together, can identify and implement best practice and foster a culture of innovation within the agency.

The CPSU thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment on these issues. CPSU would be pleased to appear before the Committee's public hearing to represent the views of government employees.

The contact person is Alison Rahill, Parliamentary Liaison Officer CPSU alison.rahill@cpsu.org.au or mob 0438 601 497.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Jones
National Secretary