

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 7
Hearing: Additional Estimates
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Programme: Science
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Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: I have just a few quick questions on the National Environmental Science Programme. In relation to CSIRO, could you just quickly outline what the relationship is between CSIRO and that program in terms of staffing levels and funding.

Dr Wright: The National Environmental Science Programme operates through six hubs, and the department is contracted with those hubs. They are multidisciplinary and they engage with other providers. So CSIRO is involved in a number of hubs across a range of projects. We do not have the detail precisely of the nature of those relationships. Sometimes they might partner, sometimes they might provide a staff member. There is quite a broad range of relationships there. But all I can say is that they are involved in a large number of projects that have been approved to date.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: So some of the CSIRO staff are allocated to the NESP—is that correct?

Dr Wright: As I said, the department contracts with each of the six hubs. The hubs then contract with other providers for particular projects, and those projects need to be approved by the minister as part of a plan for that hub. So each has to be approved by the minister, but it is the nature of the project and the outcomes which are approved by the minister. Who the hub engages to do that is really up to them. We just look at the expertise and provide advice as to whether we believe the expertise for that project is appropriate.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Is it possible to get on notice the staffing level inside CSIRO that are working in the NESP?

Dr Wright: We do not have that. What I was trying to say is that we do not have that information directly. We would have to go out to each hub and ask them specifically for the nature of their engagement with CSIRO and those numbers.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: But if they had existing responsibilities to the NESP, they will be maintained?

Dr de Brouwer: That is what we are working on—the assumptions.

Mr Thompson: We expect that to go on.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Great. I had a number of questions on that, so I will skip those.

Answer:

CSIRO and National Environmental Science Programme

Under the Research Plans approved by the Department in 2016, there are around 120 CSIRO staff, totalling around 35 full time equivalent, involved in National Environmental Science Programme projects across all Hubs.

The National Environmental Science Programme has only one direct funding agreement with CSIRO which is for the Earth Systems and Climate Change Hub totalling \$23.9 million. The Hub is delivered through a multi-disciplinary consortia lead by CSIRO. Hub partners are CSIRO, Bureau of Meteorology, University of Tasmania, University of New South Wales, Monash University, Melbourne University and the Australian National University.

National Environmental Science Programme funding that CSIRO will receive through other Hubs is administered through sub-contracts between the Hub host organisations and CSIRO.