

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry and Science Portfolio
Additional Budget Estimates Hearing 2014-15
26 February 2015

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

TOPIC: SME Engagement Centres

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 26 February 2015, page 87)

QUESTION No.: AI-2

Senator KIM CARR: You speak specifically about engagement with local small and medium businesses; that is, Australian companies. You are also interested in looking at international engagement. The SME Engagement Centre is already in existence. What role do you think that will play in the strategy that you are outlining?

Dr Marshall: As you also know I have a strong passion for SMEs, particularly Australian SMEs with unique technology, so I think that is a central role in the strategy going forward. Of course historically the organisation has a great track record of helping SMEs.

Senator KIM CARR: Yes. The website for the SME Engagement Centre refers particularly to the engagement of businesses referred by Enterprise Connect. Are you aware of whether there has been any drop-off in SME engagements with CSIRO since Enterprise Connect has been abolished?

Dr Marshall: I am not directly aware of that. I did, however, notice that I think seven of the 10 recent SME awards were CSIRO related. I will refer to Mr Roy.

Mr Roy: I cannot answer the specifics of your question but we can take that on notice. You will recall in our recent reorganisation where we focused on three particular lines of business which made this distinct. One of them was very much around services and SMEs being a large part of that. What Dr Marshall is bringing to the organisation is to say, 'Let's keep that going and maybe go harder', on the SMEs. We are now in that stage of the cycle where our current strategy comes to completion at 30 June this year so we are putting a lot of thought now into repositioning and how you best position the organisation for the nation following that time.

ANSWER

No. The engagement by CSIRO with SMEs has been sustained through the transition from Enterprise Connect to the Entrepreneurs Infrastructure Programme. In 2013-14 CSIRO's SME Engagement Centre facilitated 38 projects and in 2014-15 it has facilitated 41 to date.