

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing
26 February 2009

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST

TOPIC: Deed of Employment

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard 26 February 2009, E106 – E107)

QUESTION No.: AI-52

Senator ABETZ—Do the rules of the Public Service apply in relation to making public statements?

Mr Paterson—The Public Service Act does not apply to the Chief Scientist. The terms of the engagement of the Chief Scientist are the terms set out in the deed between the Chief Scientist and the Commonwealth.

Senator ABETZ—Are those sections of the deed able to be made available? I do not need to know the full name, address, remuneration and other things that may be contained in the deed, but I would like to know those operational parts of the deed as to the conditions under which the professor is engaged as the Chief Scientist?

Mr Paterson—I will take it on notice. Given the nature of the deed, being a deed between the Chief Scientist and the Commonwealth, I would just like to reflect on the status of that as to whether or not it should be placed on the public record.

Senator ABETZ—I did not ask for the whole deed because I am aware of some of the matters that clearly would be confidential and should not be disclosed.

Mr Paterson—I will take the question on notice.

Senator ABETZ—Yes—to the conditions of employment as it relates to public interaction and so on would be helpful.

ANSWER

The terms of engagement for the Chief Scientist are set out in *Clause 1 – Nature and period of Engagement*, provided below:

1. Nature and period of Engagement

- 1.1. The Chief Scientist is engaged as an independent contractor to provide the Specialist Advice on a full-time basis for the period from 3 November 2008 to 2 November 2013. The period may be extended by agreement.
- 1.2. The position of Chief Scientist shall be a 'public office' within the meaning of the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973* and the engagement under this Deed represents an appointment to the position for the purposes of that Act.
- 1.3. The parties acknowledge that the terms and conditions of this agreement apply to the entirety of the term of appointment.

The operational parts of the deed are detailed below in the *Schedule: Roles and Responsibilities of the Chief Scientist*.

Schedule: Roles and Responsibilities of the Chief Scientist

1. Description of the role

Australia's Chief Scientist:

- is a specialist full-time advisory appointment within the Innovation, Industry, Science and Research portfolio and operates on a whole of government basis.
- provides advice to the Prime Minister, the portfolio Minister and other areas of government as requested.
- raises awareness of emerging issues in science, engineering and innovation in the broader Australian community.
- acts as an advocate for science, promoting science education, skills development, and career information across the education and research sectors through participation in education initiatives.
- assists in the coordination of government activities and fosters collaborative relationships with key stakeholders, including scientific and research institutions, industry and State and Territory governments.
- plays a key role in relevant governance bodies.

2. Reporting and accountability

The Chief Scientist reports directly to the portfolio Minister. The Chief Scientist's reporting and accountability responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- a. appearing before the Senate Estimates hearings as requested by the portfolio Minister;
- b. providing input into the Annual Report of the Department by providing the Chief Scientist's review of her duties and activities during the year across the full range of government portfolios which are involved in science, engineering and innovation; and
- c. providing a monthly written report to the portfolio Minister on the Chief Scientist's activities against the roles and responsibilities and the areas of Government interest for the Chief Scientist set out below (sections 3 and 4 of the Schedule). The report may include, but is not limited to: reports developed by the Chief Scientist; Chief Scientist's liaison with other Ministers as well as the science and technology community; and an update on the most recent Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council, and other meetings, including outcomes.

3. Duties of the Chief Scientist

The scope, scale and prioritisation of the Chief Scientist's work and the resources to be deployed will be generally agreed between the Chief Scientist, the portfolio Minister and relevant government agencies. The Chief Scientist will focus on key strategic issues in areas of science and innovation, which are either of central or emerging interest to the Government.

The duties of the Chief Scientist will include, but are not limited to:

- a. Providing advice to the Prime Minister, the portfolio Minister and other relevant Australian Government Ministers on matters affecting science, engineering and innovation as the Prime Minister, the portfolio Minister and the other Ministers' request;
- b. Drawing to the portfolio Minister's attention emerging issues and opportunities in science, engineering and innovation that may affect national well-being or require attention by the Government;
- c. Occupying the role of Executive Officer to the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (or such equivalent position in any successor to the Council);
- d. Acting as an advocate for science, promoting science education skills development, and career information in schools, vocational and higher education institutions, engaging students and researchers of all levels (e.g. primary, secondary, tertiary, undergraduate and post-graduate) in science and broadening awareness of the types and variety of careers available through participation in education initiatives;
- e. Participating in various advisory and/or funding committees and expert advisory panels as requested by the portfolio Minister and other relevant Australian Government Ministers in an *ex officio* capacity, as agreed by the portfolio Minister;
- f. Fostering close and effective working relationships between the Government and organisations with responsibilities for science, engineering, and innovation;
- g. Providing advice, participating in public discussions and stimulating informed community debate within the wider community on science and innovation related matters;
- h. Providing advice on issues affecting science, engineering and innovation through communication networks such as the print media, radio, television, and the internet; and
- i. Supporting the Government to strengthen Australia's scientific profile internationally.

4. Areas of Government Interest for the Chief Scientist

Section 4 is intended as an initial guide to the Chief Scientist on what is expected by the Government from the Chief Scientist's activities. An overview of possible key areas where expert advice from the Chief Scientist may be sought is given below. This is not intended in any way to restrict the Chief Scientist or the Australian Government from raising other issues or initiatives. Possible key areas include:

a. Broad Expert Advice Areas

- Research and Development
- Research and Industry Collaboration
- Programs and Funding
- Infrastructure
- Education, Skills, Careers
- International Priorities
- Public Awareness and Advocacy of Science
- Governance and Coordination of Stakeholders

b. Broad Science Technical Areas

- Nanotechnology
- Biotechnology
- Agricultural Science
- Environment and Eco systems
- Climate Change
- Energy and Nuclear
- Health
- Water
- Space Science
- Maths and Statistics
- Digital Economy and ICT Infrastructure
- Engineering
- Security
- Indigenous Scientific Knowledge
- Marine Science

5. Departmental Support

The Chief Scientist will be provided, in a timely manner, with staff, research, advice and briefing to support the Chief Scientist's work, as reasonably determined by the portfolio Minister, the Department and Chief Scientist to be appropriate for the full disposition of the Chief Scientist's duties, as outlined in this Deed and modified from time to time by the mutual agreement of the portfolio Minister, the Department and the Chief Scientist.

An office appropriately equipped for the needs of the role will be made available for the Chief Scientist in the immediate proximity of her staff in a section identified as the Office of the Chief Scientist dedicated to supporting the activities of the Chief Scientist. The Department will, at the Commonwealth's expense, provide a departmental telephone and fax facilities, mobile and blackberry phones, and IT services including remote access to email for business purposes.