

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2009-10
10 February 2010

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

TOPIC: Australian Sustainable Yields Project

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 10 February 2010, E54-E55)

QUESTION No.: AI-98

Senator IAN MACDONALD—An organisation like the CSIRO cannot possibly do an assessment, as you are doing with the Australian Sustainable Yields Project, without at least giving some consideration. To not even mention the northern task force seems to me to be a diminution of the reputation of the **CSIRO**.

Dr Johnson—I cannot speak for the task force, I can only speak on behalf of the CSIRO and the science report. I draw your attention to the science report and the 68 pages in that report and, if you are interested, the 970-plus pages that are in the detailed science report.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—We are getting copies of those.

Dr Johnson—You will see in those reports that we do discuss issues around large-scale water storage. We discuss issues around groundwater storage and we discuss issues around small-scale water storage. With great respect, I think it is a really long bow to draw that somehow there is political interference and hence affecting the integrity of our science when, clearly, we are responding to a set of parameters that are set by state and territory governments in commissioning us to do the work.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—The CSIRO did a lot of work which seems to me to be more social commentary than science.

Dr Johnson—You might have to be specific there. Everything that is in the report has been undertaken with the traditions of the scientific method rigorous peer review. Some of it is not the physical or chemical science that you may traditionally associate with the CSIRO, but the CSIRO does quite a significant amount of social science and economics as well.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—A lot of the recommendations—and a lot of it comes from the CSIRO's work—deal with Indigenous people. The greatest issue impacting on Indigenous people at the current time is the fact that they cannot use their own land in Cape York because the Queensland government has locked up their land with their stupid wild rivers legislation. Yet, there has not been one word of this in a report

Dr Johnson—I would have to take that question on notice. My recollection, to the best of my knowledge, is that in the science report there are mentions of the wild rivers legislation.....

ANSWER

The word string “wild rivers” occurs in 39 places in the Northern Australia Land and Water Science Review 2009 report, distributed amongst 9 chapters (being chapters 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 20, 26, 28). The views of pastoralists and indigenous people with respect to wild rivers legislation (particularly those of Cape York) are quoted extensively and the impacts on development opportunities for pastoralism, indigenous interests and mining are noted.