

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio  
Additional Estimates Hearing 2010-11  
23 February 2011

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

**TOPIC:** Reviews

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator Colbeck

**QUESTION No.:** AI-48

- i) Are external reviews of each of CSIRO's divisions conducted on a regular basis – and, if so, is the time period for the reviews typically approximately once every five years?
- ii) How are these reviews structured, what is their purpose, and what is their average cost?
- iii) How are the individuals who undertake these external reviews selected?
- iv) Did the last external review of the Division of Sustainable Ecosystems conclude that it should continue to operate as a standalone division?
- v) How many recommendations were listed in the last external review of the Division of Entomology - and how many of those recommendations have since been implemented?
- vi) How many staff were there respectively in Sustainable Ecosystems and Entomology when those two divisions were merged? How many of those staff were scientists and how many were corporate staff?
- vii) How many staff were there in the merged division at the time of its creation? How many of those staff were scientists and how many were corporate staff?
- viii) How many staff are there now in the merged division? How many of those staff are scientists and how many are corporate staff?
- ix) Is it correct that, in some CSIRO employees' contracts, there are performance bonuses that are based on the number of Comcare claims made by staff under their direction? And, if so, how many staff are employed under such contracts?

## ANSWER

- i) Under Section 13 (h) of CSIRO's Quadrennial Funding Agreement 2007-08 to 2010-11, CSIRO agreed to undertake a continuing process of assessment of its research performance, the outcome of which will be reported to the Science Minister. Reviews of the quality of the research programs in a CSIRO Division are conducted once every four years.
- ii) The reviews have defined terms of reference. Their purpose is to assess the quality and impact of Research Programs in CSIRO Divisions. The reviews are conducted by panels of internationally respected experts. The panel is provided with a summary of the Research Programs of the Division and detailed accounts of the productivity of research teams and individual researchers. The panels are asked to judge the quality of each Program compared to similar programs elsewhere in the world. For Programs found to be below international standard, the panel is asked to comment about the level at which the team is operating and indicate whether the Program is increasing or decreasing in quality. The Panel also makes recommendations to CSIRO management as to opportunities for improvement in research quality, international and national collaboration, and attraction of high quality young researchers. The average cost of a review panel, which would normally consist of three international experts and two Australian experts, is \$60,000-80,000, which includes the panel's travel, accommodation and per-diem costs.
- iii) The CSIRO General Manager of Science Leadership and Outreach is responsible for the conduct of the reviews and interacts with the Chief of the Division and the responsible Group Executive to recommend and appoint experts whose fields of expertise cover the areas of research activity in the Division.
- iv) The external review of the Division of Sustainable Ecosystems, conducted in September-October 2009, did not prescribe or proscribe specific organisational structures.
- v) There were 16 recommendations listed in the last external review of the Division of Entomology. Eleven recommendations have been implemented so far.
- vi) In June 2010 the Division of Sustainable Ecosystems had 368 staff, comprising 318 scientists and 50 support staff. The Division of Entomology had 200 staff, comprising 172 scientists and 28 support staff.
- vii) At its formation in July 2010 the Division of Ecosystem Sciences had 566 staff, consisting of 486 scientists and 80 support staff. (Differences in the aggregate numbers reflects minor staffing changes (cessations and appointments) which took place around the time of the merger.)
- viii) Currently (March 2011) the Division of Ecosystem Sciences has a total of 539 staff, consisting of 473 scientists and 66 support staff. The reduction in support staff from July 2010 reflects a number of resignations and terms ends as well as the transfer of divisional health and safety staff to the CSIRO Enterprise model. The slight reduction in the number of scientific staff also reflects a pattern of natural staff turnover i.e resignations, retirements, term ends as well as several redundancies. Five staff have been transferred to another CSIRO Division to achieve the greater scientific alignment of their work and 31 new

research staff have been recruited. These charges are reflected in the number of staff provided at the start of this answer.

- ix) Some CSIRO staff have an at risk performance payment that is contingent on meeting a range of organisation performance outcomes. While these include demonstrated commitment to, and achievement of health safety and environment objectives, none of these staff have performance contracts that include 'number of Comcare claims' as a specific outcome measure.