

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2012-13
13 February 2013

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

TOPIC: Job cuts – Wireless Research Division

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 13 February 2013, page 8)

QUESTION No.: AI-2

Senator MASON: I refer to a report in the Australian. In November 2012, Andrew Colley wrote in the *Australian* that CSIRO's management had decided to cut three senior research positions from CSIRO's wireless research division after the deletion lost five staff a year earlier. It is noted in the article that in the past year the division had its capacity cut by 23 per cent. I am citing what was said. Dr Borgus, who is the CSIRO staff association president, labelled the decision as acutely short sighted and 'baffling'. I understand that the wireless division's research led to the wireless networking technology patents that the committee has discussed in the past that have delivered hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue in licensing proceeds for CSIRO. It seems paradoxical. What is the rationale for the job cuts?

Dr Clark: We continue to have a strong focus in the wireless area both in the development of wireless technologies in the terrestrial area and particularly broadband wireless in rural and remote Australia. We also progress our wireless technologies through receivers in space. That is why space is the ultimate wireless domain. So it is a very strong focus for us and we have a large investment in that area. From time to time we need to adjust and prioritise the skills that we need for the work that we have. In this case those jobs were as a result of reprioritisation for skills that we need for the future.

Senator MASON: Is that an accurate report? Would you dispute the numbers?

Dr Clark: I would have to take on notice the detail of the number. I would be happy to provide that for you.

Senator MASON: But there have been cuts?

Dr Clark: We prioritise. I will get back to you on notice the specific details.

ANSWER

The report which appeared in *The Australian* online on 28 November 2012 had a number of factual errors, as it referred to erroneous information in a media release issued by the CSIRO Staff Association.

The Association reissued the release with the correct figures and an apology on 29 November 2012: *“Please note - the original Staff Association media release concerning proposed ICT redundancies contained an error which subsequently appeared the Australian article sent out yesterday. The proposed cuts actually represent a 5 per cent reduction based on current staffing levels, not 23 per cent as previously stated. This error occurred during the drafting of the press release. The Staff Association apologises for any confusion caused.”*