

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: Bullying of female staff

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 13 February 2013, page 16)

QUESTION No.: AI-4

Senator BUSHBY: Is it true that during 2012 a formal investigation was launched into allegations of the bullying of a female staff member by a senior officer in the Food Futures flagship? Is it also true that that investigation unearthed another 10 cases of suspected bullying of female staff by the same CSIRO employee but that nothing was done about that either at the time or since because it was not considered to be within the scope of the original investigation?

Mr Whelan: I would have to take that question on notice. I have got general information about numbers of investigations and the outcomes of those that I can provide to the committee, but that specific matter that you have raised I have no transparency on. I would be more than happy to take that on notice and come back to you.

Senator BUSHBY: It is an example that I suspect—if it is the case and I note that you have not said, so if it is the case that an investigation into a certain person's allegations highlights a commonality of issues with others but they do not get investigated because they were not part of the original investigation—would be something I think maybe the inquiry should be examining.

Mr Whelan: From my experience in looking at these matters in CSIRO, that would be an unusual situation should that have been the one that happened. There are mechanisms that staff and managers have access to to informally raise issues and deal with those closely to the workplace. They need not require formal or written communication; they can be as simple as a discussion. There is certainly no barrier, from a process or policy perspective, to that. As I said, I am not aware of the circumstances that you seem to be suggesting.

Senator BUSHBY: If you would have a look into that—

Mr Whelan: I will look at that and provide you with information on that.

ANSWER

In 2011 a CSIRO affiliate (contractor) raised concerns that a senior manager had used inappropriate language and displayed inappropriate behaviour. These claims were investigated using the CSIRO grievance procedures by an independent (external) investigator and the recommendations, which were accepted by both parties, have been implemented fully.

In the course of that investigation, the investigator was provided with the names of current and former staff who might wish to provide information about their experiences of working with the senior manager. The investigator spoke to several of those people. These people did not progress investigation of their claims through the available CSIRO mechanisms. As these people did not pursue those claims, CSIRO management did not take further action in relation to this issue.