

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates 3-5 June 2008

Question: bet 66

Topic: CSIRO – Assets Held

Hansard Page: E19

Senator Joyce asked:

Senator JOYCE—That being the case, in the change of the use of the asset at Rockhampton held by the CSIRO—a multimillion dollar beef facility—that is a very particular asset. It is the biggest undercover beef facility in the southern hemisphere. Since it is now in moth balls, where is that going to be reflected on your budget papers?

Mr Martine—You are probably asking a question outside my area of expertise. The CSIRO is a government entity and therefore all its assets, by definition, have to appear somewhere in the aggregated balance sheet. Exactly where these assets sit is probably more a question for either the CSIRO itself or the department of finance, in terms of the aggregate statement.

Senator JOYCE—I am talking to the competence of the figures. Can you then take that on notice as to the fair market valuation of that asset, its diminution in value and how that is reflected in the figures that have been provided to us?

Senator Sherry—We will take it on notice in an endeavour to assist you. However, the valuation of a specific asset is not an issue for this department's estimates. That is an issue for the CSIRO and perhaps the department of finance.

Senator JOYCE—It is going to end up being filtered back through. It talks to the competency of the books. That is certainly part of the fiscal groups' oversight, isn't it?

Senator Sherry—But can Treasury be reasonably expected to have precise knowledge and understanding of that particular issue? No. The CSIRO and the department of finance would. We will take it on notice and we will endeavour to assist you.

Senator JOYCE—I hear what you say but they can certainly be expected to have a system in place that deals with such issues. If in this instance we find it has not dealt with that issue then it should lead to further questions in other areas where we would further question the competency of the books.

Senator Sherry—It is for the CSIRO and the department of finance, which has responsibility for oversighting evaluation of assets, to do that if it has a question or concern, not the Treasury. But we will take it on notice. But I am a little concerned that if you come here and expect the Treasury to give you a precise asset valuation of an individual asset—

Answer:

This question was also asked of the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research during their hearing with the Senate Standing Committee on Economics. They have provided a copy of their response for your information.