

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2010-11
31 May 2010

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: INNOVATION, INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

TOPIC: Yamatji Marlpa Land Council

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Eggleston

QUESTION No.: BI-57

What were the terms of the deal with Yamatji Marlpa Land Council, the CSIRO and the West Australian State Government? What is the progress of the SKA project? Have there been any indications of the likely outcome? (*The West Australian* 19/4/2010).

ANSWER

The Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) for the Murchison Radio-Astronomy Observatory contains all relevant details, and is available publicly on the web site of the Western Australian Department of the Attorney-General, Office of Native Title at:
http://www.ont.dotag.wa.gov.au/M/murchison_radio_astronomy.aspx.

The agreement provides a range of practical and financial benefits to the native title claimants, the Wajarri Yamatji people, including employment, education and training opportunities which can contribute to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Australia-New Zealand joint bid to host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) is progressing well. The Australian, Western Australian and New Zealand Governments are developing a comprehensive siting proposal for the SKA for consideration by the international community.

The Murchison Radio-Astronomy Observatory (MRO) has been established and CSIRO is now proceeding with the Australian SKA Pathfinder telescope at that site. The first antenna was erected in January 2010 and was used in a recent demonstration in which six antennas across Australia and New Zealand were linked to be used as one large telescope. Further information is available from CSIRO: <http://www.csiro.au/news/Aussies-and-Kiwis-forge-a-cosmic-connection.html>.

As part of the National Broadband Network (NBN) Regional Backhaul Blackspot's program the Government is constructing a fibre-optic link from Perth to Geraldton.

CSIRO is in the process of seeking tender submissions for the design of the MRO support facility in Geraldton, WA. In addition, the Pawsey High Performance Computing Centre for SKA Science in Perth is progressing, with construction expected to take place over the next two years.

No indication has been received from the international bodies involved with the SKA as to the likely outcome. A decision is expected in 2012.