

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
28 and 29 May 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL

TOPIC: ERA Membership

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, Monday 28 May 2012, pages 27 and 28)

QUESTION No.: BI-18

Senator MASON: I suspect you have similar conversations, Minister. Ms Harvey, Gavin Moodie, who is, as you know, a tertiary education policy analyst at RMIT, has analysed the composition of the evaluation committees and noticed that there has been a significant change in the composition of the committees from the 2010 round. He notes, for example, that of 140 members, only 43 remain in 2012. Why do you think there has been such a big turnover for members? That is quite a big turnover. What do you attribute that to?

Ms Harvey: I do not think it is actually a big turnover. In actual fact, what we look at when we are looking at the composition of our committees is what underlying research expertise we need. The ERA 2010 submission actually gave us a really good feel for the sort of level that we needed and the different units of evaluation and experience that we needed. We also make sure that we have a good balance in bringing in new people to that experience to make sure that we are not accused of perhaps stacking the committee so you get the same results. Because there is actually a different reference period over it. We also have to take into account that because our committee members put a lot of time and effort into that evaluation for us, it is about whether they are actually able to commit that time. But I can tell you that I do not consider that a really large turnover.

Senator MASON: You do not? Ms Harvey, is Mr Moodie correct in saying that of 140 members, only 43 remain. That is less than one-third, if my mathematics is correct. Is that right?

Ms Harvey: Yes.

Senator MASON: In other words, two-thirds of the membership leaving is a considerable turnover?

Ms Harvey: No. In actual fact, when we did our trial in 2009, we did not keep all of those members into 2010. We actually looked at what we needed.

Senator MASON: Did you lose two-thirds?

Ms Harvey: I would have to check the actual numbers. But there definitely is a refresh of the people coming into that.

ANSWER

More than two-thirds of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Research Evaluation Committee members from the 2009 ERA trial did not participate in the ERA 2010 process.