

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: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION (CSIRO)

TOPIC: Whistleblower complaint

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Bushby.

QUESTION No.: BI-145

1. At any time since 1 December 2007:
 - a. Has any employee or former employee lodged a whistleblower complaint alleging criminal or civil breaches of the law by CSIRO or a CSIRO employee? If so, how many and on what date(s)? Were their allegations investigated immediately in each case – or was there ever a delay and, if so, why?
 - b. How did CSIRO specifically protect the complainants in such whistleblower cases from retaliation by the respondents? In any of these cases, did a respondent possess any capacity to potentially (or indeed actually) control or influence the career of the complainant at CSIRO during the subsequent whistleblower investigation?
 - c. Has the employment with CSIRO of any such whistleblower complainants later been terminated against the will of the employee? If so, how long after the conclusion of the investigation into their cases were they involuntarily separated in each case – and for what reason(s) was their employment terminated?
 - d. What percentage of the people who laid whistleblower complaints in that period are still employed by CSIRO? What percentage of the respondents to those whistleblower complaints are still employed by CSIRO?
 - e. What percentage of the complainants who laid whistleblower complaints in that period were involuntarily separated from CSIRO or resigned under duress? What percentage of the respondents to those whistleblower complaints were involuntarily separated from CSIRO or resigned under duress?
2. At any time since 1 December 2007, has CSIRO received a whistleblower complaint that alleged deliberate actions on the part of at least one CSIRO employee to undermine an independent State Government-mandated assessment panel? If so, how many times; what was the outcome of the investigation(s) and what subsequently happened to the complainant(s)?

ANSWER

- 1a. Yes. Three such complaints have been lodged since 1 December 2007. One was dated 23 February 2010 and the other two were undated but received by the Disclosure Officer on 10 March 2008 and in late August 2010. Investigations into all allegations (including whether they fell within the parameters of the scheme) were undertaken as soon as they were received by the Disclosure Officer.
- 1b. The CSIRO Whistleblower Scheme provides certain guarantees of anonymity and protection in relation to people who make complaints under the scheme. In none of the cases lodged with

the scheme since 1 December 2007 has CSIRO been provided with evidence that retaliation has occurred.

None of the respondents to the whistleblower investigation undertaken during this period possessed any capacity to potentially (or indeed actually) control or influence the career of the complainant at CSIRO during the subsequent whistleblower investigation.

- 1c. Yes. One CSIRO employee, who had lodged a whistleblower complaint on 10 March 2008, was made redundant on 23 August 2010 as there was an insufficient volume of current and projected work to sustain the position. A second employee, who lodged a whistleblower complaint on 23 February 2010, was made redundant on 4 September 2011 as CSIRO no longer required the job to be performed by anyone because of changes in the operational requirements of CSIRO's enterprise.
- 1d. CSIRO is unable to answer this question in percentage terms as some of the applicants to the Whistleblower Scheme during this period were made anonymously. 100% of the respondents to the Whistleblower complaint are still employed by CSIRO.
- 1e. CSIRO is unable to answer this question in percentage terms as some of the applicants to the Whistleblower Scheme during this period were made anonymously. None of the respondents to that Whistleblower complaint have left CSIRO.
2. The Whistleblower Disclosure Officer has no record of such a complaint.