

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
28 and 29 May 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION (CSIRO)

TOPIC: AFPA membership reviews

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 28 May 2012, page 25 and 26)

QUESTION No.: BI-17

Senator RHIANNON: Thank you very much. You mentioned the two reviews. I want to fully understand the process there. So the review of actual AFPA membership was something you had already determined that you would do?

Mr Whelan: We made a decision to do that at the beginning of this financial year. The relevant delegate in this case is Dr Jeremy Burdon. He is the chief of the division of plant industry. He made the decision to be a member of the association. He will conduct a review in June 2012.

Senator RHIANNON: Was the decision to undertake that review made when you first joined or was it made at the time of the complaint?

Mr Whelan: No. It was made when we first joined, Senator. The context for it was that this was the merger of two peak bodies. We had been a member of one of those peak bodies. We formed the view that we would continue to be a member but we would see how the association went in our engagement with it over the period of the first year's membership. That expires in June this year.

Senator RHIANNON: So with the wider review of memberships and sponsorship policy, did you decide to undertake that in response to the particular complaint about membership of the AFPA?

Mr Whelan: No, Senator. We have been looking at our policy framework steadily over the last four or five years trying to improve it. We had identified a potential gap around memberships and sponsorship policy. We had commenced reviewing our framework for that prior to that complaint.

Senator RHIANNON: When you say 'gap', do you mean a gap in public perception or a gap in policy?

Mr Whelan: A gap in policy. So at the moment the primary guidelines for a delegate here are effectively the equivalent of the Commonwealth procurement guidelines. So there is a value for money test guided by CSIRO's public comment and publications policies. It struck us that there may be value in providing specific policy guidance to delegates around decisions on membership and sponsorship. So we have been reviewing the need for that. We have not formed the view that we will have specific membership or sponsorship policies, but we are conducting a review of that. As I said earlier, I expect the outcomes of that review to be implemented in the third quarter of 2012.

Senator RHIANNON: Will these reviews be made public?

Mr Whelan: Senator, CSIRO is an open and transparent organisation. If you would like a copy of those reviews, we would be happy to provide them to you.

ANSWER

CSIRO is happy to make public any of its policies upon request.