

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio  
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 2009-10  
21 October 2009

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

**TOPIC:** Board Briefings

**REFERENCE:** Question on Notice (Hansard 21 October 2009, E14-15)

**QUESTION No.:** SI-21

**Mr Whelan-** We brief the board on all major projects. ....

**Senator ABETZ** –But was it a high level briefing for the board?.....

**Mr Whelan-** I could not discriminate as to whether it was any higher or lower than any other briefing.....

**Senator ABETZ**—Why can't you discriminate in this when I have reason to believe that the board was given a document by Mr Craig Roy on 14 October 2007 headed ' Purpose: to provide a high-level briefing to the board'? Can you please take that on notice and then tell us whether that which I am quoting from in fact does exist? I have had experience when these things might not exist in reality other than in somebody's mind, so let us get that clear on the record. Then, if it does exist and it does use the language 'high-level briefing', can you give an explanation as to your reluctance here to acknowledge that it was of such sufficient gravity as to be described internally in the CSIRO as a high-level briefing?

**Dr Clark**—Senator, the terminology 'high-level briefing' I think was simply the matter of the overview rather than any level of priority. We simply provide updates to the board. The process has been—

**Senator ABETZ**—With great respect, Dr Clark, is everything that is provided to the board described as a high-level briefing to the board?

**Dr Clark**—It is not an indication of its priority. It is simply whether it was an overview, and we have been giving the board—

**Senator ABETZ**—Excuse me, Dr Clark—just so we can get this terminology right: say, if a one-cent discrepancy in petty cash went to the board, might that be a high-level briefing as well?

**Mr Whelan**—No, Senator.

**Senator ABETZ**—No. High-level briefing has a particular meaning. This was a big project. It had a lot of problems and it made good sense that a high-level briefing went to the board. There is no argument with any of that. I just wonder why CSIRO is reluctant to acknowledge that it did get to the stage of high-level briefings to the board.

**Mr Whelan**—There is no reluctance from CSIRO indicating to you or anybody else that the board maintained an active interest in this project and received regular briefings on it. I am more than happy to check the document that you have to see whether it was titled in the way that you suggested it was, and, if it was, we will confirm that. Could I just reiterate that we would provide—

**Senator ABETZ**—To assist you, it was attachment 3B.

**ANSWER**

Attachment 3B was headed 'BETR' and its stated purpose was 'To provide a high level briefing to the Board on progress against the BETR Program'. In the context of this document, the term high level refers to the report providing an overview of the status of the BETR Project.