

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
17 October 2012

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

TOPIC: Comcare report – workplace bullying

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Bushby

QUESTION No.: SI-73

Reference was made at the Estimates hearing in October to an all-staff email sent from Dr Clark on the 16th October in relation to Comcare's findings of CSIRO's handling of bullying in the workplace and organisational changes that will be implemented as a result of Comcare's report.

1. Can CSIRO outline what changes will be made as a result of Comcare's findings?
2. Can CSIRO outline whether these changes are required because current policies and procedures are not adequate or effective for dealing with workplace bullying or because current policies and procedures were not followed or enforced correctly or a combination thereof?

ANSWER

1. The CSIRO will:

- amend the Misconduct Policy to ensure that:
 - It provides adequate and consistent advice and guidance to the CSIRO staff managing misconduct allegations with respect to the manner in which employees are made aware of allegations against them.
 - Documented risk assessments are conducted by a competent person in particular circumstances including prior to respondents being advised of allegations of misconduct. These risk assessments will consider psychological health and wellbeing and any known pre-existing psychological injury.
- Provide training to all staff responsible for implementation of the CSIRO Misconduct Policy to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that management of misconduct allegations do not create or increase a risk to health and safety.
- Amend relevant Human Resources (HR) and Health Safety and Environment (HSE) policies to ensure that, where a medical assessment is required for fitness for duty, it considers the specific circumstances of the individual including their psychological health and well being.
- Amend HR and HSE policies and procedures to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, staff exhibiting psychological distress or injury are appropriately supported and managed including being referred for medical assessment and advice before being referred to treating specialists.

- Ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, effective governance around “complex case” management, including documenting, storing, and recording documentation of meetings.
- Implement a system which ensures that regular workplace hazard and risk assessment is undertaken of psychosocial risk factors at workplaces. This will include a documented risk assessment of the relevant workplace when allegations of bullying and / or harassment are made.
- Ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, all staff are consulted about amendments to policies and procedures regarding bullying and / or harassment.
- Implement a system that ensures that where incidents of bullying and harassment are reported they are recorded and, where necessary, notified to Comcare.
- Update the Ecosystem Sciences training plan to ensure that:
 - All Ecosystem Sciences staff receive bullying and harassment awareness training.
 - Managers and supervisors receive any necessary training in relation to Equal Opportunity, workplace discrimination, and bullying policy and procedures and any procedures amended as set out above.

2. The changes being implemented are in response to a Comcare Improvement Notice and are not wholly in response to either of the reasons mentioned in the question. The Comcare inspector determined that the changes were required as improvements to current policies to ensure the CSIRO provides and maintains safe systems of work.