

**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

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

**TOPIC:** Mental Health

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator Bushby

**QUESTION No.:** SI-81

Given the answer to BI-7 from the last round of Estimates, is CSIRO management's position that it is not aware of any incidents where CSIRO employees were in a suicidal state as a result of their experience with the organisation – other than for those identified in a letter to Senator Evans in late May 2012? Alternatively, if there are any other cases that fall into this category, please indicate how many there have been in total during and since 2007.

**ANSWER**

The response to BI-7 related to staff on 'suicide watch' which is not a term used in CSIRO.

Suicide and suicidal behaviour arise from complex social, situational, biological and other individual causes and are challenges facing the broader Australian community. The determination as to whether or not someone is experiencing 'suicidal ideation', is appropriately diagnosed by health professionals. CSIRO does not have a separate reporting system for suicide or 'suicide state'. Staff may choose to raise these confidential matters with their line manager and colleagues. Where this occurs, such cases are dealt with locally by line managers' supported by Human Resources, Health & Safety staff and our Employee Assistance Provider and the cases will not in all cases be reported in our health and safety systems.

CSIRO's Employee Assistance Provider has advised that due to the complexity of the suicide issue, by the time an individual seeks support, the matter is a personal one. CSIRO's Employee Assistance Provider does not provide information on individual cases but does provide reports showing the number of cases where staff, or their family members, approach them for assistance. Between 2007 and 2 November 2012 the Employee Assistance Provider has supported 10 staff and family members where the primary issue presented was suicidal state. There have been no workers compensation claims, or health and safety incident reports since 2007 for suicide. There are two staff that CSIRO is aware of on worker's compensation, where, during the course of their long-term rehabilitation they have attempted suicide. This occurred off site in both instances. There is one staff member CSIRO is aware of on worker's compensation, where, during the course of their long-term rehabilitation a family member advised the organisation their partner was considering suicide. There is one staff member CSIRO is aware of on worker's compensation, where, during the course of their long-term rehabilitation has advised the organisation they are considering suicide. There are three cases that CSIRO is aware of where a staff member advised the organisation they were thinking of suicide.