

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: CSIRO
Output Group: - CSIRO

DEST Question No. E958_04

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

What control does CSIRO maintain over work in this sphere conducted by CSIRO staff?

Answer:

CSIRO has provided the following response.

Security Issues

As has been pointed out previously, CSIRO does not conduct research into defence technology *per se*, although some of its work has security applications. It is therefore necessary to understand that there is nothing different about these programs with respect to how the basic research is conducted. Only if the technologies are applied in the security domain do they become particularly sensitive. Prior to this, projects with possible security applications are managed in the same manner as all other CSIRO research activities, which are subject to a standard set of project management guidelines and are required to report regularly against scientific milestones, as well as being held to tight financial and OHS&E guidelines. All Divisions review their entire project portfolio against these criteria at least three times a year.

When technologies are developed and applied in sensitive areas, additional controls are put in place, usually in consultation with external stakeholders (including Government), on a case by case basis. For example, heightened security measures were put in place in consultation with the Reserve Bank of Australia when CSIRO applied its polymer technology to the production of more durable banknotes. Similarly, CSIRO maintains the only high security facility for holding animal and human pathogens in Australia at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong.

In addition to the extra measures imposed upon them while undertaking sensitive work, all CSIRO Staff are required to adhere to the CSIRO Code of Conduct, one of four main principles of which is:

“...there is to be adequate protection of intellectual property and confidential information and strict observance of business and commercial protocols while you are an employee and after you leave the Organisation.”

Staff in possession of information that is potentially sensitive with respect to national security are therefore expected not to divulge confidential information.

All new appointments to CSIRO also undergo background checks to confirm identity and, as with the rest of the Australian Public Service, senior CSIRO staff (Divisional Chiefs and above) and any other staff who are privy to sensitive information are subject to National Security Clearances.