

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2006-2007 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: AIMS
Output Group: AIMS

DEST Question No. E764_07

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

AIMS Funding

1. Dr Poiner is quoted in January as saying that the additional five million is, and I quote "Very small, particularly when historically our base operating fund has not changed in more than a decade." In other words, Dr Poiner is saying that this government has refused to provide adequate operating funds for the last ten years:
 - a. What effect has this had on the operational efficiency of AIMS?
 - b. What priorities has AIMS been unable to pursue because of this neglect?
 - c. Did AIMS seek additional base funding in this current budget round?
2. Dr Poiner argued last year that AIMS was "being squeezed? Do you agree with him?
3. If AIMS is being squeezed, how is that apparent in the organisation?
4. You have had staff losses- are programmes or equipment replacement also suffering? Can you give us examples please?

Answer:

AIMS has provided the following response:

AIMS Funding

1. While AIMS has not received a major injection of additional operational funding, over the past 10 years it has received substantial additional capital funding for infrastructure (\$22.4 million) which will be further enhanced by Queensland Smart State funding of \$1.5 million. The resulting operational efficiencies have put AIMS in a better position to provide relevant, high quality research into the future.
 - a. Refurbishment of the AIMS headquarters and replacement of the major research vessels (RV Cape Ferguson was commissioned in November 2002 and RV Solander is under construction) has delivered significant operational efficiencies via control of maintenance costs of ageing infrastructure and the RV Cape Ferguson's more efficient fuel usage.
 - b. Two areas of research that build on AIMS' capabilities which we have been unable to fully progress are: improved understanding of marine ecosystems in northwest Australia and marine microbes. The additional \$5 million dollars provided to AIMS through the Budget will the Institute to continue to build its relationship with the offshore oil and gas industry to build a regional understanding of the largely unexplored northwest and allow a small investment is capability to progress research into the role of marine microbes in xxxxx .

- c. The Government agreed to remove the application of the efficiency dividend from the research component of AIMS budget and to increase depreciation funding in line with asset value, the impact being an increase of \$7.6 million over the 4 years from 2007-08.
2. In common with many other organisations, AIMS has been subject to some cost pressures, notably fuel costs, in recent years. A shift to modern, more fuel efficient vessels is assisting in dealing with these impacts.
3. AIMS has sought ongoing efficiencies in operations and has replaced ageing infrastructure. To maximise research operations AIMS is co-investing to deliver research outcomes in the national interest.
4. AIMS is maintaining its overall research program and equipment replacement programme.