

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

**Outcome:** CSIRO  
**Output Group:** CSIRO

#### DEST Question No. E216\_04

Senator Carr asked on 4 June 2003.

#### Question:

- (a) What are current CSIRO policies on issues such as return to work after career breaks; post maternity grants; adoption of more work/life friendly work cultures and active support for scientists successfully taking advantage of flexible work practices?
- (b) Do see these as important to both CSIRO's research effort as well as to its staff?
- (c) What improvements do you see CSIRO as making in this regard?  
Over what period of time?

#### Answer:

CSIRO has provided the following response.

#### *Women in Science*

- (a) CSIRO has the following policies to assist women in the workplace:  
If a woman resigns when she has a child she maintains her 'internal Officer Status' for a period of five years. This allows her to apply for any roles that are advertised internally, along with existing staff.
  - If a woman decides to return to work following the birth of a child she has the opportunity to work part-time, job share and undertake home based work (if appropriate). If a woman decides to return to full time work, some initiatives are in place to assist with the care of children including a reduced working year with pay averaging, access to personal leave for family reasons and flexible start and finish times.
  - The current Enterprise Agreement introduced commitments to incorporate facilities for nursing mothers into existing facilities such as first aid rooms.

CSIRO is also analysing the take up of these policies to determine whether they satisfy the needs of staff and, secondly, whether staff are being allowed to utilise the intended flexibility.

- (b) CSIRO has acknowledged in both the Strategic Action Plan and the Workplace Diversity Plan that we aim to attract and retain the best and brightest people. If CSIRO fails to attract/retain women, then we are essentially missing approximately half the population and, by definition, not achieving that stated objective.
- (c) The ability to attract and retain a diverse workforce will become increasingly important given the changing demography and limited growth of the working population. Our initial investigation has shown that in relation to women, retention is something we need to target. CSIRO plans to explore these issues more deeply via the use of focus groups. Using the information gained we will then begin the process of developing strategies and actions in line with our 2002-2006 Workplace Diversity Plan.