

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: CSIRO
Output Group: CSIRO

DEST Question No. E218_04

Senator Carr asked on 4 June 2003.

Question:

- (a) I take it that CSIRO has finally lost its battle to retain control of the National Standards Laboratory?
- (b) When will it be transferred to the new Institute within the Department of Industry?
- (c) What is the value of the Laboratory?
- (d) How many staff are involved in the transfer?
- (e) Why is this transfer not included in your out year budget estimates?
- (f) Were you taken by surprise?
Were you consulted about this transfer?
- (g) What CSIRO facilities are involved?
- (h) Will these be transferred or retained by CSIRO?

Answer:

CSIRO has provided the following response assuming Senator Carr is referring to the National Measurement Laboratory.

National Measurement Laboratory (NML)

- (a) There has not been a battle to retain control. CSIRO has always supported the formation of the National Measurement Institute, and as long ago as August 2001, the CSIRO Board agreed to the proposal that the National Measurement Laboratory would leave CSIRO to become part of the Institute.
- (b) 1 July 2004.
- (c) The NML has a balance sheet which records net assets of \$2.5M, mostly scientific equipment. It is not expected that buildings and land will be transferred, since there is another CSIRO Division on the Lindfield site as well as the NML.
- (d) There are 90 staff directly within NML, but in addition to these, a fraction of the support staff at Lindfield will also be transferred. The total will be in the order of 110-120.

- (e) In the recent Budget the Government announced the establishment of the National Measurement Institute from 1 July 2004. The Institute will be located within the Industry, Tourism and Resources portfolio. The cost of the amalgamation of the CSIRO National Measurement Laboratory, the National Standards Commission and the Australian Government Analytical Laboratories will be \$2m in 2003/04 and \$1m in 2004/05. These costs are being absorbed within the existing resourcing of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources. During 2003/04 the agencies involved will agree on the budgetary transfers resulting from this amalgamation and these will be reflected in forward estimates.
- (f) CSIRO has been heavily involved since early 2001 in the possible formation of the NMI, and actively encouraged the incorporation of the NML into it. The Department of Industry Tourism and Resources consulted extensively with CSIRO and the National Standards Commission over a long period prior to the announcement in the budget.
- (g) The main bulk of the facilities are at Lindfield in Sydney, with a small component involving approximately 10 staff at Clayton in Melbourne. These facilities comprise specialised laboratories with often unique test equipment necessary to maintain Australia's primary standards of measurement.
- (h) It is likely that the scientific assets will be transferred, but not the buildings and land for the reasons given above.