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

Outcome: CSIRO
Output Group: CSIRO

DEST Question No. E219_04

Senator Carr asked on 4 June 2003.

Question:

There was an uproar a few months ago about the cost of developing a web page for the minister for Communications, Senator Alston.

(a)   Can you confirm that CSIRO is using the same software as that (over budget) project?

(b)   Who is contracted to set up CSIRO's web site?

(c)   How long has this process been under way?
         Can you confirm that it has been going on for about three years now?

(d)   What has been the total cost, including software and consultant's costs, in setting up this web page?

(e)   Is that in accord with the original budget?
         If not, by how much has it increased?

(f)   It has been suggested that there is some dispute within CSIRO about the time taken to develop this web site and its effectiveness. Is that correct?

Answer:

CSIRO has provided the following response.

CSIRO Website

(a)   CSIRO is using the Vignette product to support the numerous websites that comprise the organisation's internal and external web presence. The product operates on a UNIX platform and is the development tool for CSIRO's enterprise-wide web content management, distributed authoring, workflow, and publication capability.

(b)   The CSIRO project is an in-house development effort resourced with CSIRO officers and contractors. Vignette provided a small amount of consulting and training assistance in the initial set-up and installation period.

(c)   The project has been underway for about 18 months. The project team was staffed in February 2002. Prior to this there was a period of consultation and analysis of the appropriate path for developing a unified web presence for the Organisation.

(d)   Total project costs to date are $3,832,931 (including software and maintenance costs of $839,075 and Vignette consultancy costs of $96,949). Please note that this is not the cost for a single web page. See (a) for the scope of the project.

(e)   The budget for 2001/02 was $1,500,000 compared to actual expenditure of $1,478,180 and for 2002/03 is $2,732,947 compared to actual expenditure to date of $2,354,748.

(f)   CSIRO's business units have been fully supportive of the effort to unify the look, feel and enterprise-wide management of content for our external web presence. The time taken on the project is required to meet the challenge of delivering an effective web platform that provides both a holistic presentation of CSIRO's information and services, and highlights the diversity of the scientific research. The requirement to provide a more uniform and consistent web presence that caters to both existing and potential customers is being carefully balanced with the Divisional requirement to tailor web offerings to targeted customer segments. There has been some frustration in the organisation with the length of the project schedule, which is to be expected on a complex project involving significant cultural change, but there has been no dispute.