

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: CSIRO
Output Group: - CSIRO

DEST Question No. E612_04

Senator Carr asked on 5 November 2003.

Question:

- a) Why has the number of students supervised by CSIRO fallen so dramatically since 1998? [Annual Report, page 41]. There seemed to be a bit of a rally after a truly dismal year in 1999-2000, but that has been short lived.

In fact, the decline in supervision by CSIRO staff is in the order of 30% since 1998-99. Is that a worry for the organisation?

- b) Is this because staff are now so preoccupied with having to prepare funding and consulting submissions that supervision has to take second place?

Answer:

CSIRO has provided the following response.

Supervision of students

- a) CSIRO's policy is to encourage student supervision across the organisation. The change in numbers of students relates to demand from students for CSIRO supervision in the context of respective research priorities and interests. It is also cyclical.

CSIRO has developed a PhD scholarship top-up scheme to increase the interest from students in CSIRO. The CSIRO Postgraduate top-up Scholarship Scheme was initiated in 2001 in recognition of the reducing numbers of students being supervised across CSIRO with a goal of increasing the numbers of PhD students across the organisation to 700 by 2006. The scheme augments Divisional investment in postgraduate training.

A new round of this scheme was recently announced and by the end of this year, 60 additional PhD top up scholarships will be provided to students supervised by CSIRO staff – encouraging PhD candidates to work with CSIRO scientists.

It should also be noted that the table on page 41 of the Annual Report shows the number of sponsored PhD students has almost doubled since 2000 to 179 in 2002-03, illustrating the organisation's commitment to research training.

- b) No. Supervision of students remains an important role for CSIRO. As stated above the fall in numbers of PhD students supervised within CSIRO is related to demand from students for supervision.