



Ms Susan Tonks
Secretary, CSIRO Staff Association
Level 3 / 99 William Street
Melbourne, Victoria 3000
By email: susan.tonks@cpsu.org.au

Dear Ms Tonks,

Enterprise Services Reform Program - Work Health and Safety matters

I write in relation to the Staff Association's correspondence dated Friday 20 September 2024.

The Staff Association's correspondence refers to three main concerns which can be summarised as follows:

1. The extent to which CSIRO has made efforts, including undertaking risk assessments, to identify and eliminate or mitigate psychosocial hazards arising from the Enterprise Services Reform (**ES Reform**) in accordance with the *Work, Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) (**the Act**) and *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* (Cth) (**the Regulations**);
2. The extent to which CSIRO has engaged in consultation with impacted CSIRO staff in relation to psychosocial hazards arising in the context of ES Reform; and
3. The timeframe of the ES Reform program and associated uncertainties.

I have addressed each of these concerns below.

1. Psychosocial risk management

The health and wellbeing of CSIRO staff is paramount during this period of organisational change. Consistent with our duties under the Act and Regulations, CSIRO has taken active steps to identify and mitigate psychosocial hazards arising from the ES Reform process so far as reasonably practicable. This includes risks identified in your letter, such as stress, changes in the workplace, increased workloads, changes in workflow, and job uncertainty. CSIRO has managed these risks on an ongoing basis and will continue to review these risks at regular intervals as the ES Reform progresses.

CSIRO has taken the following actions to address psychosocial hazards in the context of ES Reform:

- **Risk assessment:** CSIRO's ES Reform Working Group has developed a risk assessment at the enterprise level focused on psychosocial health and safety to address the potential risks associated with the ES Reform. This risk assessment captures all psychosocial risks as documented in regulatory guidance and identifies corresponding control mechanisms to reduce psychosocial health and safety risks to CSIRO workers so far as reasonably practicable. In addition to the Enterprise Risk Assessment, ES units are currently in the process of undertaking specific psychosocial risk assessments, to ensure specific risks that may arise within individual ES units are clearly identified and appropriately controlled, so far as reasonably practicable. By considering appropriate mitigations, we aim to minimise the likelihood of harm while supporting our people and their wellbeing throughout this process. The ES Working Group and each ES leadership team will regularly review and update the

risk assessments to ensure the listed control measures remain applicable. Part of this review includes regular consultation with CSIRO staff.

- **ES Reform oversight and consultative mechanisms:** To ensure CSIRO takes an informed and structured approach to ES Reform, CSIRO has set up the ES Reform Steering Committee, ES Reform Working Group, and ES Reform Stakeholder Reference Group. Each group is made up of leadership team members and subject matter experts who provide guidance on ES Reform matters, including psychosocial risks. All groups meet regularly and provide a forum to seek and address feedback from CSIRO staff across the organisation. Additionally, as part of the Major Change Consultation Process, there are standing fortnightly meetings with the Staff Association to discuss issues, including HSE concerns related to the ES Reform.
- **Training/Supports available to all CSIRO staff and leadership:** since announcing the ES Reform in February 2024, CSIRO has offered multiple live and on-demand seminars to CSIRO staff and its leadership to assist with navigating this period of change, including:
 - 'Dealing with Uncertainty' session with Converge International
 - 'Navigating Change' workshops with Converge International
 - 'Remaining a psychosocially safe and inclusive workplace through times of change and uncertainty' presented by Lycinda Hewiston, Organisational psychologist, Diversity & Inclusion
 - 'Navigating workplace change Career Assist: Awareness session'
 - 'Managing Change and Ambiguity' session with MCI Solutions
 - 'Leading Teams through Change' session with MCI Solutions
- **Email Communications with Staff:** CSIRO's Chief Executive and the ES Reform Working Group, led by CSIRO Executive Leadership Team members Peter Mayfield and Marcia Gough, have provided regular updates to all CSIRO staff on the process and outcomes of the ES Reform. Those emails have consistently addressed issues such as change and uncertainty, and have encouraged staff to talk to their colleagues, line managers and to access support through services such as EAP. These emails also encourage staff to provide feedback, including any HSE concerns, directly via a dedicated inbox (ESReform@csiro.au) for the ES Reform Working Group.
- **Webinars:** CSIRO has conducted all-staff webinars to update CSIRO staff about the ES Reform change program and provide support resources. These webinars have included opportunities for staff to ask questions of CSIRO's leadership and provide direct feedback about the ES Reform.
- **Culture Survey:** CSIRO undertook its annual Pulse Culture Survey in May 2024. In announcing the survey via email on 6 May 2024, the Chief Executive specifically noted that staff feedback was especially important in light of the ES Reform. The Chief Executive invited staff to raise concerns related to the ES Reform by emailing the ES Reform Working Group directly via a dedicated mailbox (ESReform@csiro.au).
- **Intranet Resources:** since commencing the ES Reform, CSIRO has updated its intranet to include an ES Reform Information Hub. This page includes information such as updates and outcomes regarding the ES Reform, timelines for completion, survey results from each Wave of consultation, FAQs, webinars and links to support services for staff.

Importantly, CSIRO also considers the extensive consultation process it has undertaken with its staff around the ES Reform to be a psychosocial risk mitigation measure. As discussed below, CSIRO has followed its

Major Change Consultation Process and enabled both CSIRO staff and the Staff Association to provide meaningful feedback on any matter related to ES Reform on a regular basis. This not only meets the requirements of Section 48 of the WHS Act regarding consultation, but it also seeks to mitigate psychosocial risks by providing a forum for CSIRO staff to engage and participate in the process.

CSIRO specifically rejects the Staff Association's claim that *'[t]he decision to reduce the ES workforce, with a staffing loss of up to 500 positions has been followed by a brief and limited assessment process without regard to the psychosocial impacts on both the workers to be made redundant, nor the workers who will remain with CSIRO and expected to maintain the workload.'* CSIRO has identified increased workload to be among the key risks of the ES Reform and continues to factor those concerns into the decision-making process. As ES Reform progresses, CSIRO will continue responding with appropriate risk management processes to identify and mitigate psychosocial risks related to increased workload, job uncertainty and change management insofar as is reasonably practicable.

2. Consultation

The Staff Association's letter raises concerns in relation to CSIRO's consultation with staff and their representatives, including the Staff Association, in the context of ES Reform. The Staff Association describes CSIRO's consultation as being *"minimal"* with respect to the *"specific WHS matters"* raised in the letter (which CSIRO interprets as psychosocial risk management matters) and *"has not allowed workers to appropriately contribute to the decision making process"*.

CSIRO firmly rejects these assertions.

CSIRO is taking active steps to comply with its duty to consult workers in relation to health and safety matters during the course of ES Reform in accordance with Part 5, Division 2 of the Act.

CSIRO has formally integrated an extensive consultation framework with staff and the Staff Association into the three 'waves' of proposed workplace change underpinning the ES Reform program. In doing so, CSIRO is guided by its internal procedures, including clause 54 of the *CSIRO Enterprise Agreement 2023-2026 (EA)*, as is required by section 47(2) of the Act. Most recently, in consultation with the Staff Association, CSIRO has adopted the Major Change Consultation Process for each ES unit as part of Wave 3 of the ES Reform, and has recently concluded a period of early engagement with staff members and the Staff Association regarding units identified in Group A of Wave 3.

CSIRO's position is that genuine and dedicated consultation to date has involved providing staff and the Staff Association with numerous opportunities and channels to provide feedback in relation to the entirety of the proposed changes and contribute to decision-making, which includes opportunities for workers to alert CSIRO to health and safety matters such as the psychosocial hazards and risks that may arise as part of the Reform.

3. ES Reform timeframe

Your letter notes that *"Staff across CSIRO have also been experiencing lengthy periods of uncertainty relating to job security since February 2024."*

CSIRO has endeavoured to undertake a thorough consultation process in light of the substantial changes. CSIRO is mindful of adopting a thorough consultative process to ensure compliance with clause 54 of the EA,

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and Part 5, Division 2 of the Act and will continue to monitor the psychosocial risks in accordance with CSIRO's ES risk assessment and WHS obligations.

4. Next steps

CSIRO notes the Staff Association's request to meet to discuss psychological risk management as part of the ES Reform in further detail. Senior officers from CSIRO are available on the following dates and times:

- 3 October 2024 at 2:00 pm
- 9 October 2024 at 2:00 pm

Moreover, CSIRO notes the Staff Association's comment that it would *"like to work with the CSIRO to ensure compliance with the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 is achieved"*.

To that end, and to ensure that there is an established forum for discussion between CSIRO and the Staff Association on this important matter, CSIRO will add health and safety matters as a dedicated standing item on the existing fortnightly meeting schedule for the ES Reform Program. CSIRO welcome's any additional suggestions the Staff Association may have to support the health and wellbeing of CSIRO staff during this period of change.

CSIRO's contact officer for this matter is Brett Barton, Industrial Relations Manager who can be contacted on +61 2 6218 3469 or via email brett.barton@csiro.au.

Yours sincerely,



Aaron Goninon
Director, HSE
27th September 2024