



COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRES
ASSOCIATION

5 October 2012

Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens
Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Defence and Trade
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ursula

Defence Trade Controls Bill 2011

The Cooperative Research Centres Association (CRCA) has been an active participant in discussions with the Defence Department, DIISRTE, the Chief Scientist's Office and Universities Australia on the Defence Trade Control Bill.

Universities Australia, and particularly the University of Sydney, had expressed considerable concerns about the Bill, which could restrict the flow of knowledge and potentially stop some research activities. The CRCA became aware of the problems and shared the concerns of the Universities and conveyed those to you as Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee considering the Bill.

The CRCA welcomed the Committee's decision to ask that the Defence Department conduct further consultation and address the concerns of the research community before the Bill was put to the Senate. Two roundtables convened by Australia's Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, have been conducted in the past month to facilitate discussion. Chief Defence Scientist, Alex Zelinsky, undertook extensive consultation including with the CRCA. He recommended 15 changes to the Bill.

The outcome is that an Advisory Committee with input from the research community will oversee implementation of the new export control arrangements. No penalties will apply in the first 24 months. Researchers will need to think about whether work they are doing will require a Defence Trade Control permit, with research institutions administering a self-assessment process. The Institutional committee will determine whether a permit is required. Permits will be provided by the Minister for Defence.

CRCs - Bringing knowledge together for the benefit of all Australians

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Researchers will have one more compliance issue to think about along with human and animal ethics; whether they need Statistical Clearing House approval and the like. Most will not need to take action. But we have to recognise that knowledge in the wrong hands can cause enormous devastation, so controls are needed if Australia is to meet our obligations.

The changes were necessary to make this workable for researchers, and I am satisfied that is now the case.

Yours sincerely

Prof Tony Peacock
Chief Executive