

Opening Statement: Dr Subho Banerjee

The Department welcomes the opportunity to outline to the committee the steps it has taken in response to the recommendations of the ANAO performance audit of the Energy Efficiency Information Grants program. These responses aided the Department's efforts on continuous improvement in program administration.

The Department's Agency Response to the audit accepted all of the recommendations, and outlines the measures to be taken in response. The Department was pleased to note that outside of the recommendations on improved program documentation, the ANAO found that the program has "a robust framework for the design and management" and that the "First EEIG funding round resulted in funding being distributed in a way that was consistent with the program seeking to achieve a diffusion of benefits across a range of business and community sectors and into regional settings".

In the Agency Response the Department acknowledged the need for improvement in documentation and record keeping by the Department, particularly around the merit assessment process conducted by the Program Advisory Committee. The Department noted in its reply to the recommendations that there was a need to provide both better procedural guidance and more resources so that the Department's secretariat is better able to capture the deliberations and conclusions of the Program Advisory Committee during the merit assessment.

Since the audit of the first round, the Department has concluded a second and final funding round for the program. The Department has been able to implement all of the audit responses it outlined.

The key actions taken were:

- More time for the assessment process which allowed the Department to deal with the over-subscription, while following processes as outlined in the program guidelines.
- Both better procedural guidance on the secretariat functions and further clarity in the probity briefing on the role and responsibility of the Program Advisory Committee members.
- Extra staff and clearer procedural guidance on the taking of minutes of the deliberations of the Program Advisory Committee ensured both enhanced transparency and ability to provide feedback to applicants.

Taking the lessons from the first round into the administration of the second round of the program has assisted the Department to improve the program's administration.