

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Science and Innovation

Public Hearing, Monday, 21 October 2002, Canberra

Universities and CSIRO to appear at inquiry into business commitment to R&D

The House of Representatives Committee on Science and Innovation will this Monday hold the sixth public hearing of its inquiry into business commitment to research and development (R&D) spending in Australia.

The Committee will hear from the **Group of Eight** universities and the **CSIRO**.

The inquiry is looking at the economic benefits for Australia of a greater private sector investment in R&D, the impediments to business investment in R&D, and the steps that need to be taken to better demonstrate to business the benefits of higher private sector investment in R&D.

Public hearings have already been held in Canberra and Melbourne, where the Committee has heard from a range of companies and institutions including: the Tax Institute of Australia, Australian Innovation Association, GlaxoSmithKline and the Australian Industry Group.

The **Group of Eight** (Go8) is a coalition of Australia's leading universities which conducts approximately three-quarters of Australian university research. The Go8 dominates university research links with industry, and attracted some \$263 million in research funding from business in 2001.

The Go8's submission argues that the encouraging increase in the level of business expenditure on R&D (BERD) in the past year does *not* provide a basis for confidence that similar improvements will continue. Instead, Go8 suggests that the proportion of Australia's GDP accounted for by BERD will continue to decline. The submission also notes that Australia's international ranking in public sector research has fallen from third place of 20 OECD countries in 1996-97, to sixth in 2000-01.

As Australia's largest public sector research organisation, the **CSIRO**'s mandate requires that it assist Australian industry and the submission outlines some of the steps that the organisation is taking to do this.

The CSIRO submission argues that business must be encouraged to build on the foundation of knowledge created by other parts of the nation's innovation system - especially universities and government research agencies. The organisation suggests some changes in the innovation policy environment that would serve to

encourage businesses to enter into partnerships that build on Australia's public research base.

While concluding that the Government's *Backing Australia's Ability* initiatives are useful and important, the CSIRO points to the importance for business of policy continuity and certainty if R&D initiatives are to be fully effective.

The hearing program is:

Monday 21 October 2002 - Committee Room 2R2, Parliament House, Canberra

4:45 -5:30pm **Group of Eight**

5:30 - 6:30pm **CSIRO**

For media comment, please contact the Chair of the Science and Innovation Committee, Gary Nairn MP, on (02) 6277 4939

For further information on the hearings, please contact Shelley McInnis, Inquiry Secretary on (02) 6277 2324 or via email at Shelley.McInnis.Reps@aph.gov.au

For further information on the inquiry, including copies of submissions, please visit the inquiry website at

www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/scin/randd/index.htm

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