

**Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014-2015**

**Outcome 3 - Higher Education, Reform & Support**

**Department of Education Question No. ED0708\_15**

**Senator Carr provided in writing.**

*Refers to previous Question ED0058\_15*

**Question**

***Collaborative Research Network program evaluation***

Collaborative Research Network program evaluation (a) In response to QoN ED0058\_15, the Department indicated that it had commenced an evaluation of the CRN program, which was expected to be complete by the end of 2014. Is that still the expected timeframe? (b) Is the department conducting this evaluation internally, or have you contracted someone to undertake it? If the evaluation is being undertaken under a contract: (i) What is the value of that contract? (ii) What is the timeframe of the contract? When did it start and when is it due to finish? (iii) Who is the contractor? (c) What kind of stakeholder consultation has taken place to date? (d) Is consultation still underway? (e) Will the evaluation report be made public? If so, when?

**Answer**

- (a) The mid-term evaluation of the Collaborative Research Networks (CRN) programme will be completed in early 2015.
- (b) The CRN programme mid-term evaluation is being undertaken under a contract.
  - (i) The value of the CRN programme mid-term evaluation contract is \$75,000 (GST inclusive).
  - (ii): The CRN programme mid-term evaluation commenced on 30 May 2014 and will be completed by December 2014.
  - (iii): ACIL Allen Consulting has been contracted to undertake the CRN programme mid-term evaluation.
- (c) Key elements of the stakeholder consultation process for the CRN programme mid-term evaluation are outlined below.

An advisory committee, involving sector and government representatives, provided advice to the department on the programme at key stages, including on the terms of reference, selection of the consultancy, the evaluation method, survey design and on the draft evaluation report.

The advisory committee membership comprised:

- 1) Dr Ian Goulter, an independent expert who has previously worked with the CRN Programme during the selection round process
- 2) Dr Caroline Perkins, Chief Executive Officer, Regional Universities Network
- 3) Professor Lynette Russell, an independent researcher, from Monash University
- 4) Dr Mark Diamond, a department expert in evaluation processes
- 5) Ms Virginia Hart, Chair and Branch Manager, Research Funding and Policy, Research Strategy Group.

A quantitative and qualitative survey was conducted by the consultant of all 15 CRN programme grant recipients and their 35 partner organisations.

Interviews were conducted by the consultant with Deputy Vice Chancellors Research from six CRN recipient universities (Australian Catholic University, Central Queensland University, Charles Darwin University, Edith Cowan University, Federation University and University of Canberra) and five CRN project participants (Queensland University of Technology, James Cook University, Flinders University, Deakin University, University of Southern Queensland) and the Regional University Network (RUN). The Group of Eight and the University of Melbourne were also invited to participate in an interview.

- (d) The consultation period for the CRN programme mid-term evaluation has finished.
- (e) This is a decision for the Minister.