

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Tourism and Resources Portfolio
Additional Estimates 2004-2005, 16 February 2005

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND RESOURCES
OUTCOME/OUTPUT: Outcome 2, Output 2.1
TOPIC: COMMERCIALISING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES (COMET) PROGRAM
REFERENCE: WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION No.35
(Written QON)

Senator Campbell asked:

On page 55 of the 2003-04 DITR Annual Report it mentions that the Department has undertaken a consultation process to enhance COMET, including increasing reach to regional areas and research institutions.

- Has this consultation process been completed?
- Can we see a copy of any COMET evaluation?
- What came out of the process?

ANSWER

The COMET consultation process has been completed.

The consultation process involved talking to stakeholders about potential improvements to the program's design and delivery as part of its extension through *Backing Australia's Ability – Building our Future through Science and Innovation*. The consultation process was not an evaluation.

As a result of the consultation process, improvements to the design and overall delivery model were made. These included increasing the suite of eligible activities and the amount of assistance available to successful applicants, strengthening the focus on support for innovations emerging from universities and public research institutions, and facilitating greater access to the program in outer metropolitan and regional areas. Details of the enhanced COMET program are available on the AusIndustry website at www.ausindustry.gov.au.

QUESTION No.36
(Written QON)

Senator Campbell asked:

In 2003-04 COMET assisted 286 customers. In 2002-03 the program assisted 406 customers. Why the huge drop off in customers assisted?

ANSWER

The COMET program was announced in November 1999 as a three year \$30 million competitive grants program. As part of *Backing Australia's Ability* in 2001, additional funding of \$40 million was provided to extend COMET until the end of June 2005. This funding resulted in an overlap of the two funding sources in 2001-02, effectively doubling the amount available in that financial year.

The reduction in the number of customers assisted in 2003-04 is directly related to the program's budget allocation.