

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12
15 February 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE)

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 15 February 2012, page 69)

QUESTION No.: AI-32

Senator COLBECK: I would like to put on the table a personal advocacy for both of those programs. PIEF is coming to the end of its funding in this budget cycle and PICSE likewise.

Senator Chris Evans: Which is PICSE?

Mr de Carvalho: PICSE we know about. That is the one that Professor Robson sponsors.

Senator COLBECK: Associate Professor David Russell of PIEF—the Primary Industries Education Foundation—is currently being funded partly out of DAFF and through membership fees, which are quite meagre. The work they are doing is quite good, because they are producing curriculum materials to deal with some of the issues that I spoke about a moment ago. You are looking at getting agricultural curriculum materials into the education system more broadly, which I think is a very positive move. Having seen and spoken to some of the companies that associate with PICSE and also the students who have certainly had their career paths changed by association, I will just put a plug in for that too.

Senator Chris Evans: We will give you a comprehensive answer as to where those things are up to. I do not know whether the department has yet informed the Senate committee inquiry as to the progress of that.

Mr de Carvalho: Yes, we have.

Senator Chris Evans: I will follow up and make sure that we have covered off that space as well.

ANSWER

- In 2008, the University of Tasmania was granted \$3.6 million, over three years to 2011, from the Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund (DASA) to establish PICSE at the University of Tasmania. All DASA funding for PISCE has been acquitted with the final project report due at the end of February 2012.
- Grants made under the DASA Fund were provided to support projects of developmental, pilot or introductory nature and were not provided for indefinite or ongoing support. (Clause 2.4.1 of the *Administrative Information for Providers 2008 Round*).
- The University of Tasmania is the lead partner for PICSE. Additional financial and in-kind support is also provided from industry partners, and across the Centre's seven partner universities – the University of Western Australia, Curtin University, Charles

Darwin University, Flinders University, Charles Sturt University, the University of New England and the University of Ballarat.

- PICSE is a regionally-focussed strategy of collaboration between universities, government, the broader education sector, businesses and local communities aimed at attracting students into tertiary science and increasing the number of skilled professionals in science-based primary industries.
- While the Commonwealth provided funding for the establishment of PISCE, the States and communities with which the Centre engages are at the discretion of the Centre itself.
- In 2011, the University of Tasmania applied for \$6.8 million from the first round of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) competitive grants process. While the application was of high quality, it was unsuccessful in a very competitive field.
- The Department has encouraged them to reapply for funding in the second grant round, which is expected to be opened in April 2012.
- Regardless of the outcome of the second round of the HEPPP competitive grants process, the University of Tasmania and their university partners are able to utilise their HEPPP Participation and Partnerships baseline funding of \$26.9 million in 2012 to support PICSE activities.