

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
 Industry, Tourism and Resources Portfolio
 Budget Estimates 2005-2006, 30-31 May 2005

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND RESOURCES
OUTCOME/OUTPUT: Outcome 2, Output 2.1 and 2.2
TOPIC: COMMERCIALISING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES (COMET) PROGRAM
REFERENCE: WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION No.66
 (Written QON)

BI 05/79a

Senator Campbell asked:

Can you provide us with a breakdown of COMET grants by industry and state for the financial year 2004-05?

ANSWER

The following tables detail the COMET grants for 2004-05, by industry and state.

COMET Grants by Industry

Industry	Number of Grants	Amount Awarded
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	4	\$199,400
Mining	3	\$125,600
Manufacturing	55	\$2,676,400
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	4	\$196,000
Construction	2	\$128,000
Wholesale Trade	1	\$5,000
Transport and Storage	2	\$73,200
Communication Services	12	\$540,000
Finance and Insurance	2	\$86,000
Property and Business Services	47	\$2,298,200
Education	1	\$120,000
Health and Community Services	6	\$272,852
Cultural and Recreational Services	4	\$224,000
Personal and Other Services	2	\$120,000
Total	145	\$7,064,652

COMET Grants by State

State	Number of Grants	Amount Awarded
ACT	2	\$100,000
NSW	45	\$2,291,600
QLD	29	\$1,367,000
SA	25	\$1,063,000
TAS	6	\$230,052
VIC	21	\$1,320,000
WA	17	\$693,000
TOTAL	145	\$7,064,652

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BI 05/79b **QUESTION No.67**
(Written QON)

Senator Campbell asked:

As a result of the recent review COMET grants are now capped at \$120,000. Why was the limit raised?

ANSWER

The size of the COMET grant was canvassed as part of the consultation process for the enhanced program. General consensus was that the grant size should be increased to reflect current market prices for the services delivered.

BI 05/79c **QUESTION No.68**
(Written QON)

Senator Campbell asked:

What happens if a client and a Business Adviser fail to agree on an appropriate success fee? Is any mediation from the Department available? Who has the final say?

ANSWER

The COMET National Manager acts as a mediator between the customer and the Business Adviser in any success fee dispute process.

The Department will not execute a grant agreement without notification from the National Manager that a success fee agreement has been concluded.

BI 05/79d **QUESTION No.69**
(Written QON)

Senator Campbell asked:

Is there any appeal or grievance process available for unsuccessful applicants?

ANSWER

Yes. The appeals and grievances process is outlined in the COMET Customer Information Guide. The relevant text reads:

2.4.2 Can I resubmit an application?

An applicant may resubmit an unsuccessful application for consideration by the Program Delegate. In order to enhance the chances of a different outcome, an applicant should provide additional information that was not available at the time of the Program Delegate's decision.

Applications that are resubmitted within 60 days of this advice will not attract the \$250 application fee. Applications that are resubmitted after 60 days will be treated as a new application.

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4. What if I have a complaint?

AusIndustry will ensure that it complies with the Customer Focus Principles, outlined in the Customer Service Charter, which is available at www.ausindustry.gov.au.

An applicant or customer who has a complaint about the service provided to them under the COMET program should contact the National Manager or the Manager, COMET Program, who will follow up to ensure the complaint is resolved. The National Manager and the Manager, COMET Program, should be contacted through the AusIndustry Hotline on 13 28 46.

If customers do not believe that AusIndustry has adequately addressed their concerns, they can refer the matter to the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

AusIndustry's *Customer Service Charter* also outlines a customer's option to contact the Executive General Manager in the event that a customer is not satisfied with AusIndustry's complaint resolution.

BI 05/79e **QUESTION No.70**
(Written QON)

Senator Campbell asked:

How many customers or applicants have referred their case to the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman since COMET began?

ANSWER

One COMET customer has referred their case to the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman since the program commenced in November 1999.

BI 05/79f **QUESTION No.71**
(Written QON)

Senator Campbell asked:

According to the latest COMET Customer Information Guide one of the merit criteria used to judge suitability for the scheme is 'Actual or potential management capability to commercialise the innovation with appropriate COMET support'. One of the indicators attached to this criterion is 'management flexibility to adapt as needed'. Just exactly what does this indicator mean?

ANSWER

'Management flexibility to adapt as needed' relates to the new management needs and may include flexibility to change from a product development focus to a business development focus, the flexibility to bring in new management and adapt to changed management roles and responsibilities, the flexibility to work with specialist advisers, and the flexibility to work with new shareholders or strategic partners.

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BI 05/79g

QUESTION No.72
(Written QON)

Senator Campbell asked:

Are there any human resources requirements linked to attaining COMET funding? For example, do staff have to be employed on AWAs for a company to be eligible for funding?

ANSWER

There are no human resources requirements linked to attaining COMET funding.

BI 05/79h

QUESTION No.73
(Written QON)

Senator Campbell asked:

Under the assessment guidelines, customers should receive a letter within 14 days of the Program Delegate's decision. Is this happening?

ANSWER

In the majority of cases customers receive a letter within 14 days. AusIndustry monitors its performance in this area and meets this requirement in 94% of cases.