

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio  
Budget Estimates Hearing 2008-09  
2-3 June 2008

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** INNOVATION, INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

**TOPIC:** Enterprise Connect

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator Macdonald

**QUESTION No.** BI-119

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Just before lunch we were talking about the Mackay skills training centre. I had the opportunity of tracking it down. We are both sort of right, Minister. Central Queensland University applied for \$5 million in funding for the Mackay industry skills centre. It used the teleconferencing method to connect Kim Carr's office—it was not you, Minister; it was your office—in Canberra to ask about funding for a simulation research centre.

**Senator Carr**—Yes.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—As we are talking about higher education and the Central Queensland University, I am wondering whether Central Queensland University is to receive funding for that simulation centre?

**Senator Carr**—Senator Macdonald, if you contact my office you will find that that matter will be with the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and not the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. You are in the wrong estimates, but I will nonetheless say to you that it related to the Enterprise Connect centre. There has been some discussion with the Central Queensland University about receiving money from the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research for an Enterprise Connect centre.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—So no thought or consideration has been given to funding Central Queensland University for a simulation centre?

**Senator Carr**—The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research funds research programs; I am not aware whether that particular measure met the criteria of any of the programs administered by the Department.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—By which department?

**Senator Carr**—My Department.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Because of a subsequent media release, the applicants reread the submission and informed us that the current process for the centre was that funding would not be approved.

**Senator Carr**—That fits in with my answer.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Yes. It is not being approved; you are confirming that?

**Senator Carr**—I am saying to you that that is not an Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations matter.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—I hear you, Minister. Because it is Central Queensland University—

**Senator Carr**—Yes, I know. Central Queensland University has a series of issues relating to funding. I know that it is seeking funding from a range of sources. There has been some contact with my office but it was in relation to an Enterprise Connect centre.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Okay.

**Senator Carr**—It was about an innovation program, not a university research program.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Minister, could I ask you or your department to take on notice the question of what it is you are going to fund in Mackay for \$14 million, which the local member has—

**Senator Carr**—It is an Enterprise Connect centre. I have already answered the question.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—So that is—

**Senator Carr**—It is an Enterprise Connect centre.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Could you take on notice where I could find that in the budget, please?

**Senator Carr**—It is under the Enterprise Connect program.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—I am reading the Enterprise Connect things. I have two volumes of documents and I cannot see it anywhere.

**Senator Carr**—It is a Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research program. Which PBS do you have in front of you?

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—I have Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. I also have Budget Paper No. 2—

**Senator Carr**—You will find it under Enterprise Connect centre.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—for the Enterprise Connect Innovation centre.

**Senator Carr**—That is the funding source.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Okay. Minister, could you or your department take that question on notice for me and send it to me or the others where I would find it in the Budget Papers the moneys provided for the Mackay skills centre.

**Senator Carr**—Senator Macdonald, I am not trying to be difficult. I will ask the officers here to take the question on notice. I will send it across to my department to draw attention to the relevant page in the PBS.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Where it mentions Mackay?

**Senator Carr**—No, it does not. There are 10 Enterprise Connect centres around Australia.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Yes, I have seen what the document states.

**Senator Carr**—That is all I can say to you.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—So there is no confirmation of anything for Mackay?

**Senator Carr**—No. I have made a commitment to Mackay.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Where would I find that, Minister?

**Senator Carr**—Under the Enterprise Connect initiative you will find a description of the program. Mackay will be one of the centres.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Have you announced that by a media release that I could refer to?

**Senator Carr**—It was an election commitment.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—I am not sure that it was.

**Senator Carr**—It was. I made it. I can tell you that it was.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Okay. Can you show me where it appears in the budget papers?

**Senator Carr**—Under Enterprise Connect. You will find that the funding program is there.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—It is not under Enterprise Connect because I have the Budget Papers and—

**Senator Carr**—We are going around in circles.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—it is not mentioned

**CHAIR**—The problem I have, Senator Macdonald, is that this is not actually a matter for this committee.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—It is not. I concede that.

**CHAIR**—We are trying to get some assistance for you.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—I concede that, but I am not achieving it because the question is too difficult to answer. It does not have an answer.

**CHAIR**—If you put the question on notice we will ensure—and the Secretary is annoyed with me now—that it goes to the right department.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Mr Chairman, I thank both you and the Secretary for your willingness to assist me—and, to a degree, the Minister. We will pursue that in other forums at a later date.

## **ANSWER**

***Will the Department be contributing \$5 million for a Mining Simulator Research, Development and Training Centre at Mackay?***

No

***What is the Department going to fund in Mackay for \$14 million?***

On 21 November 2007, Senator Carr announced funding of \$14 million over four years for a Mining Technology Innovation Centre to be based in Mackay. The Mining Technology Innovation Centre is part of the Government's \$251 million *Enterprise Connect* initiative. Enterprise Connect provides comprehensive support to Australian small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), to help them become more innovative, efficient and competitive.

Enterprise Connect is a national network which will consist of five Manufacturing Centres located in each of New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia, and a sixth QMI Solutions-linked centre in Queensland. There will also be five Innovation Centres including the Mining Technology Innovation Centre which are focussed on particular sectors as well as remote and regional Australia. The Manufacturing and Innovation Centres will be managed as one nationally coordinated network. For example, the Mining Technology Innovation Centre will be able to locate specialist Mining Technology business advisers in other Enterprise Connect centres around Australia, allowing delivery of services to firms wherever they are situated.

From its base in Mackay, the Mining Technology Innovation Centre will help small and medium sized businesses across Australia in the mining technology sector to:

- have their businesses benchmarked against best practice and receive advice on how to improve their production and organisational processes;
- find and adapt the latest research and technology to improve their products and (where applicable) manufacturing processes;
- access prototyping and testing facilities to turn their innovative ideas into new products or to test their products for new markets;
- identify export markets and understanding regulatory, cultural and market issues;
- identify new markets for cutting edge technology;
- become export ready, including through developing management and marketing skills; and
- cut through red tape to identify sources of government support for their activities.

***Where can I find the funding for the Mackay Centre in the Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS)?***

There is no specific reference to the Mining Technology Innovation Centre to be headquartered in Mackay in the 2008-09 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) for the Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio. However, all funding relating to Enterprise Connect can be found on page 17 of the PBS under "Enterprise Connect Innovation Centres."

Money expended on the five Innovation Centres constitutes only a proportion of this allocation. The amounts specified on page 17 include the expenditure on the whole Enterprise Connect initiative which includes five manufacturing centres linked to QMI Solutions in QLD and five Innovation Centres.