

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2010-11
31 May 2010

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: INNOVATION, INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

TOPIC: NATA Accreditation

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Eggleston

QUESTION No.: BI-119

Is it correct that NMI did not have National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accreditation for pattern approval testing between 2007 and 2009? If so, why did it take so long to get the accreditation back even after the relocation of NMI's laboratory?

Assuming such countries were made fully aware NMI had lost its NATA accreditation, can you please name each of the countries that would accept Australian NMI pattern approval laboratory test results and Australian-issued International Organisation of Legal Metrology (OIML) certificates during the period when the NMI laboratory lost its NATA accreditation between 2007 and 2009?

Does NMI intend to help, in any tangible way, Australian manufacturers (particularly those from SMEs) who were forced to go overseas to get new products approved because NMI lost its NATA accreditation for such a prolonged period of time.

ANSWER

Yes, NATA agreed to NMI's request for voluntary suspension of accreditation for that laboratory. Re-locating equipment and re-establishing accreditation is a lengthy process and NATA accreditation of the pattern approval laboratory is not required in order for NMI to perform its functions including issuing valid national pattern approval certificates.

Most countries including Australia set their own pattern approval requirements based on international guidelines. Therefore, neither NMI nor any other pattern approval authority could provide a complete list of countries and circumstances under which its pattern approval testing and certificates would be accepted. NMI will accept some overseas test results and review them for Australian pattern approval. In addition, some countries have agreed on mutual acceptance arrangements for some types of measuring instruments, under the International Organisation of Legal Metrology (OIML) Mutual Acceptance Arrangement (MAA). Details of the MAA can be found on the OIML website (see <http://www.oiml.org/maa/>). NMI has had no requests for testing to be performed under the MAA during the time that its NATA accreditation was suspended.

Except for a small number of types of measuring instruments which are specifically exempted, measuring instruments used for trade in Australia must be pattern approved in Australia, by NMI. At no time has pattern approval been unavailable in Australia.

Because Australian pattern approval is a requirement, and because NMI has consistently been able to issue national pattern approval certificates regardless of the laboratory's NATA accreditation status, it is incorrect to suggest that suppliers or manufacturers of pattern approved instruments have been forced to seek pattern approval overseas.