

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
28 and 29 May 2012

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

TOPIC: Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) program

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Williams

QUESTION No.: BI-92

1. What is being done to significantly increase the amount of funding available through the CRC program to better reflect the extraordinary impact and value-add the CRC program has had in the past and could continue to achieve in the future?
2. What funds are available to encourage Australian researchers to collaborate with international partners to ensure that Australia captures the benefits of the 98% of R&D relevant to Australia that is undertaken overseas?
3. Why not open the CRC program up so it is also available for fundamental, high-quality, high-impact research that deliver direct benefits to Australia (rather than assuming that type of research must be funded entirely by industry)?

ANSWER

1. Over \$625 million has been provided for the CRC program over the four years from 2012-13 to 2015-16. \$3.4 billion has been committed to the program since its commencement in 1991.
2. There is a range of Commonwealth funding programs designed to encourage Australian researchers to collaborate with international partners on research and development (R&D). Examples of programs administered by the portfolio are described below.

Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

The department administers two programs that are dedicated to strengthening Australia's international linkages in science and research:

- The Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF) supports joint activities (research projects and workshops) between Australia and India scientists, with funding of \$64 million committed over the life of the program (2006-07 to 2015-16).
- The Australia-China Science and Research Fund (ACSRF) provides support for strategic science and research collaboration of mutual benefit to Australia and China, with a commitment of \$9 million to the ACSRf, matched by the Government of the People's Republic of China. The fund will operate for three years from 2011-12 to 2013-14.

There are a number of other programs administered by the department to encourage international collaboration by researchers, such as:

- the European Molecular Biology Laboratory Partner Facility (\$2 million in 2012-13);
- International Postgraduate Research Scholarships (\$21.5 million in 2012-13); and
- the Giant Magellan Telescope (\$14.9 million in 2012-13).
- Participation in the international Square Kilometre Array radiotelescope project.

International collaboration is also supported by the CRC program.

Australian Research Council

Support for international collaboration is incorporated in the Australian Research Council's (ARC) National Competitive Grants Program:

- All ARC fellowships and awards are open to overseas candidates as long as they apply through an eligible Australian organisation. If successful, the fellow must reside predominantly in Australia for the duration of the fellowship.
- Researchers located overseas may participate in ARC-funded projects as Partner Investigators without any residency requirements.
- Project funding can be requested to support the costs of international travel by Chief Investigators, Fellows and Partner Investigators associated with a project, to foster and strengthen collaborations between researchers in Australia and overseas.
- Organisations based overseas (including higher education organisations, companies and non-profit and government organisations) can participate as Partner Organisations on projects funded under the Linkage Projects scheme.
- International Collaboration Awards (ICAs) are available under the Discovery Projects scheme to build collaborations among researchers, research teams and/or research centres in Australia and overseas. ICAs provide up to \$20,000 to fund international travel and associated costs for Chief Investigators, Fellows and/or Partner Investigators living overseas for periods of one to six months.
- The Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities scheme provides funding to enable Australian researchers to access major international facilities.

The appropriation for the ARC in 2012-13 is \$879 million.

3. The CRC program is open to high quality and high impact research that delivers direct benefits to Australia.

CRC activities are not required to be supported entirely by industry. To be successful in securing funding through the CRC program, a consortia must demonstrate to the Commonwealth that the program of research activities it intends to deliver has the support of both the research community as well as relevant end users. This support is demonstrated through pledges of cash and in-kind contributions from both industry and research participant organisations.