

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
17 October 2012

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

TOPIC: Grant Pause Script

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 17 October 2012, pages 58-59)

QUESTION No.: SI-24

Senator RYAN: Was there any instruction from either senior officials within the department or from the minister or his office to not communicate the pause to people who are in the application process and consideration stage for whom that process was going to be longer, because we now have delays in it? I think that is a fair way to describe it. Was there an instruction for you to not communicate that pause and that delay to those applicants or indeed any applicants?

Ms Butler: I am happy to take that question. No, there was not.

Senator RYAN: No, there was not?

Ms Butler: No. What we did in AusIndustry was we provided information to our call centres and hotlines on the basis that, if customers or stakeholders rang and inquired as to the status of their program, they would be advised that there was a brief pause while the government was collecting information on programs.

Senator RYAN: Presumably we have had a script for your call centre?

Ms Butler: Yes.

Senator RYAN: Could you provide that on notice, please?

Ms Butler: Yes.

Senator RYAN: It was described as a brief pause, that took place on 28 August. We are now on 17 October. When are you changing the words so it is no longer a 'brief pause'? We are now at seven weeks. The point I am trying to make, Ms Butler, is that I think it is fair to say it is no longer brief. Do you still consider this to be a brief pause?

Ms Butler: We certainly consider it still to be a pause.

Senator RYAN: Are you still telling people it is a brief pause?

Ms Butler: I would have to check the scripting on that. I would suggest that we may have changed it to 'paused'. I will check that and get the paperwork to you on notice.

ANSWER

The AusIndustry Hotline script relating to the grants pause, as at 17 October 2012, was as follows.

- ***Has the Government paused or abolished grants funding?***

The Government is collecting information on how grants programs are being rolled out. Analysing the levels of existing program expenditure and the extent to which this is either committed or uncommitted is a normal part of the Budget process. There is a brief pause in some grant programs while this information is being collected. But at this stage all the

background work – preparation of guidelines, assessment of applications, etc – is continuing in the normal way.

- ***Why has the Government made this decision?***

Analysing the levels of existing program expenditure and the extent to which this is either committed or uncommitted is a normal part of the Budget process.

- ***I was expecting to see the release expressions for interest/grant guidelines for [name of grants round] in the near future will this still be going ahead?***

The Government is collecting information on how grants programs are being rolled out. There is a brief pause in some grant programs while this information is being collected. But at this stage all the background work – preparation of guidelines, assessment of applications, etc – is continuing in the normal way. A decision relating to the release of guidelines/expressions of interest will be made once the current process is completed.

- ***I recently submitted an application for [insert the name of the grants rounds here – are we affected by this decision and what happens if we are?***

The Government is collecting information on how grants programs are being rolled out. There is a brief pause in some grant programs while this information is being collected. But at this stage all the background work – preparation of guidelines, assessment of applications, etc – is continuing in the normal way.

- ***Have grants been approved by the AusIndustry since the announcement of the pause?***

No funds have been committed since the announcement of the pause on 28 August 2012.

- ***Why does the innovation.gov.au website Grants Report indicate that grants have been approved during the pause?***

No funds have been committed since the announcement of the pause on 28 August 2012. The Grants Report published on innovation.gov.au is in compliance with the Commonwealth Grants Guidelines. The approval date in the report relates specify to the contract execution date not grant approval date. There is sometimes a lag between the grant approval date and the execution of the subsequent customer contract.