

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: Research funding

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Bridget McKenzie

QUESTION No.: SI-69

1. Has the department undertaken any research on the proportion of research funding allocated to regional universities? Is the department concerned about this inequity? What steps are being or have been considered to address it?
2. Would the department consider giving research applications from regional areas with regional relevance more weight in relation to ARC and NHMRC funding?

ANSWER

1. The department gathers data on the research income, activity and outputs of Australian universities. This data is then used to ensure the equitable allocation of funding from the research block grants.

Research block grant funding of \$1.6 billion annually is provided to universities across Australia to undertake world class research and to support the training of higher degree by research students. This money is allocated on a performance basis. This enables all universities to compete for funding on the basis of research performance.

The Collaborative Research Networks (CRN) was announced in the 2009-10 Budget as part of the Australian Government's *Powering Ideas* innovation agenda.

CRN funding of up to \$81.1 is being provided to 15 universities to conduct research projects from mid-2011 to mid-2016. The aim of this funding is to build the research capacity of the less research intensive and regional universities by partnering with other more research intensive universities in areas of common research interest.

2. Through the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) the Australian Research Council (ARC) supports research across a wide-range of disciplines, including research relevant to regional and rural issues. Research activity can be located either in regional or metropolitan areas as many Australian universities have multiple campuses in both metropolitan and regional areas.

Researchers in all fields are eligible to apply for ARC funding, through an Eligible Organisation, in accordance with the funding rules for each scheme. ARC funding is awarded on the basis of research excellence, which is assessed through a competitive peer review process. As the department does not have policy responsibility for the NHMRC, it is suggested it be approached directly on this issue.