

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATE HEARING

Outcome: 3
Output Group: 3.3

DEST Question No. E949_04

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

a) Can you provide the Committee with some information about the International Centre of Excellence for Education in Mathematics – beyond the Minister's media announcement of 27 January?

What is the Australian Mathematics Trust?

b) How will CSIRO be involved in this venture? Will existing CSIRO funds or resources be diverted into it? Please provide details?

c) The media release says that the Commonwealth will provide "up to \$7.8 million over four years". What does "up to" mean here? Why can't you say definitely what the Commonwealth will allocate? Is this because you are relying on contributions from other sources, and these are not yet determined?

d) In what sense is this Centre "international"? How will it "attract international recognition for our mathematicians"? Isn't it aimed at the VET and schools sector? Aren't our mathematicians in universities and Commonwealth research agencies?

e) Why was it decided to locate this Centre at the University of Melbourne? What will that University contribute? Will it divert Commonwealth funds to this venture? Where, at the University, will it be housed? Do you propose to lease some of the unused capacity originally intended for Melbourne University Private?

f) This is one of five similar centres to be created. When will the others be established? Where? Who will be consulted and involved in their establishment?

Answer:

a) The Australian Mathematics Trust is a national non-profit organisation. It administers mathematical enrichment activities for Australian and international students and publishes books on mathematical enrichment.

Its Trustee is the University of Canberra and its Board comprises representation from the Australian Academy of Science, the Australian Mathematical Society, the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers, and a number of academics and corporate people.

The best known activity of the Trust is the Australian Mathematics Competition for the Westpac Awards which has been sponsored by the Westpac Banking Corporation since 1978 and attracts of the order of half a million entries annually, from Australia and overseas. The Trust also incorporates the Australian Mathematical Olympiad Committee which runs many mathematics activities, culminating in selection of a team of students who represent Australia

internationally, and Australian Informatics Olympiad Committee which runs a number of activities in Informatics (Computer Science), culminating in selection of a team of students who represent Australia internationally.

The Trust also has a publishing arm which publishes a range of books, journals, past papers and material in other formats. These publications include pedagogical material and collections of problems of all standards with their solutions.

b) CSIRO is an associate member of the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI). We are not aware of any other involvement CSIRO will have with the ICEEM. No existing CSIRO funds or resources have been or will be diverted to provide the \$7.8 million funding for the Centre.

c) The progressive payments that will be made to the ICEEM during the funding period will be conditional on the Centre achieving agreed milestones. In the event that the Centre does not meet all of its milestones then the Centre may receive less in Commonwealth funding than the \$7.8 million that has been allocated.

d) The Education in Mathematics Centre is expected to undertake activities that will enhance education in mathematics in Australia's schools, vocational education and training institutions, and higher education institutions.

The ICEEM will enhance the international recognition of the mathematical sciences in Australia, and the recognition of Australian mathematicians, through a range of activities that enhance the teaching and learning of mathematics in Australia and bring together leading researchers from Australia and overseas to share their expertise.

e) An open submission process was used to select the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) as the organisation that would establish the ICEEM. AMSI proposes to locate the Centre at its offices which are located at the University of Melbourne. The address of the AMSI office is 111 Barry Street Carlton South. It is for the University of Melbourne to determine the level of support it will give to the Centre.

f) The five International Centres of Excellence will be established in 2003-04. Three of the Centres have been announced. The Asia-Pacific Studies Centre will be established at the ANU. The Sustainable Tourism Education Centre will be established by the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism based at Griffith University. The Education in Mathematics Centre will be established by the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute which is based at the University of Melbourne.

The separate open submission processes that will determine the location of the other two Centres, in Sports Science and Administration; and Water Resource Management are currently underway.