

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2006-2007 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 3
Output Group: 3.2 – Assistance for Collaboration and Innovation

DEST Question No. E960_07

Senator Crossin asked on 14 February 2007, EWRE Hansard page 84.

Question:

Cooperative Research Centre guidelines

Senator CROSSIN— Which of the four criteria was it not successful in meeting?

Mr Cook—At that point in the process, it is not about whether or not it met the criteria. It was judged not to be competitive relative to other applications.

Senator CROSSIN—What were the reasons on which it was judged not to be competitive?

Mr Cook—We provided, and the CRC committee has provided, written and oral feedback to the applicants, which we do not as a matter of policy publish. If you wanted us to investigate that, we would ask the CRC if they were comfortable with that. We do not publish it for the very good reason that people may have issues about that feedback being made public.

Senator CROSSIN—I would ask you to do that and take that on notice.

Ms Paul—We are happy to approach the CRCs.

Answer:

Cooperative Research Centre guidelines

The Department wrote to the CRC for Tropical Savannas Management seeking their permission to provide a copy of their CRC Committee assessment report to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education. The applicant agreed to the release of the information and a copy of the assessment report is at Attachment A.



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Science and Training**



COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRES COMMITTEE

Mr David Garnett
Acting CEO
Tropical Savannas Management CRC
B42, Charles Darwin University
DARWIN NT 0909

Dear Mr Garnett

Application No: 20060021 CRC for Tropical Savanna Futures

I am writing concerning your application in the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Programme 2006 Selection Round.

The selection round is a competitive process and the CRC Committee has completed its consideration of all Stage 2 Full Business Cases. The Committee gave careful consideration to your application against the selection criteria specified in Section 4.2 of the 2006 Selection Round Guidelines for Applicants.

As a result of this process, I regret to advise you that the CRC Committee did not select your application for further consideration in the Selection Round. The Committee considered that your application was not as competitive as other applications. Following is feedback from the Committee against each of the selection criteria:

- **Selection criterion 1** - The outcomes will contribute substantially to Australia's industrial, commercial and economic growth: *Satisfactory*

The Committee recognised that the benefits of the proposal are hard to quantify in dollar terms. The projected NPV is claimed to be more than \$1 billion with almost half this (\$447 m) expected to be gained by reducing the lag time in getting approval for new mining and/or energy ventures through improved scientific argument.

The Committee considered that the proposal did not recognise specialist mining organisations, such as ACMER, who are heavily involved in this type of work. In addition the value proposition in savanna brand beef was not well justified.

The Committee considered that in the best case the implementation and uptake might generate a satisfactory contribution to economic growth.

- **Selection criterion 2** - The path to adoption (commercialisation/utilisation) will achieve the identified outcomes: *Unsatisfactory*

The Committee noted that the delivery of research outputs involved complex issues such as building relationships with the Indigenous community were not sufficiently addressed in the application. The work on building capacity and new enterprises within Indigenous communities is positive, however the values estimated are considered optimistic, due to the complexity of the issues and possible over-simplification of the estimates given the likely constraints to economic and social development. The success of the CRC is strongly dependant on the building of relationships with the Indigenous communities and the Committee did not consider that this was adequately addressed in the application.

The Committee was not convinced that the path to adoption was achievable, given the low level of involvement by industry partners.

On the track record of the existing CRC there was little in the way of existing examples that strengthen the path to adoption.

- **Selection criterion 3** - The collaboration has the capability to achieve the intended results: *Satisfactory*

The Committee considered the researchers identified were appropriate and the governance arrangements were satisfactorily addressed.

Each of the proposed programme areas appears to overlap with the Bushfire, Desert Knowledge and Tourism CRCs and the proposal did not address this issue.

- **Selection criterion 4** - The funding sought will generate a return and represents good value for the taxpayer: *Unsatisfactory*

Independent economic assessment rated the data provided as sound. While the Committee did not question the soundness of the economic assessment it was not satisfied that an investment in this CRC would represent good value for the taxpayer. The Committee was of the view that much of the work to be undertaken by the proposed CRC was already being done or could be undertaken by the individual partners (outside a CRC model) or by other CRCs already being funded by the Commonwealth.

There was little information on the allocation of resources to Programmes.

If you would like to receive further feedback on the reasons for the CRC Committee's decision, please contact me on (03) 9223 2410 or by email Peter.jonson@RoyMorgan.com

I thank you for your interest in the CRC Programme.

Yours sincerely



Dr Peter Jonson
Chair, CRC Committee

31 October 2006