

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: ALL

Output Group: ALL

DEST Question No. E449_04

Senator Carr asked on 5 November 2003, EWRE Hansard page 71

Question:

- a. On page 3 the [interim] report notes: 'There has been suggestions of a lack of systematic support to enhance the international connectivity of individuals as well as organisations'. What do you understand that comment to mean?
- b. Where could the Department improve in providing such support?

Answer:

Mapping Australian Science and Innovation

- a. The final mapping report states that "Australia lacks a strategic approach to coordination of support for international S&T collaboration, and funding mechanisms to support this appear to be insufficient". It notes that a recent study of government policies and programmes found that international S&T collaboration needs better recognition and that measurement of activity and support needs to be improved. Another study on the contribution of the states and territories to science and innovation found that a number of states (in particular NSW, Victoria, Queensland and WA) have taken initiatives to promote international science and technology (S&T) collaboration. Also, the demand for funding to support international S&T collaboration through Australian Government programmes exceeds the supply. Australia's international S&T linkages are critical because they keep researchers up-to-date with overseas scientific developments, provide access to facilities, equipment and expertise, and facilitate access to new technology for businesses.
- b. The Australian Government supports a range of international S&T activities such as collaborative research projects, membership to international organisations, travel grants, and fellowships. Activities are supported mainly through merit-based competitive funding processes underpinned by 30 bilateral S&T agreements. These programmes include grants managed by the Australian Research Council and the Innovation Access Programme – International S&T (managed by the Department of Education, Science and Training). There is currently significant demand from Australian researchers and organisations for support to undertake international S&T activities. The level and scope of support for international activities will be considered by the Government in its deliberations on the follow on to *Backing Australia's Ability*.