

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 1 (ARC)
Output Group: 1 (ARC)

DEST Question No. E480_04

Senator Carr asked on 5 November 2003, EWRE Hansard page 43

Question:

Senator Carr—But in terms of the overall needs to improve our research infrastructure, what would the cost be to the budget?

Prof. Sara—As I said to you before, we are providing—

Senator Carr—That is my next point.

Prof. Sara—Yes. We can estimate the costs we are accountable for, and I can say to you now we believe it will be \$250 million a year for us.

Senator Carr—You say \$250 million is the estimate at this point. I say, what would it cost to bring our research infrastructure up to international standards?

Prof. Sara—That is a broader question.

Senator Carr—That is not just those two programs, is it?

Prof. Sara—No, and it is really important that that is quite clear today, that the \$250 million is an additional funding of \$50 million to LIEF and an additional funding of doubling the RIBG to bring both of them up to international standards.

Senator Carr—But that is not the only source.

Prof. Sara—That is not the entire infrastructure spectrum.

Senator Carr—What I was asking you, and what I understood I was going to get from you at the hearing on 17 October, was your estimate of what it would cost for all programs. Obviously when you are arguing these cases you have a bit of ambit in it, so I want a fair dinkum figure of what you think it would cost to bring our research infrastructure up to international standards.

Prof. Sara—We are collecting that data to provide you with it.

Answer:

Funding for research infrastructure in the higher education sector

The ARC has provided the following response.

In its submission to the National Research Infrastructure Taskforce, the ARC indicated that it believed that “project-specific infrastructure overheads should be paid at a rate of at least 40 per cent of the associated grant”. It calculated that the “corresponding annual funding for overhead payments would need to rise to \$320 million from approximately \$160 million (the amount currently allocated through the Research Infrastructure Block Grant (RIBG)).”

That submission also proposed that funding for medium-scale infrastructure under the ARC’s Linkage–Infrastructure Equipment and Facilities (LIEF) scheme be raised to \$75 million per annum. This increase was proposed on the basis that access to LIEF funding could be broadened to encompass the Publicly Funded Research Agencies. At the Supplementary Estimates hearing on 5 November 2003, Professor Sara indicated that the LIEF scheme as it is currently constituted could be doubled “because there is such a demand on infrastructure through that program”.

The ARC Board has not considered its position in relation to the level of funding support available for other forms of research infrastructure