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Chief Scientist

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Senator Ursula Stephens
Chair
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and
Trade Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Cc: The Hon Stephen Smith, Minister for Defence
The Hon Craig Emerson, Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research

Dear Senator Stephens

Thank you for your email of 22 April 2013 regarding the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee's ongoing scrutiny into the implementation of the Defence Trade Controls Act 2012 (the Act).

In accordance with the Act, the Strengthened Export Controls Steering Group was established in November 2012 to provide advice, oversight and review of the Act's operation and implementation over a 24-month transition period.

The steering group is working through the issues as identified in the legislation and by universities. The group has met on three occasions, including a recent meeting with representatives from the United States to progress investigation of whether the Act and its implementation arrangements are more restrictive than the United States export control regulations on university activities.

The steering group is scheduled to meet again on 20 June 2013 and will provide its first report to the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research and the Senate Committee following this meeting.

As required under the Act, the steering group is providing oversight of a pilot program to evaluate the impact of the legislation on research activity in Australia. The pilot program has commenced to test the adequacy of the Act, its implementation arrangements and the resources required for regulating the export controls.

The steering group has established a legislation and regulations sub-group to advise on appropriate modifications to the Act should issues be identified throughout the transition period. The sub-group will also advise participants of the pilot program as it progresses.

A website has also been established to communicate the progress of the steering group, <http://exportcontrols.govspace.gov.au/steering-group>.

If you have any questions regarding the implementation of the Act and the work of the steering group please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Professor Ian Chubb AC