

From:
To:
Subject: Omnibus Bill - ARENA Funding
Date: Wednesday, 7 September 2016 6:35:10 PM

Dear Committee,

Windlab is an Australian innovation success story. It was formed as a spin out from the CSIRO in 2003 to commercialise a suite of atmospheric modelling and wind energy prediction tools. Windlab has played a critical role in the development of Australia's wind industry and is now Australia's leading international wind energy developer. Three times it has been recognised as a finalist in the Exporter of the Year awards. Windlab is headquartered in Canberra and has offices in the Brisbane, the US, South Africa and Tanzania. Windlab is today developing more than 50 projects comprising greater than 7,000MW of capacity. It is developing industry leading projects like the Kennedy Energy Park, an innovative 50MW wind, solar and battery storage hybrid in far North Queensland, which will provide near baseload generation characteristics. This project has secured ARENA funding, ensuring the project is commercially viable and can demonstrate the benefits of co-location and integration of renewable energy.

Windlab is 100% Australian owned. It has navigated the difficult path to profitability utilising all possible Australian innovation funding options. It has utilised R&D grant funding, government sponsored seed funding, Australian venture capital and Australia growth equity. Whilst the sources of these funds were named differently at the time they were secured, they represent the funding life cycle necessary to grow successful Australian innovators.

Windlab submission calls on the Government and Committee to maintain full ARENA funding and to remove the funding cuts from the Omnibus Bill.

We hear much about the innovation agenda. Having lived the process, Windlab can clearly state that without grant funding to the renewable energy sector little Australian R&D and innovation will be commercialised. Whilst we welcome the proposed CEIF funding, this will not replace the need for grant style funding to seed the many initiatives being gestated in our universities and research institutes. Funding the first 'valley of death' requires non-commercial equity. This is recognised by the Government through the creation of their Biomedical Translation Fund.

Faced with the global challenge of climate change mitigation and meeting Australia's COP21 commitments, why would the Government seek to support innovation within the Biomedical industry, yet undermine our best efforts in renewable energy innovation?

We re-iterate, Windlab is a stand out example of the innovative companies Australia seeks to produce. We know from hard experience that the paucity of risk capital in Australia means that there must be Government support if we hope to innovate and commercialise solutions within the climate change and new energy fields. The proposed funding cuts are short sighted, opportunistic and will result in Australia being a follower and importer of technology, not an innovator and value creator.

Your sincerely

Roger Price

Chief Executive Officer | Windlab Limited