

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry Portfolio
Budget Estimates 2014-15
2-3 June 2014

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY

TOPIC: CRC Program Guidelines

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 3 June 2014, page 10)

QUESTION NO.: BI-55

Senator KIM CARR: It is ultimately a ministerial decision. If the minister chooses to direct the CRC committee, is that still a publishable instrument?

Ms Launder: To the extent that the minister's decision would be made public through the announcement of the outcomes of the round. We would not necessarily be publishing what the CRC might have applied for through their application.

Ms Butler: Senator, I think you might be referring to the Commonwealth granting guidelines, where there might be a change. I am not really aware of that; I would probably have to take that on notice; but I think I know what you are referring to.

Senator KIM CARR: I know it well. The capacity for ministerial discretion in this area is limited by what the guidelines say. Would that be a fair statement?

Ms Launder: Yes.

Senator KIM CARR: The recommendations of the CRC committee can be altered, at the direction of the minister, but only within the bands that have been offered. Is that correct?

Ms Launder: Could you clarify what you mean by 'in the bands'?

Senator KIM CARR: The CRC committee makes recommendations on priority orders. Is that correct?

Ms Launder: If there was a priority, the minister might take that into consideration when he is reviewing.

Senator KIM CARR: He has to; I will take you through the guidelines. My memory is correct: he is required to take that into consideration. But the minister may well advise the committee that he wants to change the recommendations and lift a CRC up the ladder, but he cannot necessarily just put a new one in or knock one out? Is that true?

Ms Butler: I think we would have to take that on notice. It is a bit difficult to visualise how that would all work.

Senator KIM CARR: My point is that the guidelines are quite prescriptive.

Senator RONALDSON: Well, it is an advisory committee.

CHAIR: Senator Carr, you are not here to make comments; you are here to ask questions.

Senator KIM CARR: What is that? I am asking a question: are the guidelines prescriptive?

CHAIR: But using the term 'my point is' is probably not appropriate from this side of the table. If you couch your questions correctly you can probably get your point across.

Senator KIM CARR: I do not think the officers have any trouble understanding my point. I am asking: do the guidelines prescribe what the minister can and cannot do in terms of awarding funding? Do you want to take that on notice?

Ms Butler: Senator, are you talking about the ministerial guidelines?

Senator KIM CARR: No. I am talking about the CRC guidelines.

Ms Butler: So we are talking about the program guidelines?

Senator KIM CARR: The program guidelines.

Ms Butler: We would honestly have to take that on notice.

Senator Ronaldson: My understanding is that there has been no change to the guidelines of the former government.

ANSWER

The Minister, in accordance with the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Program Guidelines, which are available on business.gov.au at business.gov.au at www.business.gov.au/grants-and-assistance/Collaboration/CRC/about-the-program/Pages/program-guidelines.aspx, takes into consideration the advice of the CRC Committee and any other relevant matters in making a funding decision.

Should the Minister choose to approve a grant that is not recommended, the relevant reporting requirements under the Commonwealth Grant Guidelines would apply.