

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio
2015-16 Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing
22 October 2015

AGENCY: ANSTO

TOPIC: Percentage of revenues and comparisons to international standards

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QUESTION No.: SI-3

Senator KIM CARR: Yes, thank you. You have said that the centre is world-class. I concur with that, from all I have seen. But can you refresh my memory: what is the rate of commercial return for commercial users? Is that world-class as well?

Dr Paterson: We have been concentrating on that very intensively. Just as background for the senators, we have essentially two modes of access. On published scientific proposals we have merit based access; this is a universal standard internationally, so that the excellence of the science rather than access to resources wins the debate. For commercial users, and even for academic users who want to protect their intellectual property, we have a fee-for-service approach, and that fee-for-service approach allows them to maintain the confidentiality of the work, whereas, in the merit based access scheme, there is a requirement to publish in the open literature. We have a very strong and growing number of industrial users. The New South Wales government, seeing the virtue of this, has funded an access program for New South Wales companies to the level of \$1.4 million. This has been very successful and has significantly increased the industrial engagement by New South Wales companies who receive benefits from that scheme. In some cases the Victorian voucher scheme has allowed people to access from the Victorian industrial base, and there are a number of other commercial users who pay on that fee-for-service basis.

Since we took over operation of the synchrotron, the industrial utilisation of the fee-for-service basis has increased by some 300 per cent, and we continue to pursue industrial engagement actively.

Senator KIM CARR: What is the aggregate then, in terms of the percentage of revenues?

Dr Paterson: I will take on notice the percentage of revenues now from our industrial use for the last financial year—I do not have that number immediately to hand. But it—

Senator KIM CARR: How does it compare with the internationals? That is the bit I am interested in.

Dr Paterson: In terms of international comparisons, there are slightly different models. I would say that at present, from the information we have, we benchmark well with the most commercially available fee-for-service arrangements. The Canadian model is slightly different. They have a specialised extension service that they use. Just about every dollar that they eventually get from industry is actually used to expand that extension service. I think that is a model that works quite well. They have specifically-identified staff who are trained in industrial engagement. That is a feature of the New South Wales scheme with us as well.

I do believe that we have some data. We try to improve this data over time to find out in the merit-based access scheme the extent to which universities and publicly funded research institutions and other users are working with industrial and business collaborators. An indicative number, based on assessments that we have received, indicates that about one in five merit-based access programs support an eventual industrial application or business application of sorts.

Senator KIM CARR: Can you take that on notice for me then? I would like to know what the comparisons are and how you think ANSTO fares by international standards.

Dr Paterson: We will certainly do that, Senator.

ANSWER

In the 2014-15 financial year, aggregate income from industrial usage of the Australian Synchrotron as a percentage of total revenues was 2.75 per cent. This is up from below one per cent in the 2011-12 financial year, as a result of a focused industry engagement strategy implemented by ANSTO since assuming operation of the Australian Synchrotron in 2013.

Internationally, there is a wide range of industry income achieved by synchrotron facilities. The European Synchrotron Radiation Facility, which has publicised its successes in industry engagement, records a figure of 1.3 per cent. The Taiwanese facility, which is based in a high-technology precinct, is also at about one per cent. The Canadian Light Source, which has implemented similar approaches to those that the Australian Synchrotron is working towards adopting, is at six per cent.