

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2014 - 2015**

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000239

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing

Higher Education Infrastructure Working Group

Question

"In relation to the Higher Education Infrastructure Working Group:

- a) The web page for the Working Group says "On 15 December 2014, the Working Group wrote to university vice-chancellors seeking to meet with them to hold consultations in early 2015. The meeting schedule is being finalised and will be published shortly." Why has the meeting schedule not been published as of 17 April 2015?
- b) The Working Group has not to date issued any public consultation documents, such as an issues or options paper. Please explain why no consultation paper has been issued.
- c) Will there be any capacity for public submissions to the Working Group? If not, why not?
- d) The Working Group's terms of reference include the following: "With specific reference to major national collaborative research infrastructure, investigate and report on the feasibility of financing new infrastructure through capital markets or other mechanisms, as well as options for meeting the costs of loan repayments." Given that the Research Infrastructure Review is scheduled to complete its work before the Higher Education Infrastructure Working Group, is this term of reference still expected to be addressed?
- e) Please provide any examples that the Department is aware of (international or domestic) where major national research infrastructure has successfully been funded by capital markets or commercial lending arrangements."

Answer

- a) Consultations with groups of universities were held in March and April. As the department confirmed the meeting dates with individual universities and their respective groupings directly, the final meeting schedule was not published on the Working Group's web page.
- b) The Working Group decided not to release any public discussion documents but to pursue targeted consultations. On 19 February 2015 the Working Group wrote to all university Vice-Chancellors setting out a number of questions to facilitate discussion at the consultation sessions.
- c) The Working Group is not seeking formal submissions but will accept comments from stakeholders. These can be sent to the Working Group Secretariat at:
HEIWG@education.gov.au
- d) Yes, this term of reference is expected to be addressed.
- e) The department has not undertaken a systematic survey of domestic or international practice in this area.