

December 21, 2006

Science and Innovation Study
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80,
Belconnen, ACT 2616, Australia

Attn: The Study Team Leader

Dear Sir / Madam,

As this study is looking at the level of public support for science and innovation, I feel that it is incumbent not only for employees of corporations and institutions, along with members of organisations to submit formal offerings but also for members of the public to make private submissions. As such, please find mine below.

I will also preface my submission with a further disclosure to my background. During the period July 1990 and June 2005 I was employed with 3 suppliers of scientific goods in W. A. (LabSupply, Crown Scientific and Perth Scientific) my employment began as a Customer Service / Telephone Sales Clerk, becoming an Area Manager, Product Specialist and also Sales Manager. During this time I have visited almost every mine site and laboratory in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

I have seen a general change, dare I say it, reluctance for companies to actively invest in internal R&D projects unless commercially challenged to do so. This change most noticeably came about with the change of R&D tax breaks from 200%, to 150% and then 125% on investment.

My submission is also based around an idealism / project which I drafted last year and may never get around to seeing started (let alone completed), but the concept of which you might appreciate.

Just pretending for a moment...

If all scientific or laboratory equipment in Australia suddenly vanished so that or no results could be suitably obtained, nor were those items able to be quickly and easily replaced, how long could your organisation survive for ?

WASTED

The **W**estern **A**ustralian **S**cientific **T**echnologies & **E**nterprise **D**atabase

The Challenge: Can **SUSTAIN:**

The **S**ignificantly **U**nderfunded **S**cience & **T**echnology in **A**ustralia, **I**nitiative

Become:

The **SU**pportive **S**cientific **T**echnologies of **A**ustralia **I**ndustry **N**etwork ??

Or some similar acronym...

The Pitch: To promote the benefits of Scientific Technologies to the governments of Australia, and to all industries in general

Tasks: Create a registry / database that can be used to extol the benefits created by science and the scientific industry with in Western Australia.

Compile a survey of all suppliers of scientific equipment in Australia.

Compile a survey of all users of scientific equipment in Australia.

Discover: How many companies / departments / individuals and institutions directly benefit from science and technology in Australia?

How much money is spent within this state and how much money is transferred to other states and overseas?

How many jobs in Western Australia are for the purpose of creating and managing scientific information?

How many jobs are additionally required to directly support these endeavours?

Will companies be maintaining, increasing or decreasing their spending and staff levels in future?

How many of these people; companies and dollars are used to pursue new scientific discoveries, research and development in Australia.

Sectors to target: ANY Section / Department / Agency / Division / Bureau of any government; industry; University; Institution; Hospital; with interests in Pharmaceutical; Mining; Food; Agriculture; Manufacturing; Transportation; Servicing / Supply / Administering / Monitoring a result obtained through using scientific technology, techniques, equipment or practices.

In short, anywhere there is a requirement to do a test, qualified comparison, evaluation or analysis.

If possible, qualify the “Sciences or Disciplines” used in each particular process and the expenditure in each:

Social; Biological; Medical – Human or Animal; Geological; Chemistry; Agricultural; Physical; Metallurgical / Mineral; Environmental; etc

Some key / qualifying questions:

How are the Scientific / Laboratory / Quality Control requirements perceived in the rest of the organisation(s)?

le: Benefit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hindrance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Only have it to satisfy regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Much valued	<input type="checkbox"/>

Easily Warranted

Quickly Justified

Cant do without

Feared

Hated.

What would be required for your organisation to increase the amount of time dollars and effort spent in this area?

One of the further challenges I see is that almost every "...ology" and discipline of science has it's own member network, seminars and annual conference(s). Each and every one cannot be entirely funded from membership and attendance alone, so they request corporate assistance. As far as I am aware, any funding from corporations to such associations for their events is not tax deductible, unless that association is also a registered charity.

Further, the events and functions are sometimes run at similar / same times of the year. Attendees and sponsors then have to decide which would be best for their circumstances and forgo the others. eg: a supplier of microscopes should attend / exhibit at a national geology conference, the same as they should a national Biology / Microbiology conference. If are run at the same time, the limitations of resources would restrict their ability to attend both, especially if they held are in different states. Sure, this is not the case for each occasion but a higher level, or more formal method, of collaboration between scientific organisations and associations cannot be a bad thing.

A final comment could not pass without suggesting further parity on approval of grant funding. If only on a percentage basis, submissions from Western Australia for federal funds rarely gain the success which is enjoyed from states such as Victoria and New South Wales. Rarely does it compare with the percentage of population or domestic wealth indicators. Research for the research's sake alone not often appropriate, but credit should be given where due credit is deserved.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my points and opinions to your study group. I wish you well with your task.

A. Shane Way

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