



**NSW GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
TO**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
STATE DEVELOPMENT
INQUIRY INTO**

**SCIENCE AND ITS
COMMERCIALISATION IN NSW.**

JUNE 2004

NSW GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY INTO SCIENCE AND ITS COMMERCIALISATION IN NSW

REC NO.	ISSUE	REVIEW RECOMMENDATION	GOVERNMENT POSITION
1	Review of the BioFirst Strategy	<p>A review of the BioFirst Strategy should be undertaken to determine how best to broaden the NSW Government's focus on science and innovation. The review should examine the priorities, focus, scope and funding of the BioFirst strategy and develop a new strategy to meet the NSW Government's policy objectives in science, technology and innovation. The new strategy should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a website providing information on all programs and application processes; - transparent, publicly advertised selection criteria for all programs; - an independent selection panel; - publication of successful applicants and funding allocations; - a feedback process for unsuccessful applicants; and - annual evaluation of all programs, and competitive benchmarking to be made publicly available. 	<p>The Government accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>In 2001, the Premier announced the five-year NSW Biotechnology Strategy BioFirst, which provides \$68 million in new funding for biotechnology in NSW. The programs funded under the BioFirst Strategy are divided into 4 categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BioPlatform - BioBusiness - BioEthics - Ministry for Science and Medical Research (formerly BioUnit) <p>The BioFirst Strategy has been largely well received.</p> <p>As indicated in the Strategy, 'the BioUnit (now the Ministry) will evaluate the benefits gained through the implementation of BioFirst. Evaluation will involve a review of the strategy's appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness...' (pg 30 BioFirst Strategy)</p> <p>Accordingly, a review of the BioFirst Strategy will occur, commencing in mid 2004.</p>
2	The establishment of an Innovation Awards Program	<p>Based on the platform established under the existing BioFirst Awards program, the Innovation Awards would supersede the BioFirst Awards by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - encompassing all areas of science and innovation; - extending the program to offer flexible short-term postings for Australians living abroad; and - including people with significant experience in commercialisation. <p>An independent and transparent selection panel should be appointed to determine the Innovation Awards.</p>	<p>This recommendation is still under consideration.</p> <p>The BioFirst awards will be reviewed as part of the Review of the BioFirst Strategy (Recommendation 1), taking into account the Inquiry's recommendation.</p>

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3	The establishment of an administration and policy coordination body within the science portfolio	That the Minister for Science and Medical Research establish an administration and policy coordination body within the science portfolio with sufficient resources to assist the NSW Government to meet its policy objectives. That the administration of scientific research remains within each Government portfolio with the proposed body to provide coordination, liaison and effective communication across portfolios.	<p>The Government has accepted this recommendation. Implementation has commenced.</p> <p>The Ministry for Science and Medical Research was established on December 1, 2003. A new Director General, Professor Mick Reid, was appointed in early March 2004 and a recruitment process is currently underway to fill new positions.</p> <p>The Ministry's is responsible for coordination of the following key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medical research; - Scientific research; - The BioFirst Strategy; - Innovation in Science and Medical Research; and - Policy Coordination across government. <p>The objectives of the Ministry include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To position and promote NSW as a leader in science, innovation and medical research; - To foster excellence in science, innovation and medical research; - To optimise the effectiveness of the NSW Government's investment in science, innovation and medical research; and - To be the lead agency in coordinating NSW whole of government approaches to science, innovation and medical research.
4	Establishment of an Office of the Chief Scientist	The Chief Scientist should report directly to the Minister for Science and Medical Research. The primary role of the Chief Scientist would be to act as an advisor to Government, as well as a conduit between the science community and the Government.	<p>This recommendation is still under consideration.</p> <p>Advice is being sought from the Ministerial Advisory Council on Medical and Health Research on the feasibility and best model for a Chief Scientist position to ensure that long term strategic advice is available to government.</p>

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5	The convening of a Science Leadership Group with a short-term role advising the Minister when reviewing the Committee's recommendations.	<p>The Science Leadership Group's primary function would be to oversee the implementation of the proposed Ministry for Science and Innovation. The Group should consist of, but not be confined to, representatives from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NSW Government; - science, technology and innovation sector; - environmental sciences; - NSW Council of Cooperative Research Centres; and - education sector. <p>That, in the long-term, the proposed Chief Scientist chair the Science Leadership Group to provide the Minister with high level advice on issues of strategic importance to New South Wales.</p>	<p>The Government does not accept this recommendation in its current form.</p> <p>The Minister currently receives advice and direction from a number of advisory bodies including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Ministerial Advisory Council on Medical and Health Research; - The BioEthics Panel; and - The Innovation Council. <p>The membership of these advisory bodies covers those broad areas recommended by the Committee for the Science Leadership Group. However, consideration is being given to the best form of advisory support to ensure that long term strategic advice is available to government, including the feasibility and best model of Chief Scientist support.</p>
6	Transfer of responsibility of the NSW Innovation Council	<p>That the responsibility and administration of the NSW Innovation Council transfer from the Minister for State and Regional Development to the Minister for Science and Medical Research.</p>	<p>The Government has accepted this recommendation.</p> <p>Implementation of a change in administrative responsibility is underway with responsibility for the Innovation Council transferring from the Department of State and Regional Development to the Ministry for Science and Medical Research.</p>
7	Intellectual Property Management and contract guidelines	<p>That the Minister for Science and Medical Research develop intellectual property management and contract guidelines for adoption across all agencies in the New South Wales public sector.</p>	<p>The Government has accepted this recommendation.</p> <p>Implementation has commenced.</p> <p>A whole-of-government Intellectual Property Management Framework is currently being developed to identify and encourage better practice in relation to the creation, use, sharing, protection and commercialisation of IP in the NSW public sector to optimise the economic, social and environmental benefits to the people of NSW.</p>

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8	Review of the Research Scientist Classification, Policy and Guidelines	That the NSW Premier's Department initiate discussions with the relevant employee organisations and public sector agencies to review the Research Scientist Classification, Policy and Guidelines, or equivalent classification. The review should examine the viability of amending the Classification to further acknowledge and reward excellence in science, technology and innovation in the public sector, in particular, commercialisation.	<p>NSW Health is preparing an IP Policy, due to be completed in the second half of 2004. The objectives of this policy are to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - encourage health research in the public health system and the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge and skills; - manage intellectual property with a potential commercial value in a manner which benefits the public health system as a whole; and - recognise and reward innovation by staff of public health organisations. <p>A copy of the Health IP policy will be provided to the Committee when publicly available.</p> <p>This recommendation is still under consideration.</p> <p>The Public Employment Office and the Chairperson of the Research Scientist Classification Committee are currently exploring the impact of implementing any changes to the award, policy and guidelines with relevant agencies.</p>

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9	That the NSW Government initiate an annual NSW Science in Parliament day.	<p>A parliament sitting day should be devoted for the purpose, and should incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a theme for the day; - the involvement of all Members of both Houses of Parliament and the Parliament's Presiding Officers; - the involvement of the NSW Chief Scientist; - a focus on scientists meeting with parliamentarians, with formal and informal opportunities for networking; - attendance by young scientists, teachers and students; - effective communication between government and the science community prior to, during and after the event; and - an evaluation process to ensure the future success of the initiative. 	This recommendation is still under consideration

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10	The Direction of Science and Technology Education in NSW	<p>That the Minister for Science and Medical Research and the Minister for Education convene a government taskforce to determine the direction of science and technology education in New South Wales. The taskforce would, in light of the National Review of Education:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. identify strategies for attracting and retaining quality science and technology teachers; 2. review the New South Wales science and technology curriculum for K-6 and Year 7-12; and 3. develop a science awareness program within New South Wales schools. 	<p>The Government has accepted this recommendation.</p> <p>It should be noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Years 7-10 science curriculum was reviewed in 2002. The new syllabus was distributed to schools in 2003 for implementation in 2005; - The Years 11 and 12 science curriculum was revised in 1997 with the NSW Government White Paper Securing Their Future in 1997; new syllabuses were implemented and then re-amended in 2002 with the new implementation effective from 2003. - The Board of Studies is considering a revision of the Science and Technology K-6 Syllabus. A timeline for this has not yet been established. <p>This notwithstanding, a Taskforce will be convened and will assess the feasibility of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. identifying strategies for attracting and retaining quality science and technology teachers; 2. reviewing the New South Wales science and technology curriculum for K-6 and Year 7-12; and 3. developing a science awareness program within New South Wales schools.
11	Federal and State co-funding of business studies module in undergraduate science courses in NSW	<p>That the NSW Government approach the Federal Government with a proposal to introduce a program to co-fund a business studies module within undergraduate science courses in selected New South Wales universities.</p>	<p>The Government does not accept this recommendation in this form.</p> <p>The Government recognises the importance of developing business studies skills amongst the business community in NSW. The Government currently funds non-tertiary programs, such as the Professional Leadership and Development Programs, which target both start-ups and established biotech businesses to encourage the development of business skills.</p> <p>Funding for the university sector is the responsibility of the</p>

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			<p>Commonwealth Government. However, the NSW Government has included this issue for discussion at the next meeting in June 2004 of the NSW Strategic Initiatives Group to determine its appropriateness for NSW. This Group is comprised of NSW Vice-Chancellors and the CEO's of the Premier's Department, the Department of Education and Training and other key agencies. The Group meets to develop initiatives of mutual benefit to universities and the State.</p>
12	Infrastructure Loans Scheme	<p>That the Minister for Science and Medical Research consider introducing an infrastructure loans scheme for start-up companies and small to medium enterprises in the New South Wales science, technology and innovation sector. That the loans be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strictly for the purposes of purchasing, or building, facilities; - determined on the viability of a business plan submitted to a government selection panel; and - made available with a flexible repayment plan, subject to the business plan. <p>That the size of the loan be subject to the viability of the business plan and the value of the asset, which would be held as security by the Government until the loan was repaid.</p>	<p>The Government does not accept this recommendation.</p> <p>The NSW Government already provides financial assistance to start-up companies and small to medium enterprises in New South Wales through well-established grant schemes administered by the Department of State and Regional Development. These schemes offer assistance for projects by providing grants against agreed milestones and based on economic evaluation and business plans.</p>
13	Cooperative Research Centre liaison position	<p>That the proposed Ministry for Science and Innovation include a Cooperative Research Centre liaison position. The position would be responsible for providing advice to Cooperative Research Centres located in New South Wales concerning NSW Government agencies, NSW Government science policies and Federal Government funding programs.</p>	<p>The Government accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Implementation has commenced.</p> <p>The Ministry for Science and Medical Research has assigned the responsibilities of Cooperative Research Centre liaison officer to an existing senior officer in the Ministry.</p>

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14	Commercialisation Brokerage Scheme	<p>That the Minister for Science and Medical Research examine the appropriateness and feasibility of the New South Wales public sector participating in a national commercialisation brokerage or establishing a State based brokerage for New South Wales. The Minister should examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the National Commercialisation Brokerage proposed by the Australian Institute for Commercialisation; and - examples of international commercialisation brokerages such as the British Technology Group in England. 	<p>The Government does not accept this recommendation at this stage.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that the NSW Government is already a member of the Australian Institute for Commercialisation and is currently working with the AIC to determine the costs, benefits and requirements for the NSW Government involvement in a national brokerage scheme.</p>