

Standing Committee on State Development

Defence Industry in NSW – Private Hearing – 3 August 2017

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Research on Artificial Intelligence

Question reference number: 3

Member: The Hon John Graham MLA

Type of question: asked on Thursday, 3 August 2017, Hansard page 19

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 30 August 2017

Question:

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You have listed some of the projects that are under consideration as part of those partnerships. One view put to me last week was very strongly about artificial intelligence and that there was almost no research going on in Australia in relation to this. This will have big security and potential defence implications. Do you have any view about where that has priority?

Mr RAMAGE: It is certainly one of the 10 priorities that the Defence white paper identified. It is a priority side, but I am not sure I would share that view. I am happy to take that question on notice. As you can imagine, artificial intelligence, the ability to increase computing power and the ability to make faster decisions to bring that in are absolutely the key elements of future defence and operations. I would not share that view.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It is about the amount of Australian research that has already been done. It is clearly a priority, but the view put was that very little research has been done. I will be interested to see your response.

Answer:

Artificial Intelligence covers a broad range of disciplines including computer science, engineering and biomedical sciences. Australia has world-leading research capabilities in many areas related to artificial intelligence. A number of centres have been established around Australia to focus research activities, for example, the Data to Decisions Cooperative Research Centre, the University of Sydney Centre for Field Robotics and the University of Technology Sydney Centre for Artificial Intelligence. These attract research funding from many sources, including the Australia Research Council, the Cooperative Research Centre program and Defence.

Defence recognises the importance of artificial intelligence for future Defence capabilities and will be supporting national efforts to further enhance the capability and capacity of our innovation sector in artificial intelligence-related science and technology. As one example, Defence is supporting the establishment of a Defence

Cooperative Research Centre for Trusted Autonomous Systems. This Centre will draw upon Australia's expertise in artificial intelligence and autonomy research that is relevant to future Defence needs.

The establishment of the Defence Cooperative Research Centre for Trusted Autonomous Systems was announced by the Minister for Defence Industry on 6 July 2017, with anticipated funding of up to \$50 million over a seven year period from the Next Generation Technologies Fund. The Chair of the Centre, Mr Jim McDowell, will be seeking university and industry partners to participate in the Defence Cooperative Research Centre and developing the proposed research program over the next few months. The program is expected to have a significant artificial intelligence element.