



The Hon Jodi McKay MP

Minister for Tourism
Minister for the Hunter

Ms Madeleine Foley
A/Director – Committees
Budget Estimates
Room 812, Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Foley

I refer to your letter of 21 October 2008 to the Hon Tony Stewart MP, concerning the Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2008-2009. I am responding in my capacity as Acting Minister for Science and Medical Research.

Please find enclosed responses to questions taken on notice during the hearing, as they relate to the *Science and Medical Research portfolio*.

Also enclosed is a copy of page 16 of the uncorrected transcript, marked with the following factual correction:

p16: 'In terms of project grants, it was announced to day that New South Wales received \$106 million. This is 29.7 per cent of the toal. That is up from **26.6 per cent received last year.**'

If you have any further questions, you can contact Mr Chris Elasi, Departmental Liaison Officer, on (02) 9228 4700.

Yours sincerely

JODI MCKAY

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1 Farrer Place, Sydney NSW 2000
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Mr TONY STEWART: I will check the figures when the question is provided. In terms of project grants, it was announced today that New South Wales received \$106 million. This is 29.7 per cent of the total. That is up from 24 per cent last year to 25 per cent. That demonstrates that we are taking the lead in this whole process.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Are you aware of a study by the Queensland Institute of Medical Research looking at the number of deaths in Australia caused by tanning beds or solariums?

Mr TONY STEWART: At this stage I am not aware of the actual figures. The issue of solariums is a concern to me, as it is to the honourable member. It is something that I intend to pursue in terms of the operation of my portfolio.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Can you confirm for us, on notice, whether it was 43? It is reported in the media that 43 people are killed each year by tanning beds. It would be good to have that confirmed. Is it correct that State-based regulations about solariums and their use are being prepared?

Mr TONY STEWART: I have already indicated my position on this. I understand that the Committee has agreed that this is a cancer-related issue, it was dealt with by the Minister for Health during his deliberations last Monday, and any questions of this nature need to be referred to the Minister for Health, John Della Bosca.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So you are no longer the Minister for cancer.

Mr TONY STEWART: My understanding is that an arrangement was made that the Minister for Health would provide answers to any questions asked, and that is what was done.

CHAIR: That is my understanding.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Can we talk about nanomaterials? That is within your portfolio?

Mr TONY STEWART: I am happy to answer your questions.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Are you aware of a recent review by a group of researchers at Monash University of Australia's current Federal regulations on nanotechnologies, which found six gaps in the capacity of the existing regulations to manage the risks of nanomaterials in commercial use?

Mr TONY STEWART: That is why, among other reasons, on 6 December 2007 the previous Minister for Science and Medical Research requested that the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on State Development conduct an inquiry into nanotechnology in New South Wales. I am sure that many members are familiar with some of the potential advances of this technology. For example, nanoparticles have potential application in the thermal treatment of tumours and in medical diagnostics. Nanomaterials are already in use in some household items, such as paints and clothing material, and nanotechnology is integral to the development of quantum computer technology. By 2014, 15 per cent of global manufactured goods, valued at about \$US2.6 trillion—that is an amazing feat—will incorporate nanotechnology.

However, there is a level of concern in the community about the relative lack of understanding of the environmental, health and safety impacts of nanotechnology products and processes, which I think is the focus of the member's question. The New South Wales Government felt that there needed to be detailed understanding of the issues before a regulatory framework could be put in place. That is why the inquiry into nanotechnology in New South Wales was initiated. Conducted by the Legislative Council's State development committee, the inquiry has received 26 submissions from various stakeholders, including the New South Wales Government, and has heard evidence from scientists, researchers, unions, and environmental groups, as well as the previous Minister for Science and Medical Research.

The committee is due to deliver its report to the Government by 31 October 2008. The inquiry will inform a more balanced consideration of all issues that relate to nanotechnology, including the health and safety risks and benefits, and the potential for nanotechnologies to be key contributors to economic growth driven by innovation in areas such as manufacturing and communications. The inquiry report will provide a detailed view of nanotechnology in New South Wales, in particular its current and future applications of technology, including its importance to New South Wales industry, and the scope of knowledge on the environmental impacts of nanoparticles. We will also gain a better understanding of how regulatory frameworks deal with nanomaterials,

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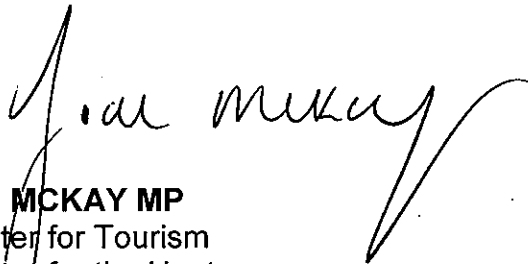
ANSWER

I am advised:

The NSW Medical Research Support Program is a competitive process for the allocation of infrastructure funds to health and medical research organisations in NSW.

The Program is delivered in three year cycles and has provided over \$64 million in infrastructure support in the current 2006/09 triennium, to the State's major publicly-funded medical research organisations.

The grant funding is directed towards infrastructure, rather than specific research projects and provides critical support to underpin research activities in the NSW health and medical research sector.



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The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Minister, how many submissions did you receive to the New South Wales Government's review of the Medical Research Support Program?

Mr TONY STEWART: That is a question that the Director General is best suited to answer.

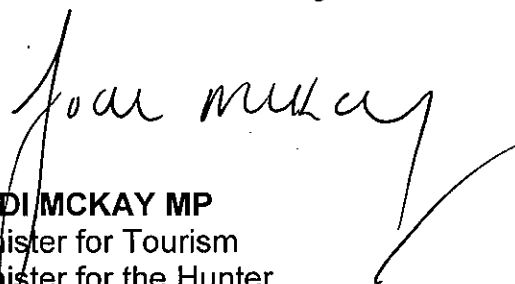
Mr VAN DYK: Submissions for that have only just closed. We do not have the exact figures. I cannot give you that right now. They closed this week.

ANSWER

I am advised:

A review of the Medical Research Support Program is being coordinated by the Office for Science and Medical Research to provide recommendations for the next funding round scheduled for distribution in 2009/2010.

A total of 23 submissions were received, including a combined submission from a consortium of nine leading research institutes.



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CHAIR: Minister, we are almost out of time and I have a final question to put on the record. Unless you can answer this straight away I am happy to put it on notice. Can you advise whether as of today's date you have met with the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, Kolling Institute of Medical Research, Westmead Millennium Institute, Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, ANZAC Research Institute, Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute, Heart Research Institute, Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, Hunter Medical Research Institute, Children's Cancer Institute Australia, Children's Medical Research Australia and/or the Centenary Institute of Cancer Medicine and Cell Biology?

ANSWER

I am advised:

As of 5 November 2008, the Minister has visited the following Science and Medical Research portfolio stakeholders

- Cancer Institute of NSW
- Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO)
- Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI)
- The George Institute for International Health



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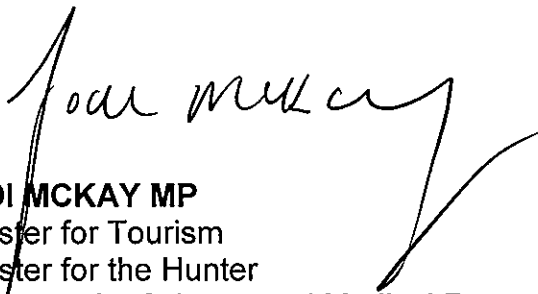
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ANSWER

I am advised:

In the lead up to the mini-budget the NSW Government will be looking at all of the major capital works programs across the State.

At this stage the Government has not ruled anything in or out. The Premier has said that everything will be considered, he wants maximum flexibility in this exercise as we strengthen the NSW economy.



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The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: How do you expect New South Wales to compete with other States for competitive grants, given such a low level of funding? If you would like to take the questions on notice, I would be happy to receive the answers.

Mr TONY STEWART: While we will provide information that has been requested, I point out that yesterday the Commonwealth announced the Australian Research Council's 2009 funding round and that researchers in New South Wales have won more than \$127 million in Australian Research Council funding for 371 research projects. That is a tremendous result by any standards. I proudly announce that this equates to 35 per cent of the national total and it is the highest proportion in terms of total research funding awarded to any State in Australia. When the State's percentage of the national population is taken into account, it is the highest result. In line with the issues being raised, this is a great accolade for New South Wales as well as for science and medical research in the State, which have achieved fantastic results.

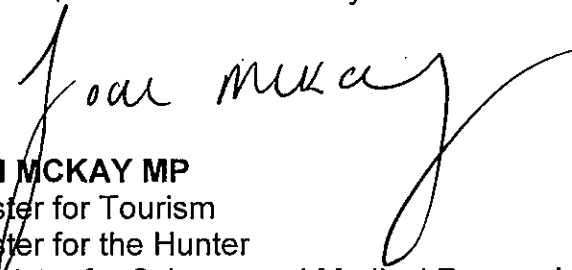
ANSWER

I am advised:

The NSW Government has made significant investments in the science and medical research sector in NSW, including capital investments of more than \$198 million to build state-of-the-art research facilities which will foster research collaborations and the efficient use of research infrastructure.

Further capital developments are under consideration and the Office for Science and Medical Research, NSW Health Department and the University sector are working together to progress developments at Liverpool, Westmead and Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute as components of the strategic plan for medical research in NSW.

This is in addition to the \$64 million funding awarded in research infrastructure support for the 2006/09 triennium of the Medical Research Support Program and another \$40 million over four years under the Science Leveraging Fund.



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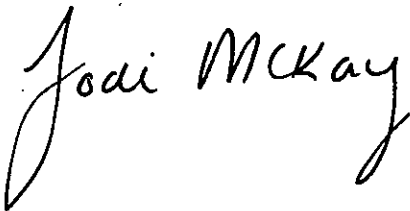
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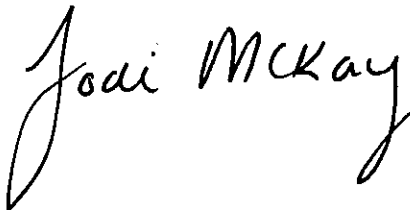
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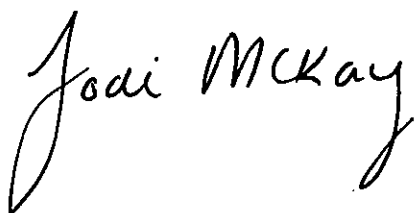
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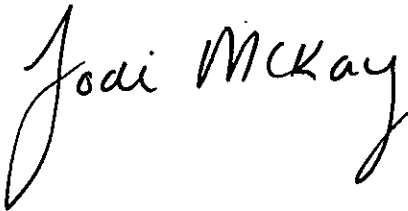
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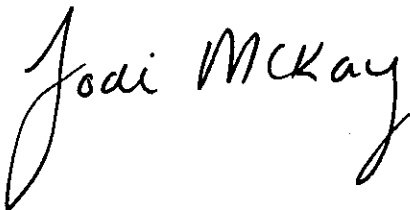
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ISSUE

The Hon Tony Stewart MP, Minister for Science and Medical Research, took a number of questions on notice at the Small Business, Science and Medical Research Budget Estimates Committee that relate to the Science and Medical Research portfolio.

ANALYSIS

The questions are as follows:

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