

Division 14: Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation — Services 3 and 4, Innovation and the Digital Economy —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Ms J.L. Hanns, Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy.

Ms R. Brown, Director General.

Ms L. Dawson, Deputy Director General.

Mr A. Dolling, Executive Director.

Mr R. Sansalone, Chief Financial Officer.

Ms K. Schaap, Director, Industry Development Division.

Mr J. Stokes, Senior Policy Adviser.

Ms I. Deng, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

Do we have any questions? The member for Vasse.

[9.30 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 195 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. Paragraph 7.3 on growing the state's science and innovation capabilities refers to co-investing in the Australian Remote Operations for Space and Earth. What is the relationship between AROSE and the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation?

Ms J.L. HANNS: The Australian Remote Operations for Space and Earth's headquarters operations 2022–26 has received \$4 million in funding. AROSE is based in Perth. It is an industry-led entity that transfers technology between the resources and space sectors. The state government's co-investment of \$4 million for AROSE's HQ operations is anticipated to leverage about \$7.4 million in cash and in-kind for the entity.

Ms L. METTAM: What was the process under which funding was allocated to AROSE?

Ms J.L. HANNS: I refer that to the director general.

Ms R. Brown: It is a partnership arrangement under which we have entered into a grant agreement with AROSE, whereby other funding is leveraged through other partners, including universities in industry.

Ms L. METTAM: How many staff from the department work for AROSE?

Ms R. Brown: There are no employees of the department in AROSE.

Ms L. METTAM: How does it work that the deputy director general of industry, science and innovation is also a director for AROSE?

Ms R. Brown: Where state government agencies may have a partnership arrangement with an external entity, often positions on that board may be held by a state government representative. In this case, the deputy director general sits on the board of AROSE. That is important as a partnership-type arrangement. Any other matters relating to conflicts are managed internally in the department.

Ms L. METTAM: I assume that role happened after funding was obtained?

Ms R. Brown: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: Is it an oversight role?

Ms R. Brown: The funding arrangement between the agency and AROSE has a condition that the state government through JTSI has a position on that board.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 196 and paragraph 7.5 on research and development commercialisation. Budget paper No 3 indicates that \$8.2 million has been allocated to establish Founders Factory for the purpose of supporting startups. However, division 14 in budget paper No 2 states that this is for working with Founders Factory. Can the parliamentary secretary clarify the discrepancy and whether the department is looking to establish a government-run Founders Factory, or is it working with the established organisation?

Ms J.L. HANNS: To start with, it is important to understand that attracting the Founders Factory to Perth and to set up in Western Australia was a coup. It is the organisation's first entry into Australia. It is globally renowned for tech acceleration. An allocation of \$7.2 million was made to Founders Factory to enable it to locate within Western Australia, and the remainder was to establish and support Founders Factory within JTSL.

The appropriation was recommended.