

**ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRY
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO TECHNOLOGICAL AND SERVICE INNOVATION
IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
THURSDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2016**

SESSION SEVEN

Members

**Mr I.C. Blayney(Chair)
Mr F.M. Logan (Deputy Chair)
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr J. Norberger
Mr T.K. Waldron**

Hearing commenced at 3.35 pm

Dr NATASHA AYERS

iPREP Coordinator, Edith Cowan University, examined:

Professor JOSEPH LUCA

Dean, Graduate Research School, Edith Cowan University, examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Economics and Industry Standing Committee, I would like to thank you for your appearance before us here today. This hearing has been convened to enable the committee to gather evidence for its inquiry into technological and service innovation in Western Australia. You have been provided with a copy of the committee's terms of reference. At this stage, I would like to introduce myself and other member of the committee here today. I am the Chair, Ian Blayney, the member for Geraldton. With me is the Deputy Chair, Hon Fran Logan, member for Cockburn, and our other member here today is Hon Terry Waldron, member for Wagin. The Economics and Industry Standing Committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure of the Parliament and therefore commands the same respect as given to proceedings of the house itself. Even though the committee is not asking witnesses to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. This is a public hearing and Hansard is making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you would provide the full title for the record.

Before we proceed to the inquiry's specific questions that we have for you today, I need to ask you the following. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the "Details of Witness" form?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today's hearing?

The Witnesses: No.

The CHAIR: We have some questions for you but before we start them, would you like to make an opening statement?

Prof. Luca: No.

Dr Ayers: We might wait and see what some of the questions are. If we do not answer, then we might make a statement at the end if we do not cover everything in the formal questions.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Can we get you to explain a little bit more about the program?

Dr Ayers: We trialled a program at ECU back in 2014. It was pretty much part of an OLT—office of learning and teaching—grant that Joe and I put in in 2013, which got rejected, but part of that grant application was to run an industry engagement program because we really saw this massive

problem obviously, not just in WA but across Australia, that universities and businesses are not truly engaging in joint research projects. Joe, you have the statistic on the OECD.

Prof. Luca: I do not know whether you have seen the data, but Australia is last on the OECD table for industry–university engagement and collaboration, so there is obviously a bit of a hole there. This is sort of a strategy to bridge the gap and to try to not only educate industry but also educate our students who are budding PhDs or about to enter industry. About 50 per cent will be in academia and about 50 per cent will end up in industry. There is really a resource that is begging to be used properly in Australia and is not being used properly.

Dr Ayers: Joe and I work closely with PhD researchers and we saw this issue that they are entering PhD and even exiting the PhD thinking they are just going to get an academic job. The reality is that their skills can be valued by industry and we are just not doing enough to sort of make those links I think.

Prof. Luca: The truth is industry does not actually know or understand what PhDs can do for them. In fact, in some instances, they will actively discourage—not discourage them—but they will not employ PhDs because they do not really get it. They do not understand their value.

Dr Ayers: IPREP was designed, I guess, to be short term because feedback from industry was that the time lag of interacting with universities put a lot of them off doing research with universities. So, we want it to be short, sharp, solving real problems for industry and the post-thesis submission time is just ideal because it is not interfering with university processes and not interfering with supervisors and delaying thesis submissions. That is why the program was designed in that time. We think the teamwork component is really a valuable part of iPREP as well. The students are working in teams of three on an authentic problem for an industry partner.

Prof. Luca: We sponsor the students. They receive a scholarship for the six weeks. They get \$500 a week, roughly, over six weeks and we ask industry to contribute a portion of that—usually about 50 per cent. They are jointly funded by the universities.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Most of the submissions refer to the problem between academia catching up with industry and vice versa, so it looks like a really smart program. How many people have gone through it at this stage? Have you seen the linkages actually take place from it and does it need to be expanded? What are your thoughts there?

Dr Ayers: The five universities signed a five-year agreement at the end of last year, and that is to run three rounds of iPREP WA, so it has gone from just a small trial at ECU with two companies in 2014 to last year when we ran two rounds—only four universities had students take part; Notre Dame does not yet have a student, but they are part of the agreement as well—to three rounds starting this year.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: That is three rounds in the year?

Dr Ayers: In a year, yes. For example, in the current round we have got seven projects and 21 students taking part. I would like to think we will have at least 50 researchers going through a year, which is really exciting. Just quickly, with the numbers, so far, just in the last year and a half really, we have had 20 projects, 16 different companies and 61 researchers go through. Four of the companies have actually taken part twice already so we see that as being quite promising. The question you refer to Terry, was the further linkages, and that is something we are really keen to promote as part of iPREP. One company has already put in an ARC linkage grant with a couple of universities after taking part in iPREP. That is Bombora Wave Power, which you would be familiar with; CingleVue, another fantastic company, they have looked at a research connections grant and a PhD scholarship.

Prof. Luca: As a result of that they have connected with our university, to the office of research and innovation, so it is forming greater linkages through the students to the supervisors, and the research departments.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Obviously, it is a great opportunity for the students, but you said some of the companies are re-engaging. Are they learning from the program?

Prof. Luca: Yes.

Dr Ayers: They are seeing what research can bring to their companies.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Is that a key thing you are looking for?

Dr Ayers: Yes. The companies are telling us that the researchers are bringing fresh eyes, a new perspective, their critical thinking, their problem solving skills, an innovative way of thinking. Whereas some of them may have in their minds that researchers are too narrow minded. We are trying to break down some of those myths about researchers and on the other hand trying to show these researchers that, actually, research being done in industry is really exciting. There is more out there than just academic jobs.

Prof. Luca: These PhDs know how to research; that is what they are trained in; that is their whole gig. They go and they can run interviews; they can do a literature review; they can collect data from current literature and come out with some sort of conceptual framework and then pitch a solution. That is what they are good at doing. I do not think industry really gets that. I am talking across the whole of Australia. These guys have got real skills. They might even be from the humanities, but they can come in and help solve a problem because they have these other skills that are very valuable.

The CHAIR: Do you have a breakdown of what industries are taking part?

Dr Ayers: Briefly, we range from the large mining companies. In the current round we have got Roy Hill and FMG. We had CITIC Pacific in the last round through to some big government departments. The Department of Health has taken part twice. We have got the Department of Culture and the Arts in the current round, which we are really excited about, to show that it is truly interdisciplinary, through to start-ups like Bombora Wave Power as well as lots of SMEs like Lateral and CingleVue, the tech companies. It is a true range. I think every company, big or small—most companies, not all—can value in some way from having researchers solving problems for them. We work closely with Ken Green from AusIndustry. I am not sure whether you are aware of their role as research facilitators. He is trying to educate these companies about how research can add value to their organisations, and we are trying to work with him on that through iPREP.

The CHAIR: How do you get it out there? Have they seen advertisements somewhere or is it through your associations?

Prof. Luca: It is really through associations. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet was really good. It worked closely with us and helped us distribute it. The Department of Commerce has helped us. It is word of mouth almost.

Dr Ayers: To be honest, AusIndustry, probably more and using contacts that we have already. We work closely with the graduate research schools at the other universities and try to use everyone's contacts as much as we can. I meet with a lot of companies to try to push the program and explain the benefits, but recruiting companies takes up a lot of time and that is not always easy.

Prof. Luca: It is time consuming.

[3.45 pm]

The CHAIR: You have not been doing it long enough yet to see whether people who go into it have a higher chance of not becoming part of the 60 per cent who want to go into academia and actually go into industry?

Dr Ayers: No. We will be tracking that data. But, to be honest even if the people who take part in iPREP, if they stay in academia, I think they are going to be better off for it because they will be aware of the research in industry and they will have some more contacts. I do not have a problem if

they do go back into academia, but I think we are just opening their eyes up to the transferability of their skills and the different career paths that we can offer them.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: With the 16 companies that have taken up the students so far, some of those will have already been exposed to PhDs because the size of the companies, but not all. How many of them have never sort of really had an interaction with PhDs at all?

Dr Ayers: I would probably say about half, to be honest. I will be frank with you. Some of the big companies that employ PhD researchers already get involved because it is cheap. It is cheap consulting. We obviously do not sell the program as that, but FMG got two projects in the current round because they are obviously struggling financially at the moment, and it was a great opportunity for them to get some bright minds for not a big outlay. But the students are getting a huge opportunity, and it is a good recruitment tool for these companies as well. I do not like calling it cheap labour, but it is attractive to those big companies. We are also hoping that those other half that have never employed a PhD researcher before will see the benefits.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Natasha, you said that you are really happy that arts and culture are coming aboard this time. What about the tourism sector? Has tourism been involved too?

Dr Ayers: No, but there are heaps of companies that still take them on.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Is this a first? Has this been done in other states?

Prof. Luca: No.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Well done.

Prof. Luca: But the other states are interested. Tash has scored a national grant to try to roll it out this year.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Well done.

Dr Ayers: I put in an application at AusIndustry about halfway through last year and it got rejected, even though I had state AusIndustry support. I think it was just before the innovation statement got released, so it was a bit too soon, my application. I hope AusIndustry might be more interested in it this year!

The CHAIR: Are there more placements than people applying for them, or is it the other way round?

Dr Ayers: In the current round, we had about three companies that did not get a student team, and that is not necessarily about the numbers applying but a skill set match. We had only about 30 PhD students apply in the current round, and we had 21 places to fill, but not all of them were the right skill set match. We work really closely to make sure that we have that alignment, and we obviously did not recruit the best this round, but it is something that we are working on with the other units to try to target the various centres at each university to try to get the right students applying.

The CHAIR: This is not really part of their PhD studies, is it?

Prof. Luca: No.

The CHAIR: So, this is the end of their PhD studies?

Prof. Luca: Yes, when they have submitted their theses.

The CHAIR: They have submitted their theses, so they do this for six weeks, and I suppose it is an opportunity to work in industry and probably increases their employability?

Prof. Luca: And they earn money—we pay them. They are actually being paid for, otherwise they would have no scholarship at that point.

Dr Ayers: It is a real limbo period for the students, so they are really excited to get the opportunity. It has led to job opportunities for some of them and also just links that they are making with each other. A couple of students in the last round have started a business together.

Prof. Luca: Yes, from different universities they joined and they started up a business.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Hopefully after you have seen the report that comes out from this committee you can have a look at all the companies and the contacts at the back and use them!

Dr Ayers: I am always looking for new contacts!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Well, they will all be there at the back of our committee report, so hopefully you can use them. An organisation that we had in earlier that deals specifically with start-ups was bemoaning the lack of linkages between academia and industry, and particularly PhDs, who can assist in start-ups—in hackathons and things like that—and from that they can possibly even start their own companies or be involved with companies that are actually getting off the ground. So, there is a demand out there for them, not from traditional industry, but from start-ups as well.

Dr Ayers: Yes, sure.

The CHAIR: How about having formal work, almost like what they do at schools now, where you are at school for two days a week or three days a week and then you are in the industry for two days a week? I cannot remember what they are called, but they have those. How about having a similar sort of thing while you are studying for your PhD, where you are working in industry at the same time, so you are doing two things simultaneously. Is any of that happening?

Dr Ayers: Some of the CRCs I think have this.

Prof. Luca: Some of the CRCs, yes.

Dr Ayers: We would love to see more of that happening. I probably should not say this, but I sometimes feel iPREP is sort of a bandaid fix for those students who have not been engaged with industry from the start. I would love to see more students designing their research projects with an industry partner in mind and working with them from the outset. It happens, but —

Prof. Luca: I think it is difficult to actually get a client aligned to student projects from nowhere. It might be okay for engineering and maybe for health science, but once you start looking at humanities, it is pretty difficult, because people are doing fairly esoteric-type topics, so it is hard to get that alignment and buy-in from industry, really. A lot of industry groups resent the fact that they have to put some time in, and, fair enough, because time is money, so having a commitment for three or four years with someone coming in for work experience can be a bit difficult. I think it is hard to actually organise that. If we had a resource to actually apply to that, we would look at it and really do our best to do that, because that would be brilliant. I think it is brilliant idea.

Dr Ayers: And if the companies got subsidised in some way.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: With that one, is there any government support for your program now, or is there a role for government going forward that you would see? Is that what Ian is talking about?

Dr Ayers: For iPREP, not the program you are thinking of, I guess we had a bit of government support. Last year, the Department of Commerce gave us \$5 000 in sponsorship, which went towards some of the administration, but mainly the celebration event that we had. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet gives in-kind support, and AusIndustry—the federal government, I guess, not the state—gives us in-kind support through Ken Green championing iPREP and putting us in touch with a lot of companies.

Prof. Luca: Very supportive.

Dr Ayers: I do personally feel government has a role to play here. ECU drives this program. We designed it; we drive it. It is very collaborative with the other unis, but perhaps it should be run centrally is probably my gut feeling.

Prof. Luca: We pay for at least one FTE.

Dr Ayers: We subsidise the cost of the program because ECU thinks it is so important.

Prof. Luca: So, it is making contact with industry, all the five universities, building the teams, getting induction organised, the packs—all that communication is a full-time job.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: If the state government was going to support it, is it financial or are there other ways in which it could support it to enhance it?

Prof. Luca: I think two ways. Financially would be great—that would be perfect—and also just spreading the message, getting the message out there, promotion.

Dr Ayers: It is not just email-outs to companies, but when you are dealing with companies in other ways, thinking of how you can build an iPREP program into other initiatives. I have been in touch with Sandra Draper from the Department of Commerce about having iPREP as a prize for Innovator of the Year, so thinking about how we can build it into other initiatives.

Prof. Luca: But also, extending what Ian said, if there was actual support, we could have iPREP going, but then also try to expand that out a little bit to have more of a long-term sort of view with placements.

The CHAIR: In a former life I worked part-time in the organisation that funds grain research, and I remember once going out with a pretty senior bloke from the CSIRO to negotiate a PhD with someone who wanted to do one. As a grower listening to what she wanted to do, in the first place to me it made perfect sense, but at the end of the process we came up with something that was really quite different, and as a grower I thought, “That does not really sound commercial; I cannot see the point of this.” I said to the CSIRO bloke that I thought what she wanted to do originally sounded better, and he said, “Oh, yes, but what we have given her is actually much better for a PhD.” So, he was interested in the PhD process, but I was sitting there looking at the commercial value of what we had at the end of it.

Dr Ayers: Ian, it is funny you say that, because my PhD was funded by GRDC, which is the industry you are referring to.

The CHAIR: No, it was not you, though!

Dr Ayers: No, no, the company! What I find disappointing is that they threw money at me for my scholarship and research costs. I had to do an annual report, which I do not think anyone read. They had no input or interest, I do not think, in my actual project. I think it happens a lot, where researchers get funding from industry just to do whatever research they want to do without actually thinking about how this might benefit a grower or another industry partner. It concerns me.

The CHAIR: She was quite happy. She got the PhD, and I remember talking to her about it afterwards. I honestly cannot remember what it was about much; it was soil biology, but I cannot remember exactly what it was. Right at the end, something had happened that had basically set it all on its head anyway, but she was given the PhD, and no doubt there was value in it. When you were talking about engaging the industry, I was wondering whether in other places people focus the subject of the PhDs better commercially than we do here. Maybe one of the reasons that our research does not get taken up by industry is that when we send people off to do PhDs, they are drawn up on the basis of what makes a good PhD rather than what is good for industry.

Dr Ayers: It is a cultural problem as well, because the students, I guess, are really mentored by their supervisors. Obviously Joe works very closely with the supervisors, and if they do not have the contacts with industry and their research is not aligned, the PhD students probably will not have either.

Prof. Luca: I am tempted to digress, but we have another program that we are running called industry engagement scholarships, and we are changing the way we allocate scholarships.

Traditionally, we go by order of merit, where the best student gets the scholarship, and then we work out the topic. We are actually reversing that now. We are saying, “Okay, Mr Researcher or Academic, what is your area of interest? Can you find an industry or government or whatever that has a problem that you can work with?” So, we identify a project first, and then students apply for the project. Sorry; that is bit off topic, I realise that, but we are actually moving in that direction now. We are pushing more and more scholarships in that area.

The CHAIR: I am digressing now, too. I remember there was a particular PhD offered to someone at Wagga, and it was something to do with soils; I cannot remember what. For three years, we offered this thing and rolled it over. It was quite commercially relevant, but we could not get anyone to take it up, so they just rolled over for three years and then sort of forgot about it.

Dr Ayers: ARC linkage grants often have funding for a PhD position that no-one takes up, and it is really disappointing. I hope this is going to be shifting in the future.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: What are your future plans for iPREP from where you are now? Are you thinking about how you will take it further?

Dr Ayers: Ideally, given it is a lot of work getting the companies on board, I would like to see more companies signing up for multiple rounds or a three-year package or something, because that is where a lot of my time is spent. It would be ideal to try to have more companies, like a pool of companies that I can contact and that perhaps had signed up for multiple rounds. I guess we are looking forward to doing this national implementation that we are investigating as part of the grant that we just got for this year, and, of course, the long-term impacts, so, the companies that take part in iPREP, do they then go on to further research with the universities, and what type of research? Do they employ PhD graduates more because of iPREP?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: So, Tash, your evaluation as you go along will probably shape where you go in the future?

Dr Ayers: Yes, and I am pretty open-minded about it as well.

Prof. Luca: I really liked Ian’s suggestion that maybe we should try for longer term sort of placements. That might be a hybrid of what we are talking about here, but that is a really good suggestion for the companies that we can encourage to be involved.

[4.00 pm]

The CHAIR: I remember I was at a high school graduation thing when the teacher got up who looks after the kids that go into industry for three days a week, or whatever it is—it was at the end of the year and there was only two of them left out of 18 or something. He said the disappointing thing about his job was that all the good students had gone to industry and he had only one or two left. He did not say the best students, but the ideal success for him was to have, at the end-of-year graduation ceremony, none of them there because they were all out working in industry. It is a whole change. In my electorate, 70 per cent of the kids do that sort of stuff. Only 30 per cent of them do ATAR and are focused on going to university. We are doing it in the secondary schools and maybe that is one of the big differences between us and, say, Germany, where the technical universities and industry are very close together.

Dr Ayers: One thing you might be interested in knowing about is the Office of Science, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, its Tertiary Connect—I cannot remember the name of it; it is a new program with some royalties for regions funding. They are looking to model iPREP for agribusinesses. That is something that is underway at the moment. It will be a bit of a spin-off of iPREP. I am not sure exactly how it will play out. They are keen to model what we are doing but focusing just on agribusinesses and expanding it to be not just PhD students but honours and masters as well. That could be useful in the future.

Prof. Luca: Terry, your question about what are our long-term plans: I run the graduate research school—Tash here is one of my best employees; she is fantastic and does a great job, but she also drives, in fact coordinates, the whole PhD program. We call it an integrated PhD. It is the first of its sort in Australia actually. We only have one coursework for one year up-front. We give our PhD students not just the three or four-year theses; we actually get them to go through some coursework, where they learn how to review the literature and the methods and all that. She has really a full-time job.

Dr Ayers: I do this on the side!

Prof. Luca: My point is that I really like iPREP and will continue to support it, but it is a resource suck on our area. I just wanted to make that point. I think you asked a good question.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The program seems to be working well, and it is working well. That is something that government should take note of. Maybe that is where government can support it.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I was literally going to come to that. This is the only program of its kind. I am glad you made that point, Terry. This is the only program of its kind in Australia. It is the area that most governments, including the commonwealth, complain about.

Prof. Luca: Yes, that is right.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It has been the subject of quite a number of comments made here already in submissions we have had. You are operating on the smell of an oily rag. Can I make a suggestion to you, apart from looking at the back of our report and reading who all the businesses are: in the further comments you would like to make to us you might like to indicate how much money government could provide and support for you, and how that would help. Obviously it is about an FTE to help run the program, but also in terms of promotion. We have to tell you a little bit of sad news for the program; that is, we have had submissions from all of the five universities and none of them mentioned iPREP.

Dr Ayers: And particularly ECU, it was a bit of an oversight. To be honest, I think that is something we are working on—the fact that we work for the graduate research school and we work with PhD researchers. Universities are like big silos, unfortunately. The research offices do not necessarily talk to the graduate research schools. This is a big problem.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: You make us in government feel a lot better!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Things are operating efficiently!

Dr Ayers: The official uni submissions came from, I guess, the research offices. It is disappointing that we have not—I take some blame for that—promoted iPREP to the research offices better and worked out ways that we can build iPREP perhaps into research grant applications.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Fran is right—the one thing that keeps coming through is collaboration with industry and academia, and universities. Everyone says that is what to do, but you are actually doing it. I have been asking people, “How do you do it?”; what I see with iPREP is you are doing it. There might be better ways to do it, I do not know, but that is why I think it is good.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: You should put what you would see as beneficial to you as iPREP to keep you going, to expand its role; what you would need in terms of capital, in terms of resources, and be innovative about it.

Dr Ayers: How many zeros do I add on to the end!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The universities, with due respect to the universities even with a silo plot, they are not asking for it. They have not put it in their submissions.

The CHAIR: Do not worry—if it is seen to do well, they will all claim credit for it!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Absolutely. Your VCs will be out there saying, “Yes, fantastic. We thought of this.”

Part of your budget is to promote iPREP to industry as well because there are so many industry associations out there. There are so many; everything from the Civil Contractors Federation to Tourism Western Australia to the Australian Steel Institute.

Dr Ayers: I even met with a food processing company a couple of weeks ago. The scope is huge.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: But they all belong to associations. Those associations have got the list of all the companies that are part of it. By contacting the associations, you can get the message out there as to who may well be interested. But that does take time to follow up and it takes money. We would encourage you to bring that to the attention of the government.

Dr Ayers: We will.

Joe and I discussed that, to get funding for at least one FTE, obviously a new staff member would be a starting point.

Prof. Luca: Oh, yes, that would be great.

Dr Ayers: That would be the minimum. We are currently investing just from ECU at the moment, but we do see it is important that the universities are contributing to the scholarship as well for their students. That makes it a true collaboration.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: If you are seen to support government, that would be important, I would think.

Dr Ayers: The businesses put in, the university is contributing and the government looked after the administration of the program. I think that is probably a good situation.

Prof. Luca: There is another group of people that we would love some funding for—it is not-for-profit organisations. There are some organisations that just do not have the money, but for great causes. They would love to have, say, three PhD students working for them but they just do not have the money to put into that. If we had extra money, we would just offer them three students, but that is something that again —

Dr Ayers: And supporting start-ups as well. We keep the price—I am not sure if you see it on the website—but it is only \$5 000 for start-ups with less than 20 employees. We do subsidise it a bit, but I think there is definitely opportunities to help out not-for-profits more as well.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: For example the building industry, which is enormous in this state—it is massive in this state—would love to be involved in this; I know they would. There are big companies and they can more than afford to have students involved. I am sure they do not know about it but would love to be involved.

Dr Ayers: I just need to get a foot in the door at some of these places.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Would you think of expanding the role of iPREP from PhDs to also masters and honours students?

Dr Ayers: Masters yes, if we are still the ones running it. I am employed by a graduate research school so we, at ECU, look after masters and PhD but some of the other universities’ grad schools who are part of the agreement for iPREP, they do not look after honours whereas we do at ECU. There is a little bit of a grey area there at universities, but if it was centrally run and not just run by the graduate research schools, there is that opportunity. You have to remember the value of iPREP is that the companies are getting three very experienced researchers and that is very appealing to them.

Prof. Luca: Yes, quality. They are all good.

Dr Ayers: We would have to manage expectations if we did change that.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is good value.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Well done. I think it is really good what you are doing.

Prof. Luca: Thank you.

Dr Ayers: Thank you for your time.

The CHAIR: Do we have any more questions?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: We think you should put a submission in!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Keep it going until it gets unhealthy and before you wear out!

The CHAIR: Thank you for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for the correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Thank you very much for your time.

Hearing concluded at 4.09 pm
