

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT - EXPENDITURE

**534. Hon MARGARET ROWE to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Science and Innovation:**

Given that the latest statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal that the Western Australian government's expenditure on research and development as a percentage of gross state product has fallen from 1.62 per cent in 1996-97 to 1.31 per cent in 2002-03, representing a decline in research and development expenditure of \$265 million per annum -

- (1) Will the minister advise whether he considers the employment of an additional 13 200 full-time equivalent public servants at an annual cost of \$1.8 billion to be a higher priority than government expenditure on research and development?
- (2) Does the minister consider the allocation of an additional \$72 million in the state budget to fund the government's new science and innovation strategy over the next four years to be adequate to restore the ratio of Western Australian government expenditure on research and development to gross state product to the level of that in 1996-97?
- (3) Will the minister advise what projects will be funded with the \$72 million allocated to the government's science and innovation strategy over the next four years?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

I thank Hon Margaret Rowe for providing some notice of a very detailed question. Unfortunately, the time required to provide the detail that would do her question justice has not been available. Therefore, I ask the honourable member to place it on notice. However, because so much of the research and development funds fall within my own agency, comparing predicted R&D costs with past R&D costs is sometimes difficult to do. We tend to under-budget the amount of R&D expenditure we will be making because a lot of that is matching funds; that is, matching either commonwealth or industry contributions. I hope that will be carefully considered when the final answer is constructed.