

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

Will the minister please advise the house of -

- (a) the percentage of Western Australia's gross state product expended on research and development for each of the financial years from 1992-93 to 2004-05 inclusive;
- (b) the aggregate dollar amount of state government expenditure on research and development for each of the financial years from 1992-93 to 2004-05 inclusive; and
- (c) the percentage of Western Australia's total research and development expenditure that is attributable to state government expenditure for each of the financial years from 1992-93 to 2004-05 inclusive?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Margaret Rowe for providing some notice of the question. I ask that the honourable member place the question on notice, and ensure that the term "research and development" is clearly defined and/or relates to a particular field of endeavour.

I just want to add that I think this is a very good question. It is one that I fear we will have some difficulty answering. The member has done well to pick up on the whole research and development issue, because it is a very serious matter that threatens where our industry is going in the future. Australian dedication to research and development generally is probably a weak link in our structure. However, the difficulty in providing an answer is in obtaining that information, because much of the research and development effort comes from the private sector, and sometimes that private sector involvement is hard to divulge. We would have to go through all the annual reports of companies to try to determine that, even to answer the third part of the question, which is about the proportion of WA's total research and development expenditure that is the government's expenditure. Perhaps we could work together to try to reformulate the question in a way that would enable us to provide an answer. I will ask the minister to speak with the member about how she can achieve her ends, because I think that we would want to find an answer for the member, but I am not sure that we can in this format.