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 TWO

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 10.19 am

Ms CAROL WALLBANK
Director, Innovate Australia, examined:

Mr PETER KASPRZAK
Chief Executive Officer, Innovate Australia, examined:

Dr ADAM OSSEIRAN
Director, Innovate Australia, 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. The Economics and Industry Standing Committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This committee is a formal procedure of the Parliament and therefore commands the same respect as is given to proceedings in 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 the 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 some questions. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" forms?

The Witnesses: Yes, we have.

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

The Witnesses: Yes, we do.

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 get to them would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Kasprzak: One thing I would like to ask is whether I could give the committee handouts, because that will make it much easier for you to understand.

The CHAIR: Of course.

Mr Kasprzak: There are two forms of handouts. I promise it will make sense! It will make sense in this short opening statement. Thank you for having us actually at the committee. This is a really exciting time in Western Australia. We have been involved with innovation for over five years now, formally for just over a year as Innovate Australia, but I can tell you that really in Western Australia we can feel that change is palpable in the air. You can really feel there are great things happening.

There is a lot of excitement, so I think the timing of the committee right now is fantastic for doing something. I am sure we can discuss things which follow Peter, who is also a great supporter of our organisation and collaborator. I would like to thank you for having us. Unless anybody else wants to add anything, we can go ahead with your questions.

The CHAIR: Before we start, can you just give me the background to Innovate Australia?

Mr Kasprzak: Sure. As I mentioned earlier, Innovate Australia is just over a year old as an organisation, although informally we have been organising a lot of free networking events for just over five years. We started with Adam. We started with the Smart Grid Network. People just started asking us, "When are you doing the next one?" It was really good. That is why I gave you a handout about the different networking events that we do. Basically, it is a simple format for networking. We get people who come in. We try to get good speakers—interesting speakers. We get networking and then we give a little introduction to people about who we are and what we do. It is first speaker, questions and answers, second speaker, questions and answers and then networking.

The CHAIR: So who funds you?

Mr Kasprzak: For networking, pretty much it does not require much funding because it is basically goodwill. We travel around usually. We have to give great credit to the Department of Commerce, especially Sandra Draper, because she has been a great supporter. Very often we can use the facilities of the Innovation Centre of WA in Bentley. We actually use it free of charge and usually Sandra provides coffee and tea. It is not a huge expense to the department. It is a win–win situation for everybody because it brings activities basically to the place. We also work closely with Deloitte. We have events at Ernst and Young and different universities. If you think about it, it is just a matter of asking somebody and just organising it. Basically we need time and effort but it does not really require much funding. That is what is great about it. All our events are free. Therefore, we can get a lot of PhD students and younger people also attending, so there is no barrier to entry.

The CHAIR: So do you all have other jobs?

Mr Kasprzak: Yes, we all have full-time paid jobs.

Ms Wallbank: We do this for fun.

The CHAIR: You are the sort of people that I love. Fran, do you have a question?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes. In the five years that you have been going, and in the last year formally as Innovate Australia, you have seen a significant number of different players and different industries in the Western Australian economy. Which industry, either a new industry, start-up industry, start-up sector or traditional industry, do you think has the capacity to change or grow—if it is an existing industry, it is about change—and who might offer the most excitement in terms of their capacity to innovate and grow? Governments could then look at them in more detail. Obviously, it could be more than one—it could be a number of industries. I am asking just in your experience.

Dr Osseiran: We noted that mining, oil and gas, being the major industries in Western Australia, innovation around mining and resources—all the innovation with that—technology would go around the mining and oil and gas to improve the way that they extract the resources. This is where we would have a lot of need, because mining of resources will continue; there is always a need. The way that we develop the technologies around it, this is where we should develop that. Typically also the energy, of course, like the batteries—again, we are talking about some resources here—lithium that we have in WA; we can develop lots of industries around this. I am also talking about technologies because my background is in technology. Of course, we see it because we discuss that very often with the attendees. Biotechnology is a strength and we should also continue to lobby for it as well.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I spoke to Professor Klinken about collaboration with industry and universities et cetera. You would witness that.

Dr Osseiran: I was nodding all the time.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It is one of the things that over the past few years you hear it talked about all the time yet it does not seem to change much. Have you got any other thoughts, as Peter said, as to how we could change that and are there any other blocks or impediments to innovation that really stand out that we should know about?

Dr Osseiran: I am glad you asked this question. I did not really know how to approach it. My background is that I am associate professor of electrical engineering at Edith Cowan University. I was also a finalist of the Innovator of the Year Awards in 2014, 2011 and 2012.

The CHAIR: Well done.

Dr Osseiran: Thank you. I started a company called Startup. It was an uphill battle. It is difficult. I am not going to say that I was ostracised in the university, but in the universities you do not see many people going out and creating enterprises because of the push towards "publish or perish". It is getting much, much stronger now while we should be encouraging that, of course, because of the prestige around the image of Australia being a smart country, but also we need to encourage researchers who are interested in entrepreneurship. Actually we should start by encouraging high school kids by teaching them about entrepreneurship, about business, legal, IT, as early as possible so that when they get to a level where they become an agricultural specialist or an engineer or a doctor, they have all this background that will allow them to create enterprise and to create companies and actually create the wealth that flows from that. That is my personal opinion. I see lots of students. We have also been both, Peter and I, past presidents of the Inventors Association of Australia and Western Australia. We saw lots of people coming in with ideas and inventions that in 99 per cent of cases do not go anywhere because they do not know how to begin with those aspects of entrepreneurship, of legal and IT. They look for money but they do not know how to do that.

[10.30 am]

Mr T.K. WALDRON: You mentioned publish or perish, which we have talked about quite a bit. Professor Klinken was saying that government needs to send some clear signals there to change that balance. Obviously you still have to publish, but to bring it back so that it is going a bit the other way.

Dr Osseiran: I fully agree. In the academic world, to which I belong, we have to go and apply for grants. The universities, the schools—everyone is asking you to bring money to the university, because it is a business. Education here is a business. We need to continue creating that and bringing more smart people here. The problem is that everyone is pushed to do this. Every researcher, whether they have an entrepreneurship mindset or would like to be involved in industry—maybe their ideas, maybe their research or it could be starting a company or a service—but they do not have the choice. The pressure is so high to push them to publish. For example, the ARC and the NHMRC—I do not know if you are familiar with these terms—have clear descriptions about the ERA, which is the Excellence in Research for Australia. The idea that is pushed there is that you need to publish in journals. If you do not publish in journals, you do not get the points, you do not get the funding, and probably you will be thanked and left out of the university and out of a job. We hear that. And I hear that not only in my university in Western Australia. I travelled for my previous job to a number of universities in Australia and everyone was saying the same thing. So there is a fundamental problem with that.

The CHAIR: If you are happy telling me, what is your background? Where were the universities that you did your initial training before you came to Australia?

Dr Osseiran: I did my high school and university in France. Then after my PhD I moved to Switzerland and I spent 16 years there. I worked for 10 years in one of the top universities in the world, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. I was a post doc there and a researcher. I was involved with industry and in a national project to develop the micro-electronics industry in

Switzerland, which made the country the first in the world in low-power circuits—hearing aids, pacemakers—thanks to the watch industry. They invested money over seven years. I was involved in a program training the trainers. That eventually created seven poles in the country. They invested a lot of money but those seven poles created about a couple of hundred high-tech start-ups that are really sharp. Switzerland is a manufacturing country.

The CHAIR: I imagine the linkage between academia and industry in Switzerland would be quite strong.

Dr Osseiran: It is very strong. Peter was talking about the interface between industry and university. In the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne where I was, and also in Zurich, there is a strong group of people who have both hats and they are continuously going out and talking to the researchers and companies and saying, "Come and talk and see what we have."

The CHAIR: This was the facilitator?

Dr Osseiran: The facilitator, yes, and they have also hubs and tech parks around the universities. When I left there was one building; today there are 14 buildings. It is a tech park.

The CHAIR: Thanks for that.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Sorry to take you down a side track, but you did raise the issue of lithium. As you know, Western Australia has a fair amount of lithium and we mine lithium as well, although we are not the only place to do so. Forty years ago here in Western Australia and in Australia resources were processed. Going back to the Second World War all minerals were processed here. You could not export—for strategic reasons there was a ban on the exporting of iron ore—so all minerals were processed here and of course that has dropped away with the rise of cheaper areas to process those minerals. Do you still see a possibility for Western Australia to actually go into the processing and manufacturing of final product from its raw material? It is okay looking at innovation in oil and gas and minerals for the efficiency of digging it up, but at the end of the day you are a price taker because that mineral, when it goes on board, is just whatever the world market price is paying for it. So as an economy, you are always behind the eight ball because you are simply a price taker. As you know, both in imperialism and also in the modern world of the Asian economies, they have gone way past that stage by taking those minerals and manufacturing, because that is where they can drive the price.

Mr Kasprzak: Next week we have our mining innovation at work session and one of our two speakers is talking about lithium.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I would love to hear that. I had better go!

Mr Kasprzak: You are cordially invited.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Just your thoughts, that is all.

Dr Osseiran: Personally, I am no expert, of course. I think there is certainly a trend in the world that cheap in Asia is not cheap any more. The cost of sending and bringing back and then processing and sending and so on could be done here in a way that, if it is a little bit more expensive at least you get the quality. In the longer term it is cheaper here. That is my personal opinion; it is not an expert's opinion.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It will be interesting to hear what your speakers say on that too.

Mr Kasprzak: Absolutely.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: Just to pick up this idea of the SME sector, the Chief Scientist talked about the greatest jobs growth happening in these smaller companies, but also they have the smallest balance sheet and the least capacity to actually expend the resource to engage with the technology end or where they may need to innovate. We often talk about innovation as an extension of science and sometimes it is not. It might be just a better way of managing or a better way of marketing or

a better way of engaging, collaborating et cetera. It seems to be lost in that spectrum of innovation through to science, and if science is the invention, innovation must be the application. What do you think are the things that a state government could do, noting the resource constraints of a subnational government, to ensure that we build capacity and get our SMEs engaged with, not just universities, but a whole bunch of research and development, a whole bunch of innovators as well—a multidisciplinary sort of approach?

Ms Wallbank: I will answer that one if I may. My day job is that I run a marketing business and I work with a lot of start-ups and SMEs in the area of branding, marketing and communications. I think we can add some real value in taking it one step back and actually helping people understand communication techniques and collaboration techniques. We seem to expect them to be innovating and working with other organisations and coming up with these new technologies, but we actually have to give them the grounding blocks of being able to start those conversations. We are going to have that problem more and more as the next generation comes through that have not necessarily done a lot of the face-to-face networking, which is why we have gone back to having these traditional networking units, so that people are actually communicating face to face. There is nothing more powerful than that. I think that is where we can start to get the collaboration happening. We actually have to explain to them from the outset what collaboration is; what innovation can look like. I think a lot are missing that. They are going to much higher level events and conferences and maybe they need to step back a bit and learn a bit more about what is involved with communicating with other people.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: Just to follow on from that if I might, there are 300 000 small businesses in Western Australia or thereabouts. Let us say that a large percentage of them are self-managed super funds, sole traders, ABN and a van or a laptop and a consultant. I am not suggesting for a second that innovation would not apply to them at some point, but if a state government is going to apply its focus in the narrowest band to achieve the biggest impact, how do we find those SMEs and what number would you think we would need to engage to deliver a critical mass of innovation? I know it is an amorphous sort of question.

[10.40 am]

Mr Kasprzak: The main thing, I think, in my opinion, in the work of a government office should be to encourage activities. Obviously, we are talking subjectively because of what we do. The biggest breakthroughs in technology and science and the reason we have different industries happen because people either share a sandwich or have a meal together. They interact in a very informal setting. This is crucial. There is no innovation in the Sahara Desert because it is sparsely populated. There is plenty of innovation in London because people are sitting on top of each other. They are interacting, bumping into each other. I will go back a little bit to what you were talking about on the technology part, because I think that is something that interests you. I acknowledge Mal Bryce, whose great idea it was to implement this, and another person, John Barker, who is a friend as well. He was the one who actually put the idea to work. Recently, I was in Sydney having a chat with John about it as well. Look, the idea is right now, obviously, you have you to have our minister Mike Mischin's permission to be there and all this, but basically everybody keeps to themselves. If you go there, even people complain. There used to be a post office. Now it is just a commercial post office. There is no place to bump into each other. I have very warm feelings towards the innovation centre because I was there 10 years ago and there was an entrepreneurs club and then an inventors' association where we had meetings over there. It is a great facility, but instead of shrinking it—the budget for it was about $300 000, which is ridiculous, in my opinion, because they should be at least a zero behind it. Instead of shrinking and seeing how we can get these people to work part-time, invest in some good people. There are people who used to run that centre and they are people who have tremendous qualifications. If you get the best people to be there, they can go out and actively seek clients as well. That is one.

Second, sometimes there were some people who—we can probably look it up—who were running a centre. There was a lot of activities and a lot of good vibes. There were things happening. We recently discussed it. If you go there right now —

Mr P.C. TINLEY: It is dead.

Mr Kasprzak: This is crucial. It is not just my idea; in a lot of places in the world they have a precinct like that, which is fantastic. The precinct is great. Take a part of it and put some life into it. Build a cafeteria; have a signed cinema where kids can go and business can go; have events—somewhere that people can interact—a few cafeterias. Have a hotel. There are people working for CSIRO, working for a lot of these organisations. Have a hotel so they can jog to work—things like that whereby all of a sudden —

Ms Wallbank: Create community.

Mr Kasprzak: Absolutely. You might laugh, but when I came to Perth—this is a true story, so it goes on the record now—I was walking through Perth in 1981 and it was 9.00 pm, and coming from Poland, we thought there was martial law. I was literally scared because this is not natural.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: You broke the curfew!

Mr Kasprzak: There was nobody there. But now look what has happened. All it is is just planning and good ideas. It is not difficult; it is just basically simple solutions.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: You are going to struggle if you come to my home town of Jingalup then!

The CHAIR: I was interested because I suspected you were from Eastern Europe.

Mr Kasprzak: Yes.

The CHAIR: You left in 1981.

Mr Kasprzak: In 1981. I arrived here in 1981.

The CHAIR: Which was around the time when they brought out martial law, I think, was it not?

Mr Kasprzak: Later on they brought in martial law, but, yes.

The CHAIR: I was just curious. Obviously, Poland has had a really tortured history. You had 50 years of Soviet communism imposed on you and then the wall came down. Now it is a quite vibrant part of Western Europe really, is it not? That would have involved for people in the academic world massive changes in the structure that sat over them and the job they did. How did they adapt to that? I see almost parallels. We keep talking about academics and how they are geared to write papers and they are not thinking about industry. The academics in a country like Poland would have been geared to serve the state, if you like, and not entrepreneurs, because there really were not any entrepreneurs. How has that change gone? What can you tell us about that from just observation?

Mr Kasprzak: Actually, I am glad you asked me because it is very important that we use the context of the country. Like here, we use the context of our state. It is different. We cannot have Silicon Valley here and we cannot have Israel here because that is our reality, and the same in Poland. I adapted very well. People were always creative and the companies pushed you to do that because you did not make enough money to do anything, so you had to be creative somehow.

The CHAIR: The saying in Poland was that the government pretended to pay you and people pretended to work.

Mr Kasprzak: That is correct. You can imagine working when it was 100 per cent employment. What incentive do you have? Everybody gets paid really low. Going to your question, at universities there has always been a lot of innovation. It just was sort of muffled. But right now there are two places, Wrocław and Warsaw, or Warszawa, which really are fantastic. I have experience being involved with the rover on Mars and things like that, so there is a lot of good stuff

happening. Now it is good to see. It is a western country, basically, as you said; yes, it is flourishing. But do you know what? Just to make you feel better, people have exactly the same problems. I watch the Polish news and it says that local Danish students invented this and nobody wanted to support it so we had to go to the United States to get funding and all that.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: The songs are the same.

Mr Kasprzak: Yes, the songs are the same, but the idea is, as I mentioned earlier, we cannot expect to build the same thing. Recently I was invited by Senator Linda Reynolds to go to Canberra to meet the chief scientist of Israel, so it was a great trip. I asked him questions. I said, "So, tell us, how can we—what can we do?" I said that both Silicon Valley and Israel are deep rooted in defence. That is where the money comes from; okay. His solution was—he said, "Start a war with New Zealand."

The CHAIR: They would probably beat us!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: If they keep winning the rugby, that may happen!

Mr Kasprzak: All I am trying to say is that that is what we are doing. We proposed two years ago to create a mining, oil and gas global innovation centre. The idea was to work with positive psychology: find what is good about it, not what is bad. That is what you are suffering from. What is good about you? Build on your strengths and that is what we are trying to do. That is why we started first with a mining innovation network, then oil and gas innovation and energy innovation, and we added an agriculture and medical innovation network, and now we are going to be doing a built environment innovation network. Our colleague Gary Baverstock, who is not here, who is a prominent architect—an Order of Australia recipient—is in charge of that. I am sure you will come to the same conclusion to find where we are and what is our reality here in Western Australia. One thing, Defence is not that bad because just recently, you know the Leeuwin Barracks, we put in a proposal to the federal government to buy the place.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is a good idea.

Mr Kasprzak: Do you know what? Nobody put in a proposal—nobody. We found out from a federal minister that nobody actually put in anything, so we said, "Okay; why don't we build a precinct over there and that precinct might be focused on marine and defence", which is a beautiful place to have that —

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Fantastic.

Mr Kasprzak: — if you think about it. If you give it to developers and we just build houses, most houses will probably be bought by overseas buyers who now have money, and as a second house where they will sit at the back end. If we build a marine and defence complex there—I do not know whether this should go on the record—I think a lot of people would support that here in the government. I am sure on both sides there would be bipartisan support to have something like that. Why not? It makes sense for us here, especially in Fremantle. It would be a perfect area to do that. It is something that would be worth putting on the record. When Senator Linda Reynolds talked to people in Canberra, they said, "Yes. Nobody asked us; yes, it is fantastic." So it has a chance.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is a good idea.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: When I was talking to Peter Klinken before about how government could get involved and actually lead et cetera, as part of that—we talk about Technology Park—if government said, "Righto; we're going to invest in this and we're going to take some positive steps", and do some of the things you are talking about, do you think that would provide part of the leadership that would start refocusing on innovation and technology?

Mr Kasprzak: Do you mind if Adam answers, because he was part of the incubator.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No. That is fine.

[10.50 am]

Dr Osseiran: I had the Innovator of the Year award. I started a company and actually we were "incubate" in the Innovation Centre. It is a fantastic result. I have never had so much interaction with the other incubates, and the projects that were born and some projects are still developing—Bombora, Ecocentric Energy. There is also a company that started there called BrainChip that has now left on an opportunity to the US. It has a fantastic technology development idea. But to go back to Technology Park, in my opinion that must stay there, as Peter Klinken was saying about what is happening in Oxford and other places. What needs to be done is to get more people in it. And how we get more people in it is to get those people from the universities who are there, who are aching to get out and do some entrepreneurship, and get them to go and start something.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: That would help. We talked about collaboration and all that. If you did that, that would actually drive that collaboration, because it would start to happen naturally with the people in the interim.

Dr Osseiran: It happens. We have once a week—I have left now, but we used to have morning teas, and this is where all the discussions were happening, and we would invite some people to come and talk to us.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I am a big believer in that, people getting together. I mean, we know in politics or anything you do, you might have a specific meeting, but a lot of the stuff gets done when you are chatting after lunch, having a beer at five o'clock or when you just bump into someone and you grab your coffee at four and just have a chat—that sort of thing.

Dr Osseiran: There are like 14, or maybe 20, different start-ups, but if there are 40 or 50, it is exponential, so the discussions were good.

Mr Kasprzak: Would you mind if I made a couple of points, because I am conscious of time and I think they are useful? Just going on with what Professor Peter Klinken was saying earlier, talking about somebody who was asking about the minister, yes, we definitely think the minister for science and innovation should be a position and separate; it probably would be good, you know, the Premier has enough on his plate, just assuming —

The CHAIR: Can I give you a tiny bit of background?

Mr Kasprzak: Yes.

The CHAIR: I remember this goes back quite a long way federally. It goes back to Bob Hawke, because they looked at innovation around the world and the country they sort of settled on was Sweden. The Swedish Prime Minister has always been the minister of science and technology and so they sort of copied that federally and that is where, I think, we picked up the idea. But I think the points you make about it are very valid.

Mr Kasprzak: Yes, look, something like that especially you really have to be passionate about it, so it is not just give it to—because there are going to be many, many Premiers just in Western Australia, so everybody has different views. But if you find somebody who is really passionate, then, you know, it filters from the top, so that is probably much easier.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: If you remember, Peter, I was the first minister for science in Western Australia and then Alan Carpenter pinched it off me!

Mr Kasprzak: I knew all this time!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: He saw I was having too much fun, so he stole it!

Mr Kasprzak: When it comes to activities, even the Innovation Centre itself, but also Technology Park, are tremendous assets. Like you said, if we consciously bring activities—even Professor Peter Klinken was talking about the science-based Innovation Centre. Right now there are three young

PhDs, extremely enthusiastic, and that is what they want to do. They have been knocking on the doors of local governments and all this.

Dr Osseiran: These three PhD students took the iPREP course—which they are going to present later—so they were exposed also to the outside environment; they were not only students working in their area, their boxes, of research. They looked out and they thought: let's go out and promote the biotechnology. This is three young people, which is fantastic. That is what the state would need, more of those people. Get them out and get them to interact and that will happen naturally.

Mr Kasprzak: Going to what you have in front of you, which is the licence plate, the idea for this is very simple. There is a psychological theory of labelling, so that is why we try to keep young people out of the criminal system, because once you label them as criminals, that is it, they start acting that. But the positive flipside is actually true as well, and that is what Peter was saying about Queensland; they label themselves as the smart state and all of a sudden people start acting the label, you know? The idea is for that. Actually it would be great if we could lobby to make this happen. Right now, for over 16 years, we do not have anything on our plates—it just says Western Australia. Why not just send the message across the country, because people are going to be travelling and being ambassadors and saying, "Hey, state of innovation." I promise you, like somebody said, if you go to the voters—people have no idea about POS computing and all that—now it gives you a chance to actually pass that message, so that is one.

One of the couple of things I have to squeeze in is young people. As you know in politics you have to look at the long-term vision; you cannot just be, "Let's fix it in this quarter", and all that, just produce something. You have to look at the long-term: if we really want to be the state of innovation. We put the goal for Western Australia to become the state of innovation and the goal for Australia to become the number one country for innovation in 15 years—that is our goal at Innovate Australia. But we are conscious that because of that you have to work with young people, so there are a couple of things that we just want to put out there that we are working on. We started with Professor Lyn Beazley many years ago, just as a concept. One is called "open youth access". It is a simple idea: you give selected, but deserving, young people free access to conferences. Look how simple it is. Again, it does not really need huge resources, it just needs goodwill—some administration—but basically you go and say, "Hey, there's a mining conference or a medical conference and all this, have these five really outstanding students go." By the time you get to the conference, the young person, anyway—by that time the company pays for you. So, this way is a shortcut to a career. Also there is the young view injected. Right now it does not exist, so it could spread around the country as an idea. That was one. The second, even for younger kids, was called "innovention convention", so it is a combination of "invention" and "innovation". "Innovention convention" is basically a school-based contest; kids come up either with inventions or with ideas, that is why it is "innovention". The best ones go to our convention centre, let us say, and then maybe there would be a national one. But it is important to start and to be very conscious that you cannot artificially just work with PhD students and make them love their—you have to start early. If we have a good plan—that is why it takes a bipartisan approach and that is why what this committee is doing is great—and you have a vision for the state, how great it would be if you asked a taxidriver and he went, "Yes, this is what we do"? How cool would that be for everybody? They are sort of the main points I wanted to squeeze in.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is interesting, the last point, the "innovention convention", I can see Lyn Beazley's fingerprints all over that!

Dr Osseiran: She is very supportive of that.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Because Lyn, as you know, was one of the main instigators for Western Australia to be invited to the biotech conference that is held, most regularly in Boston, but other places in the United States as well, that have that for young students. Queensland and Victoria at the time were very, very upset that WA was the only state in the world that was invited to send

their kids over there to be part of that very, very high level science competition, in which we did very well.

Mr Kasprzak: Absolutely. I am grateful to Adam for reminding me, because the last thing I have to say is, as I said, getting together for us, I think, is the most important thing—when people get together and talk to each other and all this. So, the idea, which I have talked to Professor Peter Klinken about many times, and to other people, is about creating an innovation task force. It sounds scary, but it is not. The task for the task force is to implement innovation and this should be in the state, but also we were talking about a national task force. But with the state innovation task force we actually decided we were going to have the first meeting of the task force on 15 March, to which you are cordially welcome, from 8.00 am to 10.00 am. The idea of the task force is getting about 25 people, sort of a roundtable, who work at the coalface—people like Justin Strharsky from Unearthed, which is a tremendous idea. He is our speaker also for next week. There is Brodie McCulloch from Spacecubed—places like that. So, people who are actually involved hands-on. You know, there are flags up and a new place. People like that sit around the table and say, "All right, Carol, what are you doing?" And Carol goes for three minutes, "This is what we are going to do." Anyway, this way you find out what is going on very quickly. It takes very little time and very little effort. They spend no money. Basically it is people getting together sitting around the table and saying, "What are you doing? Do you know John? Why don't you give him a call? Okay, how about we do it together?" That is it—simple. This way, if you spread the information—this is, no lecturing, nothing, just people getting together having an orange juice and coffee and that is it. We go for six months and we evaluate, see how we go. But I think we are going to have an impact, definitely something like that. I just made it!

The CHAIR: I would genuinely say how much I appreciate you coming along to talk to us today. The problem we have is that as you walk out, the questions start appearing! You would understand that very well I am sure.

I would like to 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 today.

Hearing concluded at 11.03 am

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