



Economics and Industry Standing Committee

Growing WA through Innovation Forum

Report No. 9
September 2016

Legislative Assembly
Parliament of Western Australia

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Report No. 9

Presented by

Mr I.C. Blayney, MLA

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 22 September 2016

Chairman's Foreword

On 30 June 2016, the Economics and Industry Standing Committee tabled its report titled, *Growing WA through Innovation. The Western Australian Government's role in fostering innovation to expand and diversify the economy*. That report was the result of the Committee's year-long inquiry into how technological and service innovation in Western Australia (WA) could be fostered to diversify the economy and provide a new generation of highly-skilled jobs for Western Australians.

The Committee's innovation inquiry was generally well-received across a broad range of sectors. The 46 submissions received, and the 58 briefings and 30 hearings held demonstrated a clear consensus on the role innovation could play in WA. As I commented in that report, the Committee's innovation inquiry demonstrated just how much research and development is being done in WA and how much creative talent there is in this state. There is some truly creative and innovative work being undertaken here by passionate and dedicated people.

In light of this, the Committee decided to hold a public forum on 17 August 2016 at Technology Park Bentley so that members could speak to the report, and explain the report findings and the practical nature of the recommendations. Most importantly, though, the forum provided an opportunity for those who had participated in the inquiry to ask questions and make comments on the report.

The forum was well-attended and I'm pleased to report that the Committee received very positive feedback on both the report and the forum. Forum participants found it interesting and useful, and appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback to Committee members. Overall, the forum was a great success and I would recommend that other committees consider holding similar events for topical and important inquiries.

I am also pleased to report that the Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Mr Matt Taylor, MLA, attended the forum. Mr Taylor commended the Committee on the report and advised forum participants that the government was in the process of considering its recommendations. These favourable comments hopefully signal a positive response from the government in October 2016 on how it will implement the Committee's recommendations.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members—Hon Fran Logan, MLA, Mr Jan Norberger, MLA, Mr Peter Tinley AO, MLA, and Hon Terry Waldron, MLA for being innovative enough to undertake the forum and for helping to make it such a success. I would also like to thank the Committee's Principal Research Officer, Dr Loraine Abernethie, and Research Officer, Mr Michael Burton, for arranging the forum and supporting the Committee in this venture.



Mr I.C. Blayney, MLA
CHAIRMAN

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Chapter 1

Growing WA through Innovation

Growing WA through Innovation

1.1 In June 2016 the Economics and Industry Standing Committee (the Committee) tabled its report, *Growing WA through Innovation: The Western Australian Government's role in fostering innovation to expand and diversify the economy*. This report was the result of a twelve-month Inquiry that focused on:

- what drives innovation;
- collaboration between government, universities and business;
- how research can lead to the development of new products, services and jobs;
- the challenges associated with financing and commercialising new technologies, products and services; and
- models of development by which technological and service innovation could be encouraged in Western Australia.

1.2 As *Growing WA through Innovation* acknowledged, the Committee approached the Inquiry from the uncontroversial position that innovation and an expanded and diversified state economy are desirable. This view was also supported by the evidence to the Inquiry.

1.3 The Inquiry generated significant interest, attracting 46 submissions from a broad range of organisations, including state government agencies, professional associations such as trade unions and industry groups, universities, major corporations and small businesses. The Committee also received 58 briefings from organisations in Western Australia (WA) and other Australian jurisdictions, and held 30 public hearings.¹

¹ A full list of the submissions, briefings and hearings for the Inquiry is contained in the appendices to: *Growing WA through Innovation: The Western Australian Government's role in fostering innovation to expand and diversify the economy*. Available at: [http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/commit.nsf/\(Report+Lookup+by+Com+ID\)/F0D11EBF044B3B4B48257FE20005D8E2/\\$file/20160630%20EISC%20Report%207.pdf](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/commit.nsf/(Report+Lookup+by+Com+ID)/F0D11EBF044B3B4B48257FE20005D8E2/$file/20160630%20EISC%20Report%207.pdf).

Chapter 1

- 1.4 Based on this evidence, the Committee aimed to provide a set of recommendations that were not only practical, but also achievable by the Western Australian Government with a relatively modest public investment.
- 1.5 Two main factors guided the Committee in this determination. First, in recent years there has been large number of federal government reports, reviews, information papers and policy statements recognising the importance of innovation. At the time the Committee resolved to undertake this Inquiry, there was also a federal parliamentary committee inquiry underway examining the structure and performance of Australia's national innovation system. It was important that the Committee investigated what could be done at a state level to foster innovation in WA to allow it to provide state-based practical recommendations.
- 1.6 Second, it was the Committee's view that, given the state's current economic circumstances, recommendations requiring significant public funding were not likely to be accepted or actioned by government. To make such recommendations risked producing just another report on the need for innovation, something the Committee was at pains to avoid.
- 1.7 Overall, the Committee's report made 32 findings and 18 recommendations about what the Western Australian Government can actually do to promote innovation in WA.
- 1.8 In accordance with the Legislative Assembly's Standing Order 277(1), the Committee directed the appropriate Ministers to report to the Assembly as to that action, if any, the government proposed to take with respect to the Committee's recommendations. The government response is due to be provided by the end of September 2016.²

The *Growing WA through Innovation* Forum

- 1.9 Through this Inquiry the Committee developed a high level of awareness of the importance of innovation to the state's economic future, what work was being undertaken in WA and what more the government could do to assist and, just as importantly, not stand in the way of innovation. This allowed the Committee, comprised of Liberal, National and Labor members, to produce a consensus report, with members being unanimous in their views on what steps need to be taken.
- 1.10 The submissions to the Inquiry and the Committee's site visits clearly demonstrated not only the amount and quality of the research and development work being undertaken in WA, but also the passion and dedication of the stakeholders in WA's innovation economy.

² As the Legislative Assembly is not sitting at the end of September, the government response is expected to be tabled during the first sitting week in October.

- 1.11 In light of these two factors, the Committee determined to hold a forum for stakeholders to allow members to speak to the report and its findings and recommendations, and to allow participants to make comment and ask questions.
- 1.12 The forum was held on Wednesday 17 August 2016 and the Committee gratefully acknowledges the assistance provided by the Department of Commerce and Technology Park Bentley in providing the theatre at the Technology Park Function Centre for the event.
- 1.13 The forum was well attended by a range of people, including representatives from large and small businesses, universities, professional associations and state, federal and local government agencies, as well as members of the Western Australian parliament.
- 1.14 The Committee was congratulated on undertaking the Inquiry and received very positive comments in relation to the report. Questions largely focussed on the next steps to be taken to implement the Committee's recommendations. The provided an excellent opportunity for the Committee to explain the differences between a government and a parliamentary committee, and the process involved in getting a ministerial response to the Committee's recommendations. It also allowed members to reiterate the purpose in providing practical and relatively low cost recommendations to government.
- 1.15 Following the forum, the Committee was congratulated on holding the forum and taking the time to explain its work. The Committee was advised that the forum was a great concept and of great value to those who attended. The Committee also found great value in speaking to its report and to those who had contributed to the Inquiry.
- 1.16 While the Committee understands that such a forum would not be appropriate for all committees or for all inquiries, in light of this positive feedback, the Committee encourages other parliamentary committees to consider holding similar events. Not only would this be beneficial to the committees involved, it would provide a valuable opportunity for extended community engagement by parliament in relation to the work of its committees.



MR I.C. BLAYNEY, MLA
CHAIRMAN

Appendix One

Committee's functions and powers

The functions of the Committee are to review and report to the Assembly on: -

- a) the outcomes and administration of the departments within the Committee's portfolio responsibilities;
- b) annual reports of government departments laid on the Table of the House;
- c) the adequacy of legislation and regulations within its jurisdiction; and
- d) any matters referred to it by the Assembly including a bill, motion, petition, vote or expenditure, other financial matter, report or paper.

At the commencement of each Parliament and as often thereafter as the Speaker considers necessary, the Speaker will determine and table a schedule showing the portfolio responsibilities for each committee. Annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the Assembly will stand referred to the relevant committee for any inquiry the committee may make.

Whenever a committee receives or determines for itself fresh or amended terms of reference, the committee will forward them to each standing and select committee of the Assembly and Joint Committee of the Assembly and Council. The Speaker will announce them to the Assembly at the next opportunity and arrange for them to be placed on the notice boards of the Assembly.