# Assistant Minister for Economic Development
# Question Time Briefs
# April 2021

| Ref No | Page number | Title | Status | Reason for Exemption |
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| 1 | 2 | Priority Investment Program | Full | n/a |

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CM2021/1247

**Portfolio/s:** Assistant Minister for Economic Development

## PRIORITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

**Talking points:**

- Talent, knowledge and infrastructure within the ACT's tertiary education and research sector are primary drivers attracting investment into Canberra.
- The Priority Investment Program (PIP) provided $9.75 million over three years in the 2018-19 budget to facilitate collaboration and, through matched funding, activate these assets to create long term wealth and wellbeing through economic diversification and growth in jobs.
- In 2018-19, $5.2 million was committed to five projects across agri-technology, renewable energy, space and cybersecurity sectors.
- In 2019-20, $2.1 million was commited to three projects across the space and biodiversity and biosecurity sectors.
- Considering the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the economy, the 2020-21 PIP funding round, which is the third round, is focused on jobs and economic recovery. A total of $1 million is available in this round to support projects that will contribute to economic recovery and creation of jobs in the priority sectors of the ACT's economy.
- In February 2021, the ACT Government established the Future Jobs Fund (FJF) to support universities and key industry capability areas with applied research partnerships and that will boost productivity and create/save jobs.
- $2.165 million was allocated in the 2020-21 budget to achieve these commitments, prioritising projects that protect or create new jobs in our universities and private sector. $1 million of FJF funding was utilised to supplement the PIP Jobs and Economic Recovery round (to a total of $2million).

**Key Information**

- 22 expressions of interest were received under the 2020-21 Priority Investment Program Jobs and Economic Recovery round with six being shortlisted and invited to submit a detailed business case. Business case submissions closed at midnight on Tuesday 16 February 2021 and are currently being assessed for funding suitability.

Projects funded under the 2019-20 round include:

*Biodiversity and Biosecurity*

- Announced on 28 January 2021, the **$1.2 million** grant is to enable DART Pty Ltd, collaborate with ANU and UC to establish a cloud-based biodiversity and biosecurity data storage and analysis platform to enable wider research and commercial applications.

*Space*

- **$300,000** to establish the Spacecraft Detector Characterisation Facility, which will enhance the ANU Space Testing Facility and secure the ANU and Canberra businesses opportunities in the supply chain of the global infrared detector industry for space applications. The new capability has a wide application in defence, agriculture, mineralogical surveys, health (pollen and air quality monitoring) and natural hazard management (bushfire and water quality).

*Space Innovation Lab **(Not public - Under contract negotiation)***

- **$600,000** to enable UNSW Canberra start-up, Space Services Australia, to develop software capability address the main cause of failure in miniature space systems (ranging from a 10 per cent dead-on-arrival and up to 50 per cent partial systems failure). This approach complements the physical systems testing capability at Mt Stromlo's Advanced Instrumentation Testing Centre which tests physical, structural and environmental integrity of space hardware.

**The 2018-19 PIP projects** :

*Renewable energy sector*

- **$1.5 million** to fund the establishment of the Distributed Energy Resources Laboratory at the ANU. This Lab will provide industry and researchers with an interface with the energy grid to test devices, get data about how energy networks function and enable training and teaching. It will also test distributed energy resources such as solar panels, batteries, wind generating units, smart meters and model and measure demand loads on each through a real time network.

*Space and Spatial Technology*

- **$800,000** to establish the Quantum Optical Ground Station at Mt Stromlo. The high speed, encrypted, optical communications capability will enable the Territory's participation in global communications networks and attract international business and world leading research groups for quantum optical communications to space.

- **$1 million** to support Skykraft, a UNSW Canberra spin off, to collaborate with multinational space companies to develop and launch smallsat constellations for space-based global services, a capability of considerable global export potential.

*Agri-technology*

- **$1.3 million** to enable the ANU/CSIRO Centre for Entrepreneurial Agri-Technology to broaden the scope of its industry engagement and research translation and become fully self-sufficient within a three-year period. The Centre's vision is to strengthen, transform and diversify Canberra into a regional, national and global hub for transformational agriculture.

*Cybersecurity*

- **$600,000** to support the Canberra node of Austcyber to advance ACT's cyber security industry capabilities.

**Background Information**

- **$9.75 million** was allocated to the PIP in the 2018-19 budget. Most of this funding was committed or expended over two rounds. A total of $8.3 million was committed to nine projects across the space, renewable energy, cybersecurity, agri-technology and biosecurity and biodiversity sectors.
- A total of $1 million is available for the 2020-21 PIP Jobs and Economic Recovery round. This has been supplemented with a further $1 million (to a total of $2 million) drawn from appropriation for FJF in 2020-21. From a total of 22 expressions of interest received in the first stage of the process, six were shortlisted to prepare full business cases. The independent assessment panel is being convened to assess the business cases before making recommendations for approval of successful respondents.

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| Cleared as complete and accurate: | 09/04/2021 | |
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| TRIM Ref: | CM2021/1247 | |