Productivity Commission Review of Science and Innovation
The Productivity Commission released its draft report titled ‘Public Support for Science and Innovation’ on 2nd November 2006. The Commission found that there are significant benefits to Australia from its public support of science and innovation, including positive returns to its national productivity as well as important social and environmental dividends.

They found no reason to make large changes to the overall level of public spending of around $6 billion in 2002-03, but there was a perceived need for incremental shifts in how it is spent. It was suggested that government programs needed to maintain a balance between pure basic research and commercial product development but there had been a trend to focus more on commercialisation. It was their view that the private sector was best placed to fund and benefit from the R&D that leads to marketable goods and services, with little extra gained from the taxpayer subsidy of that process.

In relation to university funding, the Commission indicated its view that, while the proposed Research Quality Framework had some benefits, there were also considerable costs. They suggested that implementation of the RQF be delayed while other options for assessing and improving the quality and impact of block-funded university research are explored.

The Commission released its draft report to encourage further discussion and input. Final submissions are due on 21 December 2006, with the report to be completed by 10 March 2007.

Research Quality Framework
The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training, announced on 14th November 2006 that Australia would embark on a Research Quality Framework (RQF) to decide block grant funding for Australian Universities. This reflected the advice of the RQF Development Advisory Group (RQF DAG) that included a recommended model. This incorporates a separate assessment and reporting for research quality and research impact against a five-point rating scale for each.

The inclusion of the assessment of research impact is a first internationally and it is hoped that this will create a world-first research evaluation measure.

In recognition of the comment of the Productivity Commission report, the Minister noted that the Government had taken into account the implementation costs for the sector in reaching its decision to proceed with the RQF.

Murdoch University has been preparing for this eventuality and the final advice released by the RQF Development and Advisory Group is consistent with earlier information. We are well advanced in our planning for the RQF and are currently in the process of mapping its research capability in terms of quality and impact. We will use this information to develop optimal research groupings to present as its research portfolio for the RQF.
The details of the announcement including timeframe and the link to the RQF DAG advice are available at:

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**PROCUREMENT AND PURCHASING**

The recent AUQA audit affirmed the cycle of continuous quality improvement that is an integral part of the culture at Murdoch University. We constantly look for ways to improve the outcomes of the University’s activities.

An important element of our future sustainability is better financial management. By increasing the efficiency, productivity and performance of a range of finance systems and operational processes, we will generate savings that allow us to focus on improving teaching and research outcomes.

One of the very important initiatives we have been working on is developing efficiencies, savings and quality control in procurement and purchasing. The savings generated by these activities not only come from purchasing goods and services at value for money prices but also from reducing the many hidden transaction costs involved with ordering, purchasing, storage and accounts payable processing.

Approved University Suppliers will also be appointed for commonly purchased items. The benefits of using approved supplier agreements include:

- Ensuring the University achieves best value for money by consolidating expenditure and leveraging our total buying power;
- Improving suppliers’ service performance through constant monitoring of performance measures; and
- Improving administrative efficiencies by streamlining the University’s purchasing processes.

Suppliers have been selected through tender processes that have involved extensive internal stakeholder consultation. Staff will receive advice and training on the use of approved suppliers once contracts have been finalised. A Strategic Procurement Manager has been appointed to administer all aspects of procurement, in particular managing approved supplier agreements and associated performance measures to ensure we are receiving agreed service levels, value for money and that any problems are resolved quickly.

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**BANKSIA ASSOCIATION**

The Inaugural Vice Chancellor’s Annual Dinner for the Banksia Association was held on 1st November 2006. The event provided me with an opportunity to thank Banksia Association members for their ongoing involvement with the University through activities such as guest lectures, staff and student mentoring programs, and fundraising activities.

Over 100 people attended and we received very positive feedback. Indeed, the Foundation received several donations from members after the event.
NOTABLE EVENTS

- The Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, launched the Ningaloo Collaboration Cluster at a ceremony at Murdoch on 22nd November 2006. Supported by the Flagship Collaboration Fund, the Cluster brings together expertise from a range of disciplines with the aim of describing, understanding and modelling key processes whereby humans and the reef interact. Partners include Murdoch, CSIRO’s Wealth from Oceans National Research Flagship, the Sustainable Tourism CRC and other universities. The Minister highlighted the collaboration fund is an example of opportunities to bring together key research constituencies.

- Murdoch hosted the Perth visit of Galathea 3, a project that aims to strengthen Danish research, not only through implementation of specific research projects, but also in relation to the international research network of which Denmark is a part. Planning and implementation of the project as well as fundraising is managed by the Danish Expedition Foundation, a commercial operating foundation established by the Denmark Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. A scientific symposium was held on the South Street Campus on 22nd November 2006. Featuring talks by Danish scientists from the Vaedderen and local researchers from the Western Australian scientific community, the symposium will be an exciting forum to hear leading scientists in the fields of Environment and Conservation, Marine Biology and Oceanography.

- A free computer recycling event will be held at Murdoch on 25th November 2006. Sponsored by Dell and strongly supported by the State Government, the event provides an opportunity for people to recycle computers, laptops, monitors, keyboards, scanners and printers.

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

- A memorandum of understanding was recently signed with the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science. Signatories were Professor Gary Martin and Professor Lars Moe, Rector of the School. The agreement commenced on 5th October 2006 and is for three years. Areas of cooperation will include activities such as consultancies, research projects, development and promotion of academic staff and educational projects. Individual agreements will be jointly developed for specific projects.

- A student exchange agreement has recently been signed between Murdoch and Yonsei University, Republic of Korea by Professor Dae Hee Youn, Provost and Vice- President for Academic Affairs at Yonsei. The agreement commenced from 8th November 2006 and is for five years. The exchange basis will be up to two semester long places or one year long place for students each year.

- An inter-institutional agreement has recently been signed with The Community College at Lingnan University. The agreement commenced 1st October 2006 and is for three years. The purpose of the agreement was to set the general terms for general credit transfer between the two institutions.

- A memorandum of understanding has recently been signed with the American University by Cornelius Kerwin, Interim President of the American University. The agreement commenced 30th August 2006 and continues for an indefinite period. Areas of collaboration include the sharing of academic material, joint technical and administrative programs, exchange visits of faculty and technical and administrative staff and joint conferences. Supplemental agreements will be developed for any specific projects.
• A field experience contract has recently been signed with the South Dakota State University. A South Dakota Student, Carla Hahhe, will commence her internship during the first half of 2007 in the School of Chiropractic. She will commit to a minimum of 350 contact hours during the experience.

• A new offshore course specification was recently signed with Singapore Manufacturers’ Federation. The specification is for the delivery of Murdoch’s Bachelor of Mass Communication with majors in Public Relations, and Communication, Technology & Policy. The courses are due to commence in Singapore in the second trimester, 2007.