



Breakfast with the Green Car Innovation Fund

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This is a guest post by Bellistner - with thanks from the editors for the contribution!

On Monday morning, I attended a consultation on the Australian Green Car Innovation Fund with representatives from [AusIndustry](#) (a 'division' of the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) at The Sebel and Citigate, in Brisbane ([Google Earth kmz](#)). Attending were representatives from AusIndustry (Geoff Lewis, Michelle Henderson, Judy Zelke, and one other) and hosted by the AusIndustry QLD State Manager, Paul Glenn. In the audience was a diverse group of around 40-50 individuals, mostly from concerned businesses. As far as I could tell, I was the only 'private' attendee. No recording was allowed, even by the Network Ten environment reporter who attended. Unsure of what format the consultation would take, I arrived with a small ream of paper filled with graphs and references, just in case.



The meeting started with a Powerpoint presentation, outlining the goals and objectives of both the [Green Car Innovation Fund](#) (GCIF), and it's beaucroatic parent, the New Car Plan for a Greener Future, as well as a short history of both programs (you can find the Bracks Review of the Automotive industry at www.innovation.gov.au/automotivereview). All attendees were given a hard-copy of the [GCIF Framework Paper](#). One interesting comment by one of the speakers was that it was "generally accepted that low petrol prices are not long-term". Perhaps AusIndustry 'gets it'. It was also noted by one speaker that on World Environment Day 2008, the Prime Minister had committed to a 60% reduction (from 2000 levels) of CO₂e emissions by 2020, somewhat different to the recently announced 5% cuts.

Some specifics of the plans include:

- \$10.5m for factory-fitted LPG (a subsidy, presumably),
- GCIF not limited to any specific technology,
- GCIF includes the component sector, not simply complete drivetrains or cars,
- GCIF funded at 1.3Bn over ten years, but not fixed at \$130m each year,
- Non-cash expenses (eg work in-kind) are not eligible for funding under the GCIF,
- Infrastructure is not eligible (no charging stations for EVs or refueling stations for FCEVs)!
- GCIF is limited to passenger motor vehicles (PMVs) up to 3.5T (metric). Trucks and motorcycles are not eligible (trucks can apply for a separate program run by AusIndustry, motorcycles appear out in the cold). It was not revealed if SUV's and 4X4's were covered by the GCIF, probably because nobody asked.

The GCIF is open to submissions on any aspect of the Fund or the NCP until 12 February, 2009. Submissions can be by email, regular mail, or facsimile. Further consultations will be held in [selected capital cities](#) until the 10th of February. Note that several sessions are already full. All application for the fund will be reviewed by a committee selected by [Innovation Australia](#) and all Submissions for grants over \$10m will also be assessed by Cabinet.

All funding will be by Grants, and Individuals and Companies may apply under one of two 'Streams': Stream A is for the 'big three' Motor Vehicle Producers (as defined by the ACIS or ATS) in Australian vehicle manufacturing, GM-Holden, Ford Australia, and Toyota Australia. Stream B is for Individuals and companies who are not one of the MVPs. MVPs may, however, form part of a consortia applying under Stream B, but may not lead the consortia, or be the applicant. The minimum Grant for Stream A applications is \$10m, and for Stream B is \$100,000. Grants are intended to be provided on a 1:3 grant:grantee ratio, although there is scope for some variation.

The Fund and Grants are intended to support activities undertaken in Australia, and "directly relate to the creation, acquisition, application or commercialisation of knowledge, technology, processes, materials or products which: are new or additional to the grantee; and significantly improve the fuel efficiency or GHG emissions of PMVs".

Applications can be lodged at any time after the Fund commences, and will be selected on a continuous basis in a 'competitive tender' process.

After the presentation was concluded, the floor was opened to questions. The very first question dealt with Peak Oil, and what emphasis the committee would place on it. Their answer was much the same as many following questions, in that if it was in a submission or application, it would be considered. Other questions dealt mostly with issues specific to those individuals and companies who were considering applying for Grants, such as would Ultra-Light vehicles be considered, even if they did not comply with [ADRs](#), would motorcycles and trucks be considered (recently, one of the truck 'manufacturers' released a gas injection kit for three engines in their range. The kit costs \$200,000, and I doubt they knew they could apply for R&D funding under the [Climate Ready Program](#), nor did the person who asked the question, and nor did the panel, for that matter (the answer was given by one of the roving 'helpers'), would infrastructure be eligible, and the like.

The most interesting question, and the one that made many ears prick up and heads turn, was whether battery components would be eligible. The panel's answer was 'probably', in that if a submission was made, and the submission made a case that the components would be used in batteries that would be likely to be used in low-emission cars (such as EVs), it would be considered.

Some of those attending included Deep Green Research, who have already won a grant from the Queensland Government, Howard Hughes from Lightwing, Heather Pearce, Henk Renger, of Corporate Support Group International, Mark Derrick, Chris Moreton from International Electric Vehicles, Hydrexia and Very Small Particle Company, who are developing Lithium Iron Phosphate (LiFePO₄) material for batteries, amongst many others.

Although I myself have severe doubts about the future viability of private transport, if nothing else, meetings like this show that there are more people out there 'doing something', and doing something worthwhile, than we think. I'll be making my own submission to the GCIF, and I hope many others do as well. If we do anything, we need more than a simple incremental improvement of the like the Motor Vehicle Producers have been doling out to us for years.



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