

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1.1 On 13 February 2020, the Senate referred the following items to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee (the committee):

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2020 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2019-2020];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2020 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2019-2020]; and
- Final budget outcome 2018-19—Report by the Treasurer (Mr Frydenberg) and the Minister for Finance (Senator Cormann).<sup>1</sup>

1.2 The Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements (PAES) for 2019-20 for the portfolios allocated to the committee were tabled in the Senate on 13 February 2020.<sup>2</sup>

1.3 A reporting date of Tuesday, 24 March 2020 was set for the committee's report on its consideration of the 2019-20 Additional Estimates.<sup>3</sup>

### Allocation of portfolios

1.4 As a result of the Administrative Arrangements Order (AAOs) made on 5 December 2019, the following changes came into effect on 1 February 2020:

- the Department of Communications and the Arts was abolished, and its functions transferred to the renamed Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications;
- the Department of the Environment and Energy was renamed the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and its energy functions transferred to the renamed Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources; and
- the Department of Agriculture was abolished, and its functions transferred to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.<sup>4</sup>

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1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 42, 13 February 2020, p. 1284.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 42, 13 February 2020, p. 1284.

3 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 27, 14 November 2019, pp. 851–852.

4 Commonwealth of Australia, Administrative Arrangements Order, 5 December 2019, [www.pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/government/aao-made-5-december-2019-effect-1-february-2020](http://www.pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/government/aao-made-5-december-2019-effect-1-february-2020) (accessed 18 March 2020).

Following these changes, the committee has responsibility for examining the expenditure and outcomes of the:

- Agriculture, Water and the Environment portfolio, excluding Agriculture and Water;
- Industry, Science, Energy and Resources portfolio, excluding Industry, Science and Resources; and
- Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio, excluding Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development.<sup>5</sup>

## Hearings

1.5 The committee's examination of the environment outcomes of Agriculture, Water and the Environment portfolio; and the emissions and energy outcomes of the Industry, Science, Energy and Resources portfolio, took place on 2 March 2020.

1.6 The committee's examination of the communications and the arts outcomes of the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio, took place on 3 March 2020.

1.7 The committee took evidence from Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment representing the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction; and Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds, Minister for Defence representing the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, together with officers from the relevant departments and agencies. The committee thanks the Ministers, departmental secretaries and the officers who appeared before it.

1.8 The following programs and agencies were not required to attend:

### *Agriculture, Water and the Environment portfolio*

- Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment;  
Program 1.3: Commonwealth Environmental Water
- Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder;
- Office of the Supervising Scientist;

### *Industry, Science, Energy and Resources portfolio*

- National Wind Farm Commissioner;

### *Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio*

- Australia Business Arts Foundation Ltd (Creative Partnerships Australia);

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5 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 42, 13 February 2020, p. 1268.

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- Australian Film, Television and Radio School;
  - Australian National Maritime Museum;
  - Bundanon Trust;
  - Classification Review Board;
  - National Film and Sound Archive;
  - National Gallery of Australia;
  - National Museum of Australia; and
  - National Portrait Gallery of Australia.

1.9 On 27 February 2020, the Senate passed a resolution which required representatives of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to come to the 2019-20 additional estimates prepared to answer questions with respect to the Environment Restoration Fund and the Communities Environment Program.<sup>6</sup>

1.10 The committee notes that at the hearing on 2 March 2020, departmental officials tabled a list of commitments made under the Environment Restoration Fund (see Appendix 1) and answered questions in relation to the Communities Environment Program.<sup>7</sup>

### **Questions on notice and Hansard transcript**

1.11 In accordance with standing order 26(9)(a), the committee agreed to set Friday, 17 April 2020, as the date for the return of written answers or additional information for the hearings held on 2 and 3 March 2020.

1.12 Written answers and information provided to the committee in response to questions on notice arising from the hearings are tabled in the Senate and posted on the committee's webpage. Links to the transcripts of these public hearings and to answers and additional information are available at: [www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Senate\\_Estimates/ec](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_Estimates/ec).

### **Supplementary Budget Estimates 2019-20**

1.13 The committee examined answers to questions on notice from the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearings held on the 21 and 22 October 2019 and the additional hearing held with the former Department of the Environment and Energy on 12 November 2019.

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6 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 46, 27 February 2020, p. 1415.

7 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 2 March 2020, pp. 77–78.

### ***Timeliness of answers to questions on notice***

1.14 The committee set Friday, 29 November 2019, as the date for the return of answers to questions on notice arising from the hearings on 21 and 22 October 2019. The committee also set Tuesday, 14 January 2020, as the date for the return of answers to questions on notice from the additional hearing with the former Department of the Environment and Energy on 12 November 2019.

1.15 The committee received answers to 201 of the 209<sup>8</sup> questions taken on notice for the Environment and Energy portfolio by the due date of 29 November 2019. The Communications and the Arts portfolio provided 150 of the 179<sup>9</sup> answers to questions on notice by the due date of 29 November 2019. The remaining 29 answers to questions on notice were provided between December 2019 and January 2020.

1.16 Of the 55 questions taken on notice from the committee's additional hearing with the former Department of the Environment and Energy on 12 November 2019, 28 answers were provided by the due date of 14 January 2020. The remaining 27 answers were provided on 15 January 2020.

### **Record of proceedings**

1.17 This report does not attempt to analyse the evidence presented during the hearings. However, it does provide a brief list of some of the key issues that were canvassed by the committee for each portfolio.

### **Note on references and additional information**

1.18 References to the *Hansard* transcript are to the proof *Hansard*. Page numbers may vary between the proof and official *Hansard* transcript.

1.19 Copies of the *Hansard* transcripts, documents tabled at the hearings (see Appendix 1), and additional information received after the hearings are tabled in the Senate and available on the committee's website.

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8 This figure includes two additional written questions lodged by Senator Hanson-Young with the date set for answers 14 January 2020.

9 This figure includes 10 additional written questions lodged by Senator Urquhart with the date set for answers 14 January 2020 which were provided by the due date.