

The Senate

Rural and Regional Affairs
and Transport
Legislation Committee

Additional estimates 2019–20

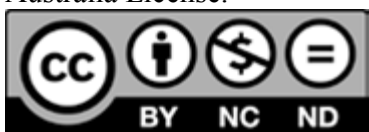
March 2020

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Membership of the committee

Members

Senator Susan McDonald, Chair	Queensland, NATS
Senator Glenn Sterle, Deputy Chair	Western Australia, ALP
Senator Alex Antic	South Australia, LP
Senator Gerard Rennick	Queensland, LP
Senator Janet Rice	Victoria, AG
Senator Murray Watt	Queensland, ALP

Senators in attendance

Senator Slade Brockman
Senator Carol Brown
Senator Matt Canavan
Senator Raff Ciccone
Senator Perin Davey
Senator Mehreen Faruqi
Senator Hollie Hughes
Senator Sue Lines
Senator Jenny McAllister
Senator Malarndirri McCarthy
Senator Nick McKim
Senator Andrew McLachlan
Senator Sam McMahon
Senator Rex Patrick
Senator Malcolm Roberts
Senator Tony Sheldon
Senator Anne Urquhart
Senator Peter Whish-Wilson

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Table of contents

Membership of the committee	iii
Chapter 1.....	1
Introduction	1
Additional Estimates Hearings	1
Questions on notice and Hansard transcript	2
Answers to questions on notice – Supplementary Budget Estimates 2019–20.....	2
Timeliness of answers to questions on notice	2
Chapter 2.....	5
Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio	5
Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio.....	5
Cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matters	6
Appendix 1.....	7
Documents tabled	7
Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio	7
Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio.....	7
Cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matter.....	7

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 13 February 2020, the Senate referred the following documents to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee (the committee) for examination and report:

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2019 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2019–20];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2019 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2019–20]; and
- Final Budget Outcome 2018–19.¹

The committee is required to examine the 2019–20 additional estimates contained in these documents in relation to the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio and the Agriculture, Water and the Environment portfolio. Following examination, the committee is required to table its report on 24 March 2020.²

Additional Estimates Hearings

1.2 The committee examined witnesses from the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio on 2 and 6 March 2020, and witnesses from the Agriculture, Water and the Environment portfolio on 3 and 6 March 2020. In addition, the committee conducted a cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matters estimates hearing on 6 March 2020 in accordance with a Senate agreement of 28 November 2018.³

1.3 The committee heard evidence from the following senators:

- Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment;
- Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam, Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries, Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism;
- Senator the Hon Jane Hume, Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology, representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport; and
- Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services.

1.4 Evidence was also provided by:

¹ Journals of the Senate, No. 42, 13 February 2020, pp. 1283-1284.

² Journals of the Senate, No. 27, 14 November 2019, p. 852.

³ Journals of the Senate, No. 27, 14 November 2019, p. 851.

- Mr Simon Atkinson, Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications;
- Mr Andrew Metcalfe AO, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment;
- Mr Phillip Glyde, Chief Executive of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority;
- Ms Jody Swirepik, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder; and
- Officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

1.5 The committee thanks the Ministers, departmental secretaries and officers for their assistance and cooperation during the hearings.

Questions on notice and Hansard transcript

1.6 In accordance with standing order 26(9)(a), the committee set 24 April 2020, as the date for the return of written answers or additional information, in response to questions placed on notice during the hearings. The return date was later revised to 8 May 2020.

1.7 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 Hansard transcripts of these public hearings, and to answers and additional information are also available on the committee webpage at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_Estimates/rrat.Record_of_proceedings

Answers to questions on notice – Supplementary Budget Estimates 2019–20

1.8 The committee undertook supplementary budget estimates hearings on 21 and 22 October 2019 for the Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio and the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio (use new department names? Not sure since they didn't have their current names at the time of these estimates hearings). On 25 October 2019, the committee examined cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matters. The committee set 6 December 2019 as the deadline for return of answers to questions on notice.

1.9 The Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio took 400 questions on notice. The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio took 211 questions on notice. The Environment and Energy portfolio took six questions on notice.

Timeliness of answers to questions on notice

1.10 The Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio submitted 339 responses to questions by the deadline. The remaining answers were received gradually between December 2019 and February 2019.

1.11 The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio submitted all responses by the deadline.

1.12 The Environment and Energy portfolio submitted all responses to questions by the deadline. Note on references

1.13 References to the Hansard transcript are to the proof Hansard; page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcripts.

Chapter 2

Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio

2.1 The committee heard from divisions of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (the department) and portfolio agencies on 2 March 2020 in the following order:

- Regional Development and Local Government Division;
- Infrastructure Investment Division;
- Cities Division;
- Western Sydney Unit;
- Inland Rail and Rail Policy Division; and
- Australian Rail Track Corporation.

2.2 The following agencies and divisions were released during the course of the hearing without providing evidence:

- National Faster Rail Authority;
- Surface Transport Policy Division;
- Portfolio Coordination and Research Division; and
- Territories Division.

Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio

2.3 The committee heard from divisions of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the department) and portfolio agencies on 3 March 2020 in the following order:

- Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Corporate Matters (finance and business support, corporate strategy and governance, assurance and legal);
- Wine Australia;
- Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Outcome Three (rural policy and farm performance, AGVET chemicals, agricultural policy, trade and market access);
- Australian Fisheries Management Authority;
- Fisheries Research and Development Corporation;
- Future Drought Consultative Committee;
- Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Corporate Matters (finance and business support, exports);
- Meat and Livestock Australia;

- Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Outcome Four (live animal exports, biosecurity policy and implementation, biosecurity plant division, compliance);
- Regional Investment Corporation; and
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority.

2.4 The following agencies and divisions were released during the course of the hearing without providing evidence:

- Animal Health Australia;
- Australian Wool Innovation Limited;
- Inspector-General for Live Animal Exports;
- Animal Health Australia; and
- Plant Health Australia.

Cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matters

2.5 The committee heard from divisions of both departments and portfolio agencies on 6 March 2020 in the following order:

- Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (water division);
- Murray-Darling Basin Authority;
- Commonwealth Environmental Water Office;
- National Water Grid Authority
- Inspector-General of Murray-Darling Basin Water Resources; and
- Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics and Sciences.

Appendix 1

Documents tabled

Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio

- Tabled Document No. 1: Documents tabled in response to a request from Senator Sterle, tabled by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, on 2 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 2: Regional Growth Fund Guidelines, tabled by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, on 2 March 2020.

Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio

- Tabled Document No. 1: National Landcare Program - Agriculture Stewardship Package, tabled by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, on 3 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 2: Onshore Biosecurity Levy, tabled by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, on 3 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 3: Organisational Chart with Responsible Ministers, tabled by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, on 3 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 4: High level breakdown of all MoG costs to 31 January, tabled by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, on 3 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 5: Public Interest Immunity Claim – Request for Information Report, tabled by Senator Anne Ruston, on 3 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 6: Correspondence between Ms Kathryn Richards on behalf of The New Club Armidale Pty Ltd and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (formerly the Department of Agriculture), tabled by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, on 3 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 7: Educating Kids About Agriculture: Kids to Farms grant program, tabled by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, on 3 March 2020.

Cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matter

- Tabled Document No. 1: Opening statement, tabled by Mr Philip Glyde, Chief Executive, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, on 6 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 2: Correspondence regarding the Barmah-Millewa Forest, tabled by Senator Rex Patrick, on 6 March 2020.

- Tabled Document No. 3: Opening statement, tabled by Ms Jody Swirepik, First Assistant Secretary, Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, on 6 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 4: Correspondence between Ms Terri Butler MP and Mr David Littleproud MP, tabled by Senator Jenny McAllister, on 6 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 5: MDBA Report Card July and December 2019, tabled by Senator Murray Watt, on 6 March 2020.
- Tabled Document No. 6: Referrals to the Inspector-General, tabled by Mr Mick Keelty AO APM, Interim Inspector-General of Murray-Darling Basin Water Resources, on 6 March 2020.