

The Senate

Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee

Additional estimates 2013–14

March 2014

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ISBN 978-1-74229-962-4

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Table of Contents

Membership of the Committee	iii
Chapter 1.....	1
Additional Estimates 2013–14	1
Introduction	1
Portfolio coverage	1
Hearings.....	1
Questions on notice and Hansard transcripts	2
Public interest immunity claims	2
Senators guidance document	2
Conduct of the hearings.....	3
Chapter 2.....	5
Portfolio specific issues.....	5
Environment Portfolio	5
Communications Portfolio.....	13
Appendix 1	17
Additional Estimates program	17
Appendix 2.....	21
Tabled documents.....	21
Environment	21
Communications.....	23

Chapter 1

Additional Estimates 2013–14

Introduction

1.1 On 13 February 2014¹, the Senate referred the following to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee (the committee):

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013–14];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013–14];
- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014 [Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013–14];
- Final Budget Outcome 2012–13; and
- the advances provided under the annual Appropriation Acts report for 2012–13.

1.2 The committee is required to report to the Senate on 18 March 2014.²

Portfolio coverage

1.3 The committee has responsibility for examining the expenditure and outcomes of the following:

- Environment Portfolio; and
- Communications Portfolio.³

Hearings

1.4 The committee held public hearings on Monday, 24 February 2014 (Environment portfolio) and Tuesday, 25 February 2014 (Communications portfolio). The committee took evidence from Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, representing the Minister for the Environment; and Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, Minister for Finance, and Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Assistant Minister for Social Services, representing the Minister for Communications, together with officers of relevant

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 14, 13 February 2014, p. 484.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 6, 4 December 2013, p. 224.

3 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 1, 12 November 2013, p. 16.

departments and agencies. The committee expresses its appreciation for the assistance of the Ministers, Departmental Secretaries and the officers who appeared before it.

1.5 The following agencies were not required to attend:

- Sydney Harbour Federation Trust; and
- Telecommunications Universal Service Management Authority.

Questions on notice and Hansard transcripts

1.6 The committee notes that it had set Friday, 17 January 2014, as the date for the return of answers to questions taken on notice during the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearings held in November 2013. However, at that date all answers to questions on notice for both the Environment and the Communications portfolios were outstanding. Many of the late answers were submitted in the weeks and days prior to the Additional Estimates hearings and there were three answers outstanding for the Environment portfolio at the conclusion of the Additional Estimates hearings. Once again the committee reiterates its expectation that answers to questions on notice should be provided to the committee by the due date.

1.7 In accordance with Standing Order 26(9)(a), the committee has set Friday, 11 April 2014, as the date for the return of written answers or additional information in response to questions placed on notice during the 24–25 February 2014 hearings.

1.8 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 web page. Links to the transcripts of these public hearings and to answers and additional information are available on the Internet at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_Estimates/ecctte/estimates/ad1314/index

Public interest immunity claims

1.9 On 13 May 2009⁴, the Senate passed an order relating to public interest immunity claims. The order sets out the processes to be followed if a witness declines to answer a question. The full text of this order has previously been provided to departments and agencies and was incorporated in the Chair's opening statement on each day of the additional estimates hearings.

Senators' guidance document

1.10 The committee would like to thank the Department of the Environment for providing a 'guidance document' for the additional estimates round. The guidance document provided a comprehensive overview of the department's new outcome

4 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 68, 13 May 2009, p. 1941.

structure and was very helpful to committee members in establishing the correct area in which to raise their questions.

Conduct of the hearings

1.11 The committee notes that the estimates process often encompasses robust and vigorous questioning of the minister and officials. However, the rules of debate in the Senate apply to committee proceedings, including those relating to disorderly conduct. During questioning of witnesses from NBN Co, Senator Conroy accused one witness of lying. This brought a rebuke from the chair and several requests from the chair for him to withdraw the remark. Senator Conroy refused and the chair suspended proceedings for a private meeting of the committee. Upon resumption, the chair again invited Senator Conroy to withdraw and he did. It should be remembered by all committee members and other senators that questions should be put to witnesses in an orderly manner and witnesses should be provided with the opportunity to respond adequately. This ensures that the committee operates effectively and that matters can be pursued to the fullest extent.

1.12 During the questioning of NBN Co, Senator Conroy based a range of questions on two documents without providing a copy of the documents to the witnesses. The committee sought the tabling of the document, but it notes that the senator refused to do so. The committee notes that one of the roles of the chair is to ensure that the rights of witnesses are protected. This includes that witnesses are given adequate access to the information on which questions are based. The committee considers that the witnesses were disadvantaged by Senator Conroy's action and therefore reports the refusal to table the documents.

Chapter 2

Portfolio specific issues

2.1 This chapter provides an overview of some of the matters raised during the committee's hearings on the additional estimates 2013–14. The discussion follows outcome and agency structure.

Environment Portfolio

Department of the Environment

2.2 The committee opened the hearing with the Department of the Environment by asking general questions about:

- staffing reductions in the department as a consequence of the delegation of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) approvals to state governments (pp 5–6); and
- Nishi building office space (p. 6).

Outcome 1: The conservation and protection of Australia's terrestrial and marine biodiversity and ecosystems through supporting research, developing information, supporting natural resource management, and establishing and managing Commonwealth protected areas

2.3 Officers from the department were called in relation to Program 1.1: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment. Matters raised included:

- 20 million trees project (p. 101);
- Caring for our Country program (pp 101–102);
- Green Army (p. 103);
- Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement (p. 106);
- diversion of Natural Heritage Trust funds (pp 107–108);
- future of the National Landcare Program (pp 108–109);
- protection plans for the turtle and the dugong (pp 112–113); and
- Save the Tasmanian Devil Program (p. 112).

2.4 Officers from the department were called in relation to Program 1.2: Environmental information and research. Matters raised included whaling surveillance (pp 113–114); and the National Environmental Research Program (p. 115).

2.5 Officers from the department were called in relation to Program 1.3: Carbon Pollution Reduction. Matters raised included land sector initiatives – Biodiversity Fund (p. 117).

2.6 The committee welcomed the new Director of National Parks, Ms Sally Barnes. Ms Barnes commented on her new position as Director:

...I have some very big shoes to fill. I have come from the New South Wales government. I was the chief executive of the Office of Environment and Heritage. As part of that role, I had responsibility for managing New South Wales national parks. Before that role, I was the head of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in New South Wales. So it is an exciting time to come to the Commonwealth. Peter was in the role for 14 years. Obviously the Director of National Parks role does not come up very often. I was very keen to throw my hat into the ring and very pleased to be selected for the position.¹

2.7 The committee proceeded to question the Director of National Parks and canvassed matters including:

- the World Parks Congress (p. 67);
- Indigenous employment at Uluru (pp 67–68);
- Christmas Island commercial fishing area (p. 68); and
- deep water fishing licences and impacts (p. 68).

Outcome 2: Improved sustainability of Australia's population, communities and environment through coordination and development of sustainable population and communities policies, and the reduction and regulation of waste, pollutants and hazardous substances

2.8 Officers were called and examined in relation to Program 2.1: Management of Hazardous Wastes, Substances and Pollutants. Matters raised included:

- Tyre Stewardship Australia established by the tyre industry and the impact of the project on our natural environment (p. 13–15); and
- the e-waste scheme (p. 15).

2.9 The committee called departmental officers in relation to Program 2.2: Sustainable Communities and examined the expenditure for the establishment of the National Sustainability Council (p. 16).

1 *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2014, p. 68.

Outcome 3: Advancement of Australia's strategic, scientific, environmental and economic interests in the Antarctic by protecting, administering and researching the region

2.10 The committee called agencies and departmental officers in relation to Program 3.1: Science, Policy and Presence. Matters raised included:

- the 20-year Antarctic strategic plan (pp 19–20);
- importance of the scientific research in the Antarctic around ocean acidification and funding of the research (p. 21);
- organisations and countries contributing financially to research (p. 21); and
- abandoned fuel drums at Wilkes Station and the Thala Valley waste disposal site (p. 22).

2.11 The committee discussed the costs for the use of the Aurora Australis to rescue passengers from the ship stuck in Antarctic ice in December 2013. The Australian Antarctic Division advised that the direct costs to the Australian Antarctic program were about \$1.8 million. Dr Tony Fleming, Director, advised the committee that the Australian Antarctic Division is attempting to recoup the costs.²

2.12 The Australian Antarctic Division also elaborated on the 20-year Antarctic strategic plan:

The 20-year Antarctic strategic plan has as its terms of reference the strategic importance of Australia's Antarctic interests, expanding the role of Tasmania as the gateway for Antarctic expeditions and scientific research, ensuring robust and reliable access to the Australian Antarctic Territory, extending Australia's reach across the Australian Antarctic Territory, committing to undertaking nationally and globally significant science, and committing to exercising influence in the region through the Antarctic treaty system. They are the terms of reference and you can see them on our website. There is further detail in those terms of reference.³

Outcome 4: Adaptation to climate change, wise water use, secure water supplies and improved health of rivers, waterways and freshwater ecosystems by supporting research, and reforming the management and use of water resources

2.13 Officers from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and departmental officers were called in relation to Program 4.1: Water Reform. Matters raised included:

- the release of the Constraints Management Strategy (p. 23);
- likely impacts of changes to river levels (p. 24);

2 *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2014, p. 18.

3 *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2014, p. 18.

- the involvement of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder in relation to the constraints management strategy (p. 24);
- Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program (pp 24–25);
- funding allocated to South Australia under the PIPP(SA) program (pp 26–27);
- memorandums of understanding with Mekong River Commission and the Yellow River Conservancy Commission in China (p. 28); and
- Water for the Future program (p. 28).

Outcome 5: Increased protection, awareness and appreciation of Australia's environment and heritage through regulating matters of national environmental significance and the identification, conservation and celebration of natural, Indigenous and historic places of national and World Heritage significance

2.14 Officers from the department were called in relation to Program 5.1: Conservation of Australia's Heritage and Environment. Matters raised included:

- proposed boundary modification for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (pp 68–69);
- identifying and collating the Aboriginal cultural values of the expanded World Heritage Area (p. 70);
- funding provided to the Tasmanian Government to commence the rehabilitation works on degraded forest areas (p. 70);
- the progress of the community consultations for the listing of Cape York as a World Heritage Area (p. 73);
- mining development in the Galilee Basin (p. 74);
- the progress, development and completion of the Government's heritage strategy (p. 75); and
- Dampier Archipelago and the Burrup Peninsula (pp 76–77).

2.15 The committee also sought details about obtaining a detailed map of the area proposed for delisting, and if the department would publish such a map on its website. The department responded:

...the standard practice is that we would not put up GPS coordinates for any maps that have been sent to the World Heritage committee prior to it considering the request from the state party and after it has made a decision. That has been standard practice for all nominations and proposals put to the World Heritage committee over recent years, because they can sometimes change depending on what the World Heritage committee might actually decide. So we would normally put up the really detailed GPS based

mapping after a final decision has been made by the World Heritage committee.⁴

2.16 Officers from the department were called and examined in relation to Program 5.2: Environmental Regulation. Matters raised included:

- progress of the process to delegate Commonwealth approval powers to the states (p. 78);
- actions the department has taken to implement the minister's review of marine parks (p. 82);
- studies on reducing the size of marine parks (p. 82);
- the impact of continued fishing within marine parks (p. 83);
- the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Amendment (2014 Measures No. 1) Regulation 2014 (p. 83);
- scrutiny undertaken on the West Australian Government's application for exemption from Part 3 of the EPBC Act (p. 83);
- Queensland drum lines (p. 83);
- number of sharks of any breed that have been caught—target and non-target species (p. 84);
- Waratah Coal approval in the Galilee Basin (p. 87);
- Maules Creek coalmine approval (pp 89–90);
- Abbot Point approval (p. 91);
- draft recovery plan for koalas (p. 91); and
- strategic environmental assessment being undertaken into the Perth and Peel regions (p. 92).

Outcome 6: Protection and restoration of environmental assets through the management and use of Commonwealth environmental water

2.17 Officers from the department were called in relation to Program 6.1: Commonwealth Environmental Water, together with officers from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office. Matters raised included:

- environmental water holdings (p. 29);
- risk assessment processes for riverbanks (p. 30);
- Environmental Watering Plan and the implementation of the Constraints Management Strategy (p. 30); and
- sale of the environmental water in the Gwydir Valley (pp 31–32).

4 *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2014, p. 69.

Outcome 7: Reduction of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to the impacts of climate change, and contribution towards the negotiation of an effective global solution to climate change, through the development and implementation of a national response to climate change

2.18 In relation to Program 7.1: Reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, matters raised included:

- consideration of the development of the safeguards mechanism (p. 39);
- funding for the one million solar roofs, solar schools and solar towns programs (p. 40);
- the progress and success of the Renewable Energy Target review (RET) (p. 40)
- impact on investment in renewables of removing the RET (p. 41);
- abolition of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and investment in renewables in Australia (p. 41);
- the role of the department in the RET review process (p. 42);
- the abolition of the Climate Change Authority (CCA) (pp 42–43); and
- Galilee Basin coal deposits (p. 48).

2.19 During questioning under Program 7.2: Adapting to Climate Change, matters raised included:

- moves by local councils to remove regulations preventing building developments near the coastal areas at risk of rising sea levels (p. 55);
- potential sea level rises (pp 55–56);
- drought in New South Wales and Queensland (p. 57);
- twenty million trees program (p. 59); and
- funding for the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (p. 60).

2.20 The committee also canvassed issues related to heatwaves across south-east Australia with the department commenting on heat-related illness and death:

Broadly, the department is aware of the general implications of the extreme weather that Australia has experienced in the last few years. Clearly, increasing heat and heatwaves have had a significant impact on human health, particularly in 2009 and 2010. We have actively been informed about the implications of the number of excess deaths, for example, which were reported in the Victorian heatwave in 2009–10. So we are aware of that. Since that time, I think the department, in working closely with both the health and the family services departments, has explored the implications and benefits of an early warning heatwave system. I understand

the Bureau of Meteorology now has a role in putting in place and piloting a heatwave early warning system.⁵

2.21 The committee questioned the Supervising Scientist Division on the Alligator Rivers Regional Technical Committee and its role. Acting Supervising Scientist, Mr Richard McAllister, explained that:

The Alligator Rivers Regional Technical Committee is a committee of seven independent scientists who essentially oversight the research undertaken into impacts of the environment in the Alligator Rivers region with specific relation to the uranium mining activities in the region. They essentially oversight the research that both ourselves and the mining company undertake and give an independent view of that and report directly to the minister with that independent view.⁶

2.22 Other matters raised included:

- the failure and spillage of leach tank No. 1 on 7 December (pp 61–63);
- radiation readings undertaken by Energy Resources Australia (ERA) (p. 64);
- incident on 3 November involving and unauthorised vehicle movement (p. 65); and
- inadequately secured exploration samples (pp 65–66).

Bureau of Meteorology

2.23 The Bureau of Meteorology was called and examined on matters including:

- Blue Mountains bush fires (p. 8);
- summer heat wave events (p. 8);
- use of the Bureau of Meteorology website during the heat waves (p. 11);
- forecasting tropical Cyclone Dillon (pp 12–13);
- requirements for providing information through the media and generally reporting to the community (pp 10–11); and
- radar maps and anomalous information on radar images (pp 11–12).

2.24 In relation to extreme weather events, the Director, Dr Rob Vertessy, advised the committee about particular climatic trends:

I will start with the clearest evidence, which is around temperature. The globe has warmed almost a degree since the beginning of the last century. Accompanying that growth in average warmth of the planet has been a growing frequency of hot days and a lesser frequency of cool nights. So

5 *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2014, p. 56.

6 *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2014, pp 60–61.

there is very clear evidence to show that global warming is impacting on temperature distributions. When we come to rainfall, it is a little less clear. In the Australian region we have been getting a little more rainfall on average. However, the signal in rainfall is very noisy. So it is difficult to discern any kind of global warming trend in the pattern of rainfall in our region. When it comes to cyclones, we have similar difficulties discerning any trend because of there being a lot of variability in the cyclone frequency and magnitude. There are a lot of them and if anything we are either holding steady or there has been a slight decline in the number of cyclones since the 1970s. But the research on that is quite equivocal.⁷

Clean Energy Regulator

2.25 Officers from the Clean Energy Regulator were called and examined in relation to:

- media reports in relation to cancellation of the auctions of carbon units (p. 50);
- activities undertaken as part of the clean energy package (p. 51);
- annual compliance and risk based audit processes (pp 52–53); and
- revenue from the carbon price (p. 55).

Climate Change Authority

2.26 The committee called and examined officers from the Climate Change Authority and canvassed matters including:

- progress of the emissions reduction target review (p. 118);
- Carbon Farming Initiative (p. 118);
- the effect of the RET on wholesale electricity prices in Australia (p. 120); and
- economic modelling for the review of the RET (p. 123).

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

2.27 Officers from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) were called and examined. Matters raised included:

- Abbot Point offshore dumping (pp 92–94); and
- Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Action Plan (p. 96).

2.28 The committee continued to question the GBRMPA on the Abbot Point offshore dumping and the role that the GBRMA has in ensuring that appropriate

7 *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2014, p. 9.

information is available about activities being undertaken.⁸ The Chairman and Chief Executive, Dr Russell Reichelt, elaborated:

Our role in a decision like Abbot Point is to say yes or no and ask, 'Can it be done safely,' in plain terms. That involves identifying all the risks that, if unmanaged, would cause harm and then, same as the minister's decision, making sure there are conditions to prevent that occurring, and that is what we have done. But we have also been meeting with the community groups. In the last two weeks, we have met with our local management advisory committees and senior executives, and to those people I would say, 'We are hearing your concerns and we do need to get more information out to you quickly.' That is so that they understand not just the scientific rigour behind the controls that we have put in place but the independence—so the information is transparently available to the community and they hear it the same as we do, and to avoid secrecy agreements and things that prevent their representatives from talking to them about it. We intend to ramp that up in the case of Abbot Point. My colleague mentioned the technical panel and the management group, which would have community people on it.⁹

National Water Commission

2.29 Officers from the National Water Commission (NWC) were called and examined. Matters raised included:

- the triennial assessment of progress under the National Water Initiative (p. 34); and
- the publication of benchmark price (p. 37).

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

2.30 General questions were asked of the department in relation to:

- methodology for calculating the cost to industry of the regulation administered by the department (p. 3);
- costing regulation (p. 3);
- staffing in the E-government Branch (p. 4); and
- the role of the chief economist (pp 5–6).

8 *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2014, p. 99.

9 *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2014, p. 100.

Outcome 1: Develop a vibrant, sustainable and internationally competitive broadband, broadcasting and communications sector, through policy development, advice and program delivery, which promotes the digital economy for all Australians

2.31 Officers from the department were called and examined in relation to Program 1.1: Broadband and Communications Infrastructure. Matters raised included:

- the prioritised rollout and the broadband survey (p. 17);
- access to Telstra's 3G to 4G network (p. 21);
- the release of a broadband quality and availability report on the myBroadband website (pp 23–24);
- premises having inadequate or no broadband (p. 27); and
- Interim Satellite Service (pp 31–32).

2.32 Officers from the department were called in relation to Program 1.2: Digital Economy and Postal Services. Matters raised included:

- Strategic Review of the National Broadband Network (p. 97); and
- postal services – corporate plan (p. 98).

2.33 Officers from the department were called in relation to Program 1.3: Broadcasting and Digital Television. Matters raised included:

- reviews on technology choices for radio (p. 121); and
- extending digital radio to regional areas of Australia (pp 122–123).

Australia Post

2.34 Officers from Australia Post were called and examined at the conclusion of the opening statement made by Mr Ahmed Fahour, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer. Matters raised included:

- changes in the delivery schedule survey (p. 77);
- basic postage rate price increase (p. 79);
- provision of 60 cent concession stamp (p. 78);
- declining mail services (p. 80);
- declining service standards (p. 80);
- competition with existing businesses (p. 95); and
- digital mailboxes (pp 95–96).

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

2.35 The committee canvassed the following matters with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC):

- broadcast of New Year's Eve celebrations, Sydney and complaints received (pp 101–102);
- ABC children's programs and relocation of Giggle and Hoot (p. 102);
- Stone Cold Justice, Four Corners program (p. 102);
- the ABC's correction policy (pp 104–105);
- television production outside of Sydney and Melbourne (pp 106–107);
- additional services for regional areas for digital radio, including rollout of digital transmission towers (p. 110); and
- Centenary of Navy Fireworks Display on Sydney Harbour (p. 111).

Australian Communications and Media Authority

2.36 Officers from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) were called and examined. Matters raised included:

- the role ACMA plays in enforcing content standards in the broadcasting sector (p. 7);
- number of investigations instigated by ACMA into broadcasts by Ray Hadley and by Alan Jones in 2013 (p. 7)
- the replacement of the chief economist (p. 9); and
- number of complaints received (pp 14–15).

National Broadband Network (NBN Co)

2.37 Officers from the National Broadband Network (NBN Co) were called and examined. The Executive Chairman, Dr Ziggy Switkowski, tabled his opening statement. Matters raised included:

- cable rollout trajectories for NBN (pp 37–38).
- long-term satellite availability (p. 48);
- investments in satellites (p. 51);
- Freedom of Information requests (p. 64);
- take up of the rollout of NBN (p. 74); and
- impact of regional rollout (p. 75).

Special Broadcasting Service

2.38 Officers from Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) were called and examined. Matters raised included:

- obligations of SBS as a national television broadcaster (p. 118);
- Mandarin News Australia (pp. 118–119);
- PopAsia followings on Facebook and Twitter (p. 120); and
- SBS participation in digital radio trials (p. 120).

Senator John Williams
Chair

Appendix 1

Additional Estimates program

The Senate BUSINESS OF COMMITTEES

This document is issued as a guide to Senators
Business listed is subject to change

It should be noted that times allocated for the consideration of outcomes, items and agencies within portfolios are indicative only.

Senators, staff and departments should liaise with secretariats on the progress of portfolios during the estimates process.

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Public Hearings: ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2013–14

Monday, 24 and Tuesday, 25 February 2014

**Committee Room 2S3
Parliament House
Canberra ACT**

*To be televised on Channel 111 and broadcast on Radio 91.1
http://www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament*

AGENDA

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2014

Time	Environment Portfolio
9.00 am	Department of the Environment
9.00 am – 9.15 am	General questions of the Department
9.15 am – 9.45 am	Bureau of Meteorology
	Outcome 2: Improved sustainability of Australia's population, communities and environment through coordination and development of sustainable population and communities policies, and the reduction and

	regulation of waste, pollutants and hazardous substances
9.45 am – 10.05 am	<i>Program 2.1: Management of Hazardous Wastes, Substances and Pollutants</i>
10.05 am – 10.20 am	<i>Program 2.2: Sustainable Communities</i>
	Outcome 3: Advancement of Australia's strategic, scientific, environmental and economic interests in the Antarctic by protecting, administering and researching the region
10.20 am – 10.40 am	<i>Program 3.1: Antarctica: Science, Policy and Presence</i>
10.40am – 10.55 am	<i>Morning tea</i>
	Outcome 4: Adaptation to climate change, wise water use, secure water supplies and improved health of rivers, waterways and freshwater ecosystems by supporting research, and reforming the management and use of water resources
10.55 am – 11.40 am	Murray-Darling Basin Authority
	<i>Program 4.1: Water Reform</i>
	Outcome 6: Protection and restoration of environmental assets through the management and use of Commonwealth environmental water
11.40 am – 11.55 am	Commonwealth Environmental Water Office
11.55 am – 12.10 pm	<i>Program 6.1: Commonwealth Environmental Water</i>
	National Water Commission
	Outcome 7: Reduction of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to the impacts of climate change, and contribution towards the negotiation of an effective global solution to climate change, through the development and implementation of a national response to climate change
12.10 pm – 12.45 pm	<i>Program 7.1: Reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions</i>
12.45 pm – 1.30 pm	<i>Lunch</i>
1.30 pm – 2.15 pm	<i>Program 7.1: Reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (continued)</i>
2.15 pm – 2.45 pm	Clean Energy Regulator
2.45 pm – 3.30 pm	<i>Program 7.2: Adapting to Climate Change</i>
3.30 pm – 3.45 pm	<i>Afternoon tea</i>
3.45 pm – 4.15 pm	<i>Program 7.2: Adapting to Climate Change (continued)</i>
	Outcome 5: Increased protection, awareness and appreciation of Australia's environment and heritage through regulating matters of national environmental significance and the identification, conservation and celebration of natural, Indigenous and historic places of national and World Heritage significance
4.15 pm – 4.30 pm	Office of Supervising Scientist
	Outcome 1: The conservation and protection of Australia's terrestrial and marine biodiversity and ecosystems through supporting research, developing information, supporting natural resource management, and establishing and managing Commonwealth protected areas
4.30 pm – 4.45 pm	Director of National Parks
	Outcome 5: Increased protection, awareness and appreciation of

	Australia's environment and heritage through regulating matters of national environmental significance and the identification, conservation and celebration of natural, Indigenous and historic places of national and World Heritage significance (<i>in continuation</i>)
4.45 pm – 5.25 pm	<i>Program 5.1: Conservation of Australia's Heritage and Environment</i>
5.25 pm – 6.00 pm	<i>Program 5.2: Environmental Regulation</i>
6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	<i>Dinner</i>
7.00 pm – 7.40 pm	<i>Program 5.2: Environmental Regulation (continued)</i>
7.40 pm – 8.25 pm	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
	Outcome 1: The conservation and protection of Australia's terrestrial and marine biodiversity and ecosystems through supporting research, developing information, supporting natural resource management, and establishing and managing Commonwealth protected areas
8.25 pm – 9.00 pm	<i>Program 1.1: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment</i>
9.00 pm – 9.15 pm	<i>Tea break</i>
9.15 pm – 9.40 pm	<i>Program 1.1: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment (continued)</i>
9.40 pm – 10.00 pm	<i>Program 1.2: Environmental Information and Research</i>
10.00 pm – 10.20 pm	<i>Program 1.3: Carbon Pollution Reduction – Land Sector Initiatives</i>
10.20 pm – 11.00 pm	Climate Change Authority
11.00 pm	<i>Adjournment</i>

TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2014

Time	Communications Portfolio
9.00 am	Department of Communications
9.00 am – 9.20 am	General questions of the Department
	Outcome 1—Develop a vibrant, sustainable and internationally competitive broadband, broadcasting and communications sector, through policy development, advice and program delivery, which promotes the digital economy for all Australians
9.20 am – 10.20 am	Australian Communications and Media Authority
10.20 am – 11.00 am	<i>Program 1.1: Broadband and Communications Infrastructure</i>
11.00 am – 11.15 am	<i>Morning tea</i>
11.15 am – 11.35 am	<i>Program 1.1: Broadband and Communications Infrastructure (continued)</i>
11.35 am – 1.00 pm	NBN Co
1.00 pm – 2.00 pm	<i>Lunch</i>
2.00 pm – 3.50 pm	NBN Co (continued)
3.50 pm – 4.05 pm	<i>Afternoon tea</i>
4.05 pm – 6.05 pm	Australia Post
6.05 pm – 7.05 pm	<i>Dinner</i>
7.05 pm – 7.50 pm	<i>Program 1.2: Digital Economy and Postal Services</i>
7.50 pm – 8.50 pm	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
8.50 pm – 9.05 pm	<i>Tea break</i>
9.05 pm – 9.35 pm	Australian Broadcasting Corporation (continued)
9.35 pm – 10.30 pm	Special Broadcasting Service
10.30 pm – 11.00 pm	<i>Program 1.3: Broadcasting and Digital Television</i>
11.00 pm	<i>Adjournment</i>

Appendix 2

Tabled documents

Environment

Monday, 24 February, 2013.

1. Dr de Brouwer, Head count metrics 30 September 2013 - 31 January 2014.

Department of the Environment - Head count metrics 30 September 2013 - 31 January 2014

Metric	30-Sep-13	31-Oct-13	30-Nov-13	31-Dec-13	31-Jan-14	Total
Total employees ¹	2,677	2,719	2,910	2,835	2,805	
Ongoing employees ¹	2,291	2,282	2,468	2,412	2,383	
Non-ongoing employees	284	335	339	321	326	
Casual employees	102	102	103	102	96	
Total employee initiated ongoing separations	15	13	11	6	14	59
Total employee initiated non-ongoing separations ²	6	3	2	1	0	12
Ongoing resignations ³	4	8	6	2	10	30
Non-ongoing resignations ^{2,3}	6	3	2	1	0	12

¹ Includes employees of the Director of National Parks and employees on leave without pay

² Includes non-ongoing and casual separations, Australian Antarctic Division employs a large number of non-ongoing staff as expeditors over the summer season.

³ Resignations defined as employees who left the department with the reason "Resigned".

This excludes other types of employee initiated separations, e.g. retirements, deaths, transfer/promotions & invalidity retirements.

Communications

Tuesday, 25 February, 2013.

1. Dr Switkowski, NBN Co, Opening statement.

Senate Estimates 25 February 2014 – Opening Statement

OPENING STATEMENT

[Chair: Dr Switkowski, would you like to make an opening statement?]

Thank you Chair, I do have a brief opening statement. I want to update the committee on the transition process, on some recent and upcoming events, and on the company's progress.

Six-month report

On Friday, I released NBN Co's first six-month report which outlined our financial and operational performance for the period up to December 31. This is part of our response to the Government's call for greater transparency and timeliness of information, and we aim to continue this reporting on a quarterly basis.

The report is now on the public record, so I don't propose to go through those details here today. I think I can summarise by saying there remains much to do, but NBN Co is making progress in some important areas.

As one example, the transit network program is running on schedule and within budget. This is the critical infrastructure that links towns and cities to all the major network components and underpins the fixed wireless network, the satellites and any fixed line technology deployed in the future.

38,000 km of transit fibre has been deployed and 94 out of a planned 121 Points of Interconnect (Pols) are complete, representing 80% of the Pol program.

In addition, preparations for the launch of two satellites in 2015 remain on track for key milestones including earth station construction around the continent.

A separate review of our Fixed Wireless and Satellite strategy is just a few weeks from completion.

Strategic Review next steps

While these are encouraging signs, and elements of the build are going well, we are some distance from getting the entire project on track. As we do this, NBN Co is in a period of transition and this will continue for some time.

The Strategic Review found that the fastest and most affordable way to deliver the NBN is to apply a mix of technologies based on their best fit with the infrastructure already in place. NBN Co is now making preparations to implement the Government's directions.

To manage and drive the transition, a Transformation Management Office, or TMO, has been established within NBN Co under the leadership of J.B. Rousselot.

The TMO is engaging widely with staff, delivery partners, customers, suppliers and the community to ensure the findings of the Strategic Review, once agreed by Government, are understood and that the next steps are successfully implemented.

The TMO is looking at all in-flight projects to assess their alignment with the new strategic direction, and to map the existing set of business relationships and governance structures.

The aim is to build a whole-of-business strategy with which all business units are aligned.

In addition, an Employee Engagement Survey is about to be initiated to give us a cultural baseline to assist incoming CEO, Bill Morrow, in his review of the organization and its strengths and against which the efficacy of future changes can be measured.

FTTP and ongoing work.

Meanwhile, the Fibre-to-the-Premise (FTTP) rollout continues, and our aim is to stabilise the process and give contractors, suppliers and customers more visibility of forward plans, and greater certainty.

NBN Co is working with our delivery partners to address planning and construction issues that led to delays in the past. I will give you an example of how we are doing this.

In the past, NBN Co's reporting and our contracts with delivery partners had a strong focus on the "Premises Passed" metric.

It is axiomatic that you get the outcomes you incentivise—whether these are desired or not.

The focus on "premises passed" led to a situation where running fibre up and down streets was prioritised over connecting it to buildings. The result was a high number of premises that simply could not connect to the network despite being "passed".

We are now working productively with our delivery partners to ensure the incentives go to "serviceable premises" and RSPs are able to connect end-users quickly and efficiently.

NBN Co is also working as quickly as possible on the required commercial negotiations, product development, policy arrangements and technology testing that will underpin the future rollout.

FTTN/B Trials

This technology testing is being carried out through a series of programs that will help the company incorporate a broader mix of technologies and move the rollout to scale.

A **Fibre-to-the-Building pilot** will test delivery of VDSL broadband to end users in ten buildings in Carlton, Brunswick and Parkville in Melbourne. Fibre optic cables are being delivered to a telecommunications connection box in the buildings, which connect to the existing in-building wiring. RSPs will then be able to deliver fast broadband to each premises. A technology trial in December last year produced download speeds of 108 Mbps and upload speeds of 48Mbps.

A Fibre-to-the-Node build pilot is set for two locations: Umina near Woy Woy on the NSW Central Coast and Epping in Melbourne's northern suburbs. We will construct two small scale Copper Serving Area Modules and erect kerbside cabinets. NBN Co will then invite RSPs to participate in a **Fibre-to-the-Node end user trial** to test the delivery of high speed broadband to about 100 premises at each location and to design deployment processes together.

Disconnection

Finally, I want to mention an area of work that is the focus for many NBN Co staff at the moment. On 23 May, we will reach the copper disconnection date for the first 15 fibre serving areas.

This means nearly all existing landline phone and internet services in these FSAMS will be disconnected from the copper network. If residents and business owners want to continue these services, they need to switch to the NBN.

Disconnection is not only an operational issue; it is also a complex communications project, which NBN Co has been working on collaboratively with RSPs, government, application providers, industry and consumer groups for some time.

We are working to ensure that this disconnection process is as smooth as possible and that everyone in these areas knows what to expect and what to do. This includes being very sensitive to the requirements of the more vulnerable people in our communities.

We continue to communicate through a range of measures, including through direct mail, local advertising, information kiosks, door knocking and engagement through community groups and local advocates.

Importantly, RSPs and application providers are also directly engaging their customers to assist them in this process.

Conclusion

Along with our continuing construction work, the trials, pilots and reviews all form a vital part of the forward direction of NBN Co. Our focus for 2014 will be to learn from past experiences, transform the company in line with the advice we receive from Government, and deliver the NBN to more Australians sooner and at lower cost.

My colleagues and I are now happy to take your questions.