

## Secretary's Opening Statement – Senate Estimates

Tuesday 8 November

- I would like to begin by associating myself with your **acknowledgement of the traditional custodians** of the land on which we meet today, the **Ngunnawal** and **Ngambri** people, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with us today and also **to those viewing online**.
- I wanted to make a **short opening statement** to recognise that this is the **first appearance** of before Senate Estimates of the **new Department** of Employment and Workplace Relations – and **my first appearance** as **Secretary**.  
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- It is a great **privilege** to have been **appointed Secretary** of this new department – I have spent much of my career working in the areas its **functions encompass** and it's **got a lot of work** to do!
- It's been a while since I've sat before an Estimates committee and in our appearance over the next 2 days I'll be **ably supported** by some very experienced **senior officials** including **4 Deputy Secretaries** and we are **pleased to respond** to your **questions** today.
- I'll **introduce** each of them now and explain the **functions** they oversee to help the Committee **understand** their **responsibilities** and those of our new Department.
  - **Belinda Casson** – acting Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Secretary Corporate and Enabling Services
    - Belinda oversees the operating structures and supports for the department including **HR, legal services, finance and budget and IT**. This includes for the systems supporting delivery of our programs.
    - Being a COO for a **new entity** after a MOG is a **big, challenging** job and I **thank** Belinda and her team for their work supporting **TeamDEWR** come together.
    - I would also like to acknowledge the support from **Dr Michele Bruniges**, the Secretary of the Department of Education during these **MOG arrangements** from **DESE to DEWR**.

- **Nathan Smyth** – Deputy Secretary Employment and Workforce Group
  - This Group is responsible for **fostering a productive and competitive labour market** through **policies** and **programs** that assist **job seekers** into work, especially **secure work**, and meet **employer** and **industry needs**.
  - It manages **employment services programs** which include the newly rolled out **Workforce Australia**.
    - Rolling out a **new employment services system** is a **significant exercise** that in this case started in **2018** with an **independent review** of employment services and involved several **trials**.
      - I thank the **team** for their work on this **monumental** task, including getting us through the **formal transition** period that began just as our new **Department** was **formed**.
    - This group includes also the **onshore delivery** of the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (**PALM**) **scheme** which is delivered in **partnership** with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I welcome the team of **34** from DFAT who have joined us in the MOG.
    - I **thank** the teams for facilitating the **MOG** including the **arrangements** between us and **DFAT** around the **split** of **responsibilities** between our Departments.
- **Martin Hehir** – Deputy Secretary Workplace Relations
  - This Group is responsible for **facilitating jobs growth**, including **secure work**, through **policies** and **programs** that promote **fair, productive** and **safe** workplaces.
  - I welcome the **333** people who came from AGD who are **leading development** of work on the Government's **Workplace Relations reforms**
  - I thank **Katherine Jones** for her support of the crew during the **transition** at time when this was a **top priority** for the new

Government. I thank the team for their patience and persistence during the transfer while they continued to achieve so much, in particular the **introduction** and **passage** of the **Paid Family** and **Domestic Violence Leave** legislation and the introduction of the **Secure Jobs, Better Pay** Bill.

- The Group includes the **Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner**; and manages **workplace safety, employment conditions** and **safeguarding worker entitlements**.
- **Nadine Williams** – Deputy Secretary Skills and Training
  - This Group is responsible for **promoting growth** in **economic productivity** and **social wellbeing** through access to quality skills and training.
  - Early priorities for this the team has been to establish the new **Jobs and Skills Australia agency**, another high priority for the Government, and delivering on an **agreement** with **state** and **territory** governments for **fee-free TAFE places** and the New Energy and increasing the proportion of women undertaking **apprenticeships**.
  - The team have already supported the passage of **JSA legislation** through the Parliament and I thank them for their work in this.
- We would be happy to step you through the **details** of the **MOG** should you wish.