

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 14 February 2019, 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) 2018–19];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2019 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2018–19]; and
- Final Budget Outcome 2017–18.¹

1.2 The committee is required to examine the 2018–19 additional estimates contained in these documents in relation to the Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio and the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio. Following examination, the committee is required to table its report on 2 April 2019.²

1.3 In 2014 in the 44th Parliament, the Legislation Committee self-referred an inquiry into Airservices Australia under Standing Order 25(2)(a). In the 45th Parliament, the committee re-adopted the inquiry and conducted hearings. The committee has also been monitoring the performance of Airservices through the estimates process and decided that it would be appropriate to make any final comments on the administration of Airservices in the context of an estimates report. Chapter 5 reports on the committee's inquiry into the performance of Airservices Australia.

Additional estimates hearings

1.4 The committee examined witnesses from the Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio on 18 and 22 February 2019, and witnesses from the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio on 19 and 22 February 2019. In addition, the committee conducted a cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matters estimates hearing on 22 February 2019 in accordance with a Senate agreement of 28 November 2018.³

1.5 The committee heard evidence from the following senators:

- Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Regional Services, Sport, Local Government and Decentralisation, representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport; and

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 140, 14 February 2019, p. 4692.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 133, 29 November 2018, p. 4329.

3 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 132, 28 November 2018, p. 4287.

- Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, representing the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources.

1.6 Evidence was also provided by:

- Dr Steven Kennedy, Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities;
- Mr Daryl Quinlivan, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources;
- 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.

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

Questions on notice and Hansard transcript

1.8 In accordance with standing order 26(9)(a), the committee set 29 March 2019, as the date for the return of written answers or additional information, in response to questions placed on notice during the hearings.

1.9 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

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

Answers to questions on notice – Supplementary Budget Estimates 2018–19

1.11 The committee undertook supplementary budget estimates hearings on 22 and 23 October 2018 for the Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio and the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio. On 26 October 2018, the committee examined cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matters. The committee set 7 December 2018 as the deadline for return of answers to questions on notice.

1.12 The Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio took 172 questions on notice. The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio took 159 questions on notice. The Environment and Energy portfolio took 5 questions on notice.

Timeliness of answers to questions on notice

1.13 The Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio submitted 154 responses to questions by the deadline. The remaining answers were received gradually throughout December 2018 and until 4 February 2019.

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

1.15 The Environment and Energy portfolio submitted all responses to questions by the deadline.

Note on references

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

