

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 8 May 2018, 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 expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2019 [Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2018–19]; and
- particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2019 [Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2018–19].¹

1.2 The committee is required to examine the 2018–19 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 26 June 2018.²

Additional estimates hearings

1.3 The committee examined witnesses from the Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio on 21 and 22 May 2018, and witnesses from the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio on 23 and 24 May 2018. In addition, the committee conducted a cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matters estimates hearing on 25 May 2018 in accordance with a Senate agreement of 15 November 2017.³

1.4 The committee heard evidence from the following senators:

- Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport; and
- Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, representing the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources.

1.5 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

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 95, 8 May 2018, p. 3033.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 70, 15 November 2017, p. 2228.

3 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 70, 15 November 2017, p. 2227.

- officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

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

Questions on notice and Hansard transcript

1.7 In accordance with standing order 26(9)(a), the committee set 6 July 2018, as the date for the return of written answers or additional information, in response to questions placed on notice during the 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 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

1.9 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 – additional estimates 2017–18

1.10 The committee undertook additional estimates hearings on 26 and 27 February 2018 for the Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio and the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio. On 2 March 2018, the committee examined cross-portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matters. The committee set 13 April 2018 as the deadline for return of answers to questions on notice.

1.11 The Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio took 128 questions on notice. The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio took 212 questions on notice. The Environment and Energy portfolio took 13 questions on notice in the cross-portfolio hearings.

Timeliness of answers to questions on notice

1.12 The Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities portfolio did not submit any responses by the deadline. All responses were provided on 9 and 10 May 2018.

1.13 The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio did not submit any responses by the deadline. All responses were provided on 10 May 2018.

1.14 The Environment and Energy portfolio submitted ten responses by the deadline. All responses were received by 17 April 2018.

Note on references

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