

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE  
AND TRADE  
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**SCRUTINY OF ANNUAL REPORTS**

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# CONTENTS

<i>Membership of the Committee</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Contents</i>	<i>iii</i>
<b><i>Chapter 1:</i></b> Introduction	1
<b><i>Chapter 2:</i></b> Annual reports by departments	
Department of Defence	5
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	6
Department of Veterans' Affairs, Repatriation Commission and the National Treatment Monitoring Committee	8
<b><i>Chapter 3:</i></b> Annual reports by statutory and non-statutory authorities	
<i>Statutory authorities</i>	
<u>Defence portfolio</u>	
Army and Airforce Canteen Service	11
Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund	12
Australian War Memorial	12
Commonwealth and Defence Force Ombudsman	13
Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal	14
Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Authority	15
Judge Advocate General (JAG)	15
Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme	16
Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA)	17
Royal Australian Air Force Veterans' Residences Trust Fund	18
Royal Australian Air Force Welfare Trust Fund	19
Royal Australian Navy Relief Trust Fund	20
Veterans' Review Board	20

*Statutory authorities*

Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio

Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office (ASNO) 22

Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) 23

*Non statutory authorities*

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) 24

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Committee is responsible for examining annual reports of departments and agencies within two portfolios: Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence (including the Department of Veterans' Affairs).

1.2 Under Standing Order 25 (21), the Committee is required to report on annual reports tabled by 31 October each year by the tenth sitting day of the following year, and on reports tabled by 30 April each year by the tenth sitting day after 30 June of that year.

1.3 The following annual reports are examined by the Committee in this review:

### Annual reports of departments

Department of Defence

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Department of Veterans' Affairs, Repatriation Commission

and the National Treatment Monitoring Committee

### Reports of statutory authorities

#### *Defence Portfolio*

Army and Airforce Canteen Service

Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund

Australian War Memorial

Commonwealth and Defence Force Ombudsman

Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Authority

Judge Advocate General

Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme

Repatriation Medical Authority

Royal Australian Air Force Veterans' Residences Trust Fund

Royal Australian Air Force Welfare Trust Fund  
Royal Australian Navy Relief Trust Fund  
Veterans' Review Board

#### Reports of Statutory Authorities

##### *Foreign Affairs and Trade Portfolio*

Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office  
Australian Trade Commission (Austrade)

#### Reports of non-statutory authorities and government companies

##### *Foreign Affairs and Trade Portfolio*

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)

#### **Assessment of annual reports**

1.4 The annual reports have been examined by the Committee to determine whether they are 'apparently satisfactory', as required by the Senate resolution of 24 August 1994. In the process of assessment, the Committee has considered whether the reports comply with the relevant requirements for the annual reports of departments or authorities.

1.5 Departments are required to adhere to the *Requirements for Departmental Annual Reports, March 1994* (updated April 1998) issued by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and approved by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit in June 1998.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the revised *Guidelines* was to make reports 'the key accountability document for reviewing actual outcomes for the past financial year'. Together with Portfolio Budget Statements and Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements, annual reports are meant to enhance government communication with Parliament and so 'to make more meaningful their accountability relationships'.

1.6 The amendments required that annual reports should:

- focus on outcomes, including social justice outcomes;
- provide clear links between strategies, outcomes and program objectives; and
- be concise, readily understandable and balanced.

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1 From now on referred to as *Requirements* (1998).



1.7 On 18 March 1994, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet informed departments that:

Commonwealth authorities whose operations are similar to those of departments should consult these revised requirements [for Departmental annual reports] and comply with them—as well as with the 1982 *Guidelines for the Content, Preparation and Presentation of Annual Reports by Statutory Authorities*—as far as is appropriate to do so.

1.8 Requirements for non-statutory authorities were outlined in the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Government Operation's report tabled in August 1986, and modified in 1987. Statutory authorities whose operations are not similar to those of departments are to follow the *Guidelines for the Content, Preparation and Presentation of Annual Reports by Statutory Authorities* (1982).<sup>2</sup>

1.9 Legislation committees are also required by the Senate Standing Orders to investigate and report any lateness in the preparation of annual reports.

### **General comments on the annual reports**

1.10 The Committee was pleased to observe that the majority of reports are well designed and effectively describe and assess the work of the departments, authorities and companies within the two portfolios.

1.11 The Committee is pleased to see that all three departments are now, generally, assessing performance as required by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet requirements for departmental annual reports. Nevertheless, there is still scope for further refinements, especially in the area of frank self-assessment of performance.

1.12 Subject to the comments made in the individual assessments following in the body of this report, the Committee found the annual reports considered in this report to be 'apparently satisfactory'.

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2 From now on referred to as *Guidelines* (1982).



## CHAPTER 2

### ANNUAL REPORTS OF DEPARTMENTS

#### Department of Defence

2.1 The *Defence Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 31 October 2000.

2.2 The Committee noted that the structure of the report had changed with the introduction of accrual budgeting. Rather than having 14 groups, as was the case in 1998–99, Defence has moved to one outcome and 22 outputs. Other information, which was in the previous year included in the 14 groups and now not specifically dealt with in the outputs, is contained in other parts of the report. The 22 outputs, major capital equipment and significant major facilities all have their performance measured.

2.3 Dr Allan Hawke, Secretary of the Department of Defence and Admiral Chris Barrie, AO RAN, Chief of the Defence Force, in their joint review of the year, stated that the ‘year has been characterised by the breadth and complexity of challenges facing Defence, the foremost of which has been the Australian Defence Force’s operations in support of the United Nations in East Timor’. At its peak, more than 6,000 Australian personnel were deployed in East Timor as part of Interfet.<sup>1</sup>

2.4 Dr Hawke and Admiral Barrie also said that ‘We have recognised, in particular, that our relationships with Ministers, the Government, the Parliament, the central agencies and industry are not what they should be. We accept this credibility problem and that improved performance over the whole spectrum of our activities is essential to restoring confidence in the Defence organisation. This is primarily an issue of leadership and requires an improvement in accountability, by bringing the organisational, accountability and financial structures into alignment.’ They outlined initiatives to bring about that alignment.<sup>2</sup>

2.5 Defence has improved the design and production of the report, giving it a very professional appearance. Despite the size and complexity of the Defence Organisation, it is relatively easy to find specific information in the report. The report is generally well written but, in places, lapses into jargon or uses terms only used within Defence. This can be disconcerting to non-Defence readers who have a legitimate right to easily understand the annual report.

2.6 For each item listed in the three areas where performance is measured, the degree to which the forecast was achieved is indicated. Reasons are given for partial or non-performance. However, some notes associated with performance are somewhat cryptic and do not explain the nature of the problem and why it occurred. For example, in Output 10

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1 Department of Defence Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 3

2 Department of Defence Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 6

(page 209), special forces minimum level of capability was only partially achieved. The relevant note states that the ‘manning of the part-time component is an ongoing issue’. The relevant part of the accompanying overview was not much more enlightening: ‘A number of initiatives have been developed to address manpower requirements associated with surge capacity within some units, especially part-time components, in times of high operational tempo’. One can guess at the nature of the problem but a little elaboration of the issue concerning part-time personnel would give the reader a better understanding of the real problem. What appears to be a similar problem in Output 11 is explained more fully in note one on page 214.

2.7 Despite such relatively minor criticisms, Defence has met the requirement to measure performance of its outputs and some other areas. The Committee finds that the report fulfils all the requirements of departmental annual reports.

### **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

2.8 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Annual Report 1999–2000 was tabled in the Senate on 30 October 2000.

2.9 The Secretary of the Department, Dr Ashton Calvert, in his review of the year, drew attention to the East Timor ballot and subsequent violence and massive destruction as one of the ‘greatest foreign policy challenges to Australia in recent history’. Australia played a central role in generating international support for the deployment of Interfet, which was mandated by the United Nations Security Council and agreed to by the Indonesian Government.<sup>3</sup>

2.10 Political crises in Fiji and the Solomon Islands also placed demands on the Department in the latter part of the year. The visit to Australia in September 1999 by President Jiang Zemin was the first visit by a Chinese head of state and represented a high point in our relations with China. However, the failure of the Seattle ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization in December 1999 was a setback to efforts to launch a new round of multilateral trade negotiations.<sup>4</sup>

2.11 For several years, the Committee has criticised the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in its scrutiny of annual reports for not addressing adequately the departmental performance requirements contained in the guidelines for departmental reports, which are issued by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Over that time, the Committee has noted incremental improvements each year but, in this annual report, the Committee is pleased to note a quantum leap in compliance with the departmental guidelines in this area.

2.12 The performance indicators themselves were generally more appropriate than in previous years. The Committee understands that establishing performance indicators is not an easy task for a department like DFAT, especially as DFAT often does not have control over the environment in which it operates. Inevitably some indicators will always be overtaken by events, as the indicators are formed 15 months or more before the end of the reporting period. Circumstances can change rapidly in many parts of the world and, when they do, DFAT has to reassess its goals and performance indicators. The unattainability or

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3 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 3

4 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 4, 5

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irrelevance of particular indicators, as a result of being overtaken by events, should be explained briefly in the annual report.

2.13 The committee noted that, generally, there was a marked improvement in addressing performance indicators in this report. There appears to be a more resolute effort to apply indicators to performance across the board.

2.14 In previous years, the Committee has drawn the Department's attention to the fact that it was supposed to be reporting on its performance in its annual report and not that of Ministers or the government, even though ministerial activity during the year would always form part of the record. Throughout this report, there was a pleasing focus on the Department's activities and the Department's support of Ministers rather than focussing on Ministers themselves.<sup>5</sup>

2.15 The Committee understands the reluctance of the Department to draw attention to activities, processes or policies that did not go well during the year. There were references in the report to goals not being met and activities that failed to meet expectations. However, they were exceptions to the rule. The Committee finds it difficult to believe that there were so few hiccups in performance in the Department. The Committee reminds the Department that it is required to provide a frank assessment of its performance over the year. The inclusion of more things that did not go well would only bring a greater touch of reality to the report and would not diminish the reputation of the Department. More often than not, such things would already be published elsewhere or known to readers of the report.

2.16 This annual report has improved its appearance through the use of both black and blue ink (rather than just blue ink in the previous report) and more pronounced shades of colour. The report's straightforward structure and clear delineation between sections makes it easy to find information in the report.

2.17 The report is well written and easily comprehensible, even in the more technical areas. It is admirably concise in many areas, enabling a lot of information to be included in the report without it becoming unwieldy.

2.18 It is clear that DFAT has taken account of the Committee's criticisms of previous annual reports and has made a considerable effort to comply with departmental guidelines in this annual report. The Committee commends DFAT for the coordinated effort required to achieve the uniform approach evident in this report and for its design and production.

2.19 The Committee also finds that DFAT has met the other standard requirements for departmental reports.

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5 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 27

## Department of Veterans' Affairs

2.20 The Repatriation Commission, Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and the National Treatment Monitoring Committee Annual Reports 1999–2000 was tabled in the Senate on 30 October 2000.

2.21 The Repatriation Commission is responsible under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* for the granting of pensions, allowances and other benefits, providing treatment and other services and, generally, administering the Act. The Department of Veterans' Affairs provides administrative support to the Repatriation Commission in discharging its responsibilities to veterans and other entitled people.<sup>6</sup>

2.22 Dr Neil Johnston, the President of the Commission and Secretary of the Department, drew attention to the restructuring of services to take account of the changing demand for services. Compensation claims appear to be declining while demand for health services is not expected to peak for another several years. A review of veterans' health services in the previous financial year resulted in the establishment of the Veterans' Home Care program.<sup>7</sup>

2.23 Dr Johnston commented on the strong interest in Australia's military heritage, which was exemplified by the record attendance on Anzac Day at the dedication of the new ANZAC commemorative site at Gallipoli. There were also strong attendances at the dedication of the Australian Service Nurses National Memorial and the Australian National Korean War Memorial in Canberra. He also noted that October 1999 marked the centenary of the beginning of the Boer War.<sup>8</sup>

2.24 Although it is easier for a service department to measure performance against performance indicators than, say, a department like DFAT, nevertheless, the DVA devoted more than 30 pages to performance outcomes in a separate chapter. Inevitably, there was a focus on quantitative performance measures but qualitative measures, such as client surveys, were also used. The Committee noted that the time taken to process a new income support claim fell to 30 days, which reflected a 36 per cent fall in new cases compared with the previous year. The amount of time to process a pensioner-initiated review fell from 29 days in 1996–97 to 11 days in 1999–2000. The critical error rate of 3.9 per cent in 1999–2000 has remained approximately the same as the two preceding years, which registered 4 per cent.<sup>9</sup>

2.25 The National Treatment Monitoring Committee (NATMOC) was established by the Repatriation Commission to monitor the integration or sale of the repatriation general hospitals. Following integration, the NATMOC and State monitoring committees monitor the standard of health care and the range of services available to veterans, war widows/widowers and dependants throughout Australia. The report outlines the range of significant matters that NATMOC focussed on over the year under review.<sup>10</sup>

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6 Repatriation Commission Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 5

7 Department of Veterans' Affairs Annual Report 1999–2000, p. ix

8 Department of Veterans' Affairs Annual Report 1999–2000, p. x

9 Department of Veterans' Affairs Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 121–152

10 National Treatment Monitoring Committee Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 193

2.26 Overall, the report is again well produced and easy to use. The Committee finds that it meets all the requirements for departmental reports.





## CHAPTER 3

### ANNUAL REPORTS BY STATUTORY, NON-STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND GOVERNMENT COMPANIES

#### STATUTORY AUTHORITIES

##### *Defence portfolio*

##### **Army and Air Force Canteen Service**

3.1 The *Army and Air Force Canteen Service Board of Management Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 31 October 2000. The report is tabled in accordance with section 9 of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*.

3.2 The Army and Air Force Canteen Service (AAFCANS) was established by regulations under the *Defence Act 1903*. The mission of the organisation is ‘within the Australian Defence community, provide quality, competitively priced and convenient consumer and leisure goods and services and generate a satisfactory financial return to stakeholders’ The Board adopted the trade name ‘Frontline Defence Services’ (‘Frontline’) in 1997 as part of a major business realignment.<sup>1</sup>

3.3 In 1998, the Board reported that a review (Kelly Review) had been commissioned to examine personnel support, including canteen services.<sup>2</sup> In support of recommendations arising from the review, AAFCANS expressed two aims for the future. One was to explore and develop new business opportunities (for example, support to exercises and operations). The other was to extract the benefits of a national approach particularly in dealings with key suppliers and to improve the facilities from which the business operates at Defence installations. The Committee notes that the Board ‘is working hard to continue the restructure of the business’ to achieve these objectives.<sup>3</sup>

3.4 In this report the Board described the establishment in 1999 of a retail facility in support of the Australian Defence Force Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville. The Board also received a request to replicate that arrangement in support of INTERFET. The Service reported that both operations, in their various forms, continue to be successful, both in the services they provide and the profits generated.<sup>4</sup>

3.5 The 1999–2000 report is an informative account of the operations and performance of AAFCANS. The Committee finds that this report fulfils all requirements outlined in the guidelines for statutory bodies.

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1 Army and Air Force Canteen Service Board of Management Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 1, 3, 23

2 Army and Air Force Canteen Service Board of Management Annual Report 1998–1999, p. 7; Management Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 5, 6

3 Army and Air Force Canteen Service Board of Management Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 3, 9

4 Army and Air Force Canteen Service Board of Management Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 4–6, 7, 18

### **Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund**

3.6 *The Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 31 October 2000. The report is submitted in accordance with section 9 of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*.

3.7 The Military Forces Relief Trust Fund was established by the *Services Trust Funds Act 1947*. The Fund provides financial services to members who have served in the Army, or in association with the Army. The benefits to members and their families are in the form of low interest loans and welfare grants.<sup>5</sup>

3.8 During the year under review the Trustees provided interest free loans totalling \$777, 541 to 252 clients and approved grants totalling \$22,429.<sup>6</sup>

3.9 The Trustees again reported that the continuing impact of the Defence Reform Program is likely to reduce the capacity of regional committees to continue providing assistance to the Fund. The Trustees continued to examine alternative arrangements to ensure that eligible clients are not compromised in their ability to access Fund benefits.<sup>7</sup>

3.10 The Trustees reported no significant changes to the Fund's state of affairs or principle activities during the period under review.<sup>8</sup>

3.11 The report clearly describes the operation and financial position of the fund for the reporting period. The Committee finds that the report adequately complies with all reporting requirements for statutory authorities.

### **Australian War Memorial**

3.12 *The Australian War Memorial Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 11 October 2000. It was prepared under section 36 of the *Australian War Memorial Act 1980* and under section 9 of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies (CAC) Act 1997*.

3.13 The purpose of the Australian War Memorial (AWM) is to commemorate the sacrifice of those Australians who have died in war, and, 'to assist Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society'.<sup>9</sup>

3.14 The Chairman of the Council noted in the report for 1999–2000 noted that the Memorial achieved outstanding success during 1999–2000, with 'significant progress across a variety of projects'. Two major development projects, in particular, progressed well. The refurbishment of Bradbury Aircraft Hall was expected to be completed and open to the public in August 2000 with a new exhibition 'air power in the Pacific 1942–1953'. 'Six complete aircraft will be shown in dramatic presentations with another three being partly displayed'.

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5 Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 2

6 Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 4

7 Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 2

8 Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 2

9 Australian War Memorial Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 1

3.15 The other major development project—the design and construction of the new exhibition facility, ANZAC Hall, was begun in March 2000, and on target for completion by ANZAC Day 2001. The report noted that ‘the floor exhibition is planned to interpret large relics dramatically using sound, light, and images in “object-theatre”’. This will take place in stages over a number of years.<sup>10</sup>

3.16 The Committee notes that travelling exhibitions program continued throughout the year. ‘The newest exhibition *Out in the cold: Australia’s involvement in the Korean War*, was developed to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Korean War’. It coincided with the dedication of the Korean War memorial on ANZAC Parade.<sup>11</sup>

3.17 The Australian War Memorial continues to present a well written and designed report. The Memorial provides a comprehensive account of each major activity, detailing performance targets and outcomes as well as disclosing operational problems where relevant. The appendices provide comprehensive information on staffing matters, publications and papers produced during the reporting period, VIP visits and gallery talks.

3.18 The Committee commends the Australian War memorial on a quality document that complies with the reporting requirements for statutory bodies.

### **Commonwealth and Defence Force Ombudsman**

3.19 The *Commonwealth Ombudsman Annual Report 1999–2000* was presented to the Temporary Chair of Committees on 25 October and tabled in the Senate on 30 October 2000. In accordance with section 19F(3) of the *Ombudsman Act 1976*, the report contains the seventeenth Defence Force Ombudsman’s Annual Report.

3.20 The role of the Ombudsman’s office is to consider complaints from people who believe they have been adversely affected by defective administration of Commonwealth Government departments or agencies. The office will ‘investigate complaints where appropriate and aim to resolve complaints in an impartial and effective way and achieve fair outcomes’.<sup>12</sup> The Act establishes the office of the Defence Force Ombudsman to investigate employment matters relating to members of the Australia Defence Force (ADF). The Committee considered only the parts of the report or general data relevant to the defence portfolio.<sup>13</sup>

3.21 In this year’s report the Defence Force Ombudsman (DFO) reported on matters relating to timeliness—both in the redress system for ADF members and the response time by the Department of Defence to inquiries from the DFO’s office. In the case of redress for ADF members, there was agreement with the Department of Defence ‘that there should be a joint review of the redress system and the DFO’s interaction with that system’ Also, information

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10 Australian War Memorial Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 2, 7, 8

11 Australian War Memorial Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 8

12 Internet site: [http://www.comb.gov.au/publications/service\\_charter/Charter2.html](http://www.comb.gov.au/publications/service_charter/Charter2.html)

13 Commonwealth Ombudsman Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 61

was distributed through the three service newspapers as a way of educating ADF members on their rights and obligations under the redress system.<sup>14</sup>

3.22 The Committee noted that the matter of the time taken for the Department of Defence to respond to inquiries from the DFO caused continuing concern to the Ombudsman and his senior officers. After a personal complaint to the Chief of the Defence Force in one instance, DFO's office adopted the strategy of personal representations to the responsible Defence areas to resolve the more difficult issues. The DFO reported that this approach 'will hopefully promote better understanding of alternative viewpoints and encourage less formal day to day relations. ... Towards the end of the reporting period an improvement in turnaround time became apparent.'<sup>15</sup>

3.23 The 1999–2000 report is an informative account of the operations and performance of the Commonwealth and Defence Ombudsman. In particular, the detailed nature of the performance report informed the reader of the commitment to client service and the extent and complex nature of the work of the Ombudsman's office.<sup>16</sup> The Committee finds that this report fulfils all requirements outlined in the *Guidelines* for statutory bodies.

### **Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal**

3.24 The *Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal Fifteenth Report 1999–2000* was presented to the President of the Senate 24 October 2000 and tabled in the Senate on 30 October 2000. The Tribunal was established in 1984 under section 58H of the *Defence Act 1903*. The functions of the Tribunal under the act, are 'to inquire into and determine the salaries and relevant allowances to be paid to members of the ADF, and, to inquire into and make determinations in respect of prescribed matters that have been referred to the Tribunal'.<sup>17</sup>

3.25 The Tribunal consists of three members appointed by the Governor-General. The President must be a presidential member of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. The other members are to include a person who is experienced in industrial relations matters and a person who has been a member of the Australian Defence Force (ADF).<sup>18</sup>

3.26 The Tribunal considers that 'in all its work it has regard to the special nature of ADF employment and the need to ensure that ADF members are treated fairly and equitably. The independent judgement and scrutiny which the Tribunal brings to the determination of matters coming before it is an important safeguard for the ADF, and in particular, for its members'.<sup>19</sup>

3.27 In its report, the Tribunal provided a brief yet thorough account of all 'matters considered' during the reporting year. It disclosed information on the outcomes of each

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14 Commonwealth Ombudsman Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 61, 62

15 Commonwealth Ombudsman Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 61, 62

16 Commonwealth Ombudsman Annual Report 1998–99, pp. 10–24

17 Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal Fifteenth Report 1999–2000, p. 1

18 Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal Fifteenth Report 1999–2000, p. 2

19 Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal Fifteenth Report 1999–2000, p. 6

review and on the negotiating process that occurred between the parties involved. The Tribunal also described the various inspections and visits which were conducted as part of their decision-making process.<sup>20</sup>

3.28 The Tribunal has again presented a report that is well structured and provides clear and concise information in an ‘easy-to-use’ format. The Committee finds that this report complies with all requirements outlined in the *Guidelines* (1982) for statutory bodies.

### **Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Authority**

3.29 The *Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Authority Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 31 October 2000. The report is submitted in accordance with section 16(1) of the *Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Act 1973*.

3.30 The Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Authority (DFRDB) came into operation on 1 October 1972 under the *Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Act 1973*. It is a fully defined unfunded superannuation scheme which is governed by the DFEDB Authority. Day-to-day administration is provided by ComSuper. Although closed to new members in 1991, the scheme continues to provide benefits for existing members.<sup>21</sup>

3.31 The Committee notes that the Authority considered a report from ComSuper on the efficiency and effectiveness of the systems and procedures used in the administration of the DFRDB Scheme. In particular, it ‘noted improvements in the delivery of services such as processing of invalidity cases and distribution of annual statements. The Authority endorsed higher standards of service for the call centre to reach, and tighter timeframes for future distribution of annual statements...’<sup>22</sup>

3.32 Throughout the report the Authority has again used a table format as an evaluation tool for its client services. The Committee considers this to be a well-written, easy-to-use report which informs the reader of the financial and statistics gathering operations of the organisation.<sup>23</sup>

3.33 Although a statutory body, the Authority aims to comply, where applicable, with the Requirements for Department Annual Reports. The Committee finds that this report complies with all requirements outlined in the *Guidelines* (1982) for statutory bodies.

### **Judge Advocate General (JAG)**

3.34 The Judge Advocate General Report for the period 1 January to 31 December 1999 was tabled in the Senate on 15 August 2000.

3.35 The office of Judge Advocate General (JAG) of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) was created by the *Defence Force Discipline Act 1982*. The JAG is an office held only by a Federal Court or a Supreme Court judge. The position has a number of functions, including

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20 Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal Fifteenth Report 1999–20090, pp. 7–15

21 Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Authority Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 1–3

22 Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Authority Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 7

23 Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Authority Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 7, 9–31

making procedural rules for service tribunals, providing the final legal review of proceedings within the Australian Defence Force, and, reporting upon the operation of laws relating to the discipline of the ADF. ‘The JAG also has a role in the promotion of the jurisprudential welfare and education of the ADF together with the exercise of a beneficial influence upon the legal structure within it.’<sup>24</sup>

3.36 In his 1998 report the JAG outlined the key changes to the military justice system recommended in the Abadee Report. During 1998–1999, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade also inquired into and reported on military justice procedures. The recommendations in these reports have formed the basis of changes which have been, and will continue to be, implemented in the future. The Committee notes that two important recommendations contained in both reports are being progressively implemented. They relate to administrative policy and procedures, and training of officers involved in the administration of military justice.<sup>25</sup>

3.37 The JAG went on to report that ‘the development of ADF prosecution guidelines has progressed to the stage where a Defence Instruction containing the ADF Prosecution Policy will be promulgated in the very near future’. The progress of these guidelines was held in abeyance pending the findings of the Joint Sub-Committee, which favourably endorsed the development of such guidelines. The JAG is ‘confident that the policy will provide valuable guidance to convening authorities and assist in providing a consistency of approach to prosecution with the ADF’.<sup>26</sup>

3.38 The report is clearly a written account of the operations and performance of the office of the Judge Advocate General. The Committee finds that this report fulfils all requirements outlined in the *Guidelines* for statutory bodies.

### **Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme**

3.39 The *Military Superannuation and Benefits Board of Trustees No. 1 Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 31 October 2000.

3.40 The Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme (MSBS) was established on 1 October 1991 under section 26 of the *Military Superannuation and Benefits Act 1991*, to replace the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme (DFRDB) for new contributors. The MSBS is administered by ComSuper (Commonwealth Superannuation Administration) on behalf of the Board.<sup>27</sup> The compliance index flags the functions and responsibilities undertaken by ComSuper as part of their administration of MSBS. The reporting requirements met by ComSuper are covered in the *Commissioner for Superannuation Annual Report 1999–2000*.<sup>28</sup>

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24 Judge Advocate General Annual Report 1999, p. 1

25 Judge Advocate General Annual Report 1999, pp. 2–5

26 Judge Advocate General Annual Report 1999, p. 5

27 Military Superannuation and Benefits Board of Trustees No. 1 Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 1

28 Military Superannuation and Benefits Board of Trustees No. 1 Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 101

3.41 The Chairman reported that the Fund again experienced a challenging year. Investment markets were dominated by the impact of new technology and the changing interest rate outlook for Australia and the USA. Although markets were unsettled overall returns were strong. The Fund's long-term objective is to exceed inflation, on average, by at least 5%. This year's performance was ahead of this objective.<sup>29</sup>

3.42 The Committee notes that the Board has adopted the practice of annual review of the MSB Fund's investment objectives and strategy. In February 2000, the Board, with the assistance of its investment adviser and portfolio manager and its administrator, undertook a number of review processes. As a result of the reviews, the Board took a number of key investment and management decisions which will be more appropriate to the needs of MSB members and the administration of the organisation.<sup>30</sup>

3.43 Throughout the report the Fund has used a table format to demonstrate how the organisation measured and evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided to its clients. The Fund has also used graphs and tables to present statistics on the operations of the organisation for the year in review. The Committee considers this to be a well-written, easy-to-use report which informs the reader of the financial and statistics gathering operations of the organisation. The Committee find that the report complies with the reporting requirements for statutory authorities.<sup>31</sup>

### **Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA)**

3.44 The *Repatriation Medical Authority Sixth Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 4 October 2000. The Repatriation Medical Authority was established on 30 June 1994 under section 196B of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.

3.45 The major function of the RMA is to determine Statements of Principles (SOPs) in respect of particular kinds of injury, disease or death, in order for the Repatriation Commission to assess claims for disability pensions for veterans and their dependents. The RMA can also conduct investigations either on its own initiative or when it receives a request ... in respect of a particular kind of injury, disease or death. Investigations may lead to the determination of a new Statement of Principles, or amendment to an existing Statement of Principle.<sup>32</sup>

3.46 During the reporting period the Authority met formally on ten occasions and determined forty Statements of Principles. Thirty-two new Statements of Principles replaced thirty-four existing statements and seven existing amendments. There were no amendments of previously determined SOPs. Since the inception of the Authority 263 Statements of Principles have been determined for particular kinds of injury or disease.<sup>33</sup>

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29 Military Superannuation ... Annual Report 1999–2000, p. viii

30 Military Superannuation ... Annual Report 1998–99, pp. viii, ix, x

31 Military Superannuation ... Annual Report 1998–99, pp. 23–60

32 Repatriation Medical Authority Sixth Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 2, 3

33 Repatriation Medical Authority Sixth Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 6, 7

3.47 The Committee notes that the Authority is coping with an increasing number of requests for investigations into current and new SOPs. This is placing ‘a substantial strain on the resources of the RMA...which is being forced to develop processes to establish priorities for the lists of requests awaiting review’. The Authority reported that the issue of increasing workloads could lead to either unacceptable delays or a need for significant extra resources if it continues. It is currently the subject of legislative review following recommendations of the Pearce Report on the RMA.<sup>34</sup>

3.48 The RMA initiated two major projects during the year. It hosted a workshop in Brisbane in July 1999 to examine aspects of Australian anti-malarial experimentation conducted by the Australian Army in North Queensland between 1943–1945. This followed a request by the Minister and the Repatriation Commission to investigate the relationship between a number of diseases and exposure to various drugs that were used in these anti-malarial drug trials. The RMA reports that ‘the presentations and detailed background papers are to be made available in the final report of the investigation.’<sup>35</sup>

3.49 The Authority also received a request to develop a SOP concerning Gulf War syndrome. As part of its investigation into the matter the Authority conducted a workshop in March 2000 which was well-attended by the RMA, Defence and Veterans’ Affairs officials, ex-service organisations and members of the veteran community. The Authority reported that it ‘will consider the possibility of hosting an international working group later in the year to closely consider the Australian and world research in this area’.<sup>36</sup>

3.50 The RMA continued to provide a good overview of the organisation and its functions by presenting a brief, but informative outline of major objectives and outcomes achieved over the reporting period. The report also provided a useful table showing the Statements of Principles approved for 1999–2000.<sup>37</sup> The Committee finds that the Authority’s sixth report is concise and clearly written and complies with the reporting requirements for statutory bodies as outlined in the *1982 Guidelines*.

### **Royal Australian Air Force Veterans’ Residences Trust Fund**

3.51 The *Royal Australian Air Force Veterans’ Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 31 October 2000. The report was submitted to the Minister and subsequently tabled within the period of time prescribed in section 10A of the *Royal Australian Air Force Veterans’ Residences Act 1953*.

3.52 The Trust operated in the five eastern states to provide accommodation for ex-RAAF veterans and their families in difficult circumstances. The Trust owned 67 residences comprising one bedroom and two bedroom self-contained units in six locations.<sup>38</sup>

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34 Repatriation Medical Authority Sixth Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 5

35 Repatriation Medical Authority Sixth Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 10, 11

36 Repatriation Medical Authority Sixth Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 11–12

37 Repatriation Medical Authority Sixth Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 2–3, appendix 2

38 Royal Australian Air Force Veterans’ Residences Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 2, 5–7



3.53 The Chairman of the Trust reported that a number of changes in accounting policies initiated by government in 1998–99 are still having an impact on the Trust’s financial statements. The Trust recommended that ‘an effective comparison of the 1999–2000 results is best gained by a check of the average results for the last five years prior to 1998–99. By adjusting the surplus for 1999–00 (\$78,593) with the increase in depreciation (\$48,227) effective from 1998–99, the outcome for this financial year would have been to the order of \$126,810. This compares favourably with the average surplus of \$135,937 for the five years 1993–98.’<sup>39</sup>

3.54 The Committee notes that for the period 1999–2000 there was an increase in operating costs (a \$16,640 increase) and repair and maintenance charges (increased by \$6,793). However, there was a \$34,462 increase in revenue receipts over the previous year.

3.55 The Chairman reported that the Trust is committed to the policy of providing the organisation with strong administration. This is achieved by ‘maintaining a high level of preventative maintenance and to the provision of facilities which enhance tenant quality of life, their security and peace of mind.’ through good management of its accommodation, long term strategies to acquire more property and a high level of preventative maintenance of current stock.’<sup>40</sup>

3.56 The Committee finds the report is clearly written and complies with all the reporting requirements for statutory authorities.

### **Royal Australian Air Force Welfare Trust Fund**

3.57 The *Royal Australian Air Force Welfare Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 31 October 2000 in compliance with reporting requirements under section 34 of the *Services Trust Funds Act 1947*.

3.58 Since its inception in 1947, as part of the RAAF Chaplain Branch program, the Trust Fund has contributed to the welfare and morale of RAAF members and ex-serving members and their families by providing loans or grants to them in times of need. The Fund’s head office is in Canberra and is supported by a network of regional committees. The committees are usually located at each RAAF base to provide benefits to eligible persons in Australia and to RAAF personnel based overseas.<sup>41</sup>

3.59 The Committee notes that the total number and value of loans approved for the reporting period was down on previous years (2,834 loans compared with 3,081 for the previous year). The Trustees again attribute this to a reduction in the numbers of RAAF personnel. The total value of loans approved for the year was \$6,215,206. Applicants applied for loans mainly for group life assurance (43% of total loans) followed by home improvements (29% of total loans).<sup>42</sup>

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39 Royal Australian Air Force Veterans’ Residences Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 2

40 Royal Australian Air Force Veterans’ Residences Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 2, 3

41 Royal Australian Air Force Veterans’ Welfare Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 4

42 Royal Australian Air Force Veterans’ Welfare Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 5–6

3.60 The Committee finds that the report clearly describes the Trust's activities for the year and complies with all reporting requirements for statutory authorities.

### **Royal Australian Navy Relief Trust Fund**

3.61 The *Royal Australian Navy Relief Trust Fund Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 31 October 2000. The Trustees of the Fund submitted their report under the terms of section 34 of the *Services Trust Funds Act 1947*.

3.62 The Navy Trust Fund was established to provide assistance to eligible serving members and ex-members of the service and their dependants by means of interest free loans or grants.<sup>43</sup>

3.63 During the period July 1999 through to June 2000, the Fund approved loans to the value of \$3,275,231. Purchase of furniture, followed by housing were the main reasons members applied for loans. Grants for assistance upon the death of a serving member amounted to \$12,000. The Fund also paid out grants totalling \$18,505 to assist twenty-six families through the home management services scheme. This service provides assistance to naval families in times of crisis through illness and other emergencies.<sup>44</sup>

3.64 The report clearly sets out the Trust's financial operations. The Committee finds that the report complies with all reporting requirements for statutory authorities as outlined in the 1982 *Guidelines*.

### **Veterans' Review Board**

3.65 The *Veterans' Review Board Annual Report 1999–2000* was presented to the Temporary Chair of Committees on 25 October 2000 and tabled in the Senate on 30 October 2000.

3.66 The Veterans' Review Board (VRB) was established by the *Repatriation Legislation Amendment Act 1984*. It began operations in 1985 to implement the Government's decision to adopt the recommendations of the Administrative Review Council. The main recommendation of the Council was that a statutory review body be established to review the merits of the primary case decisions made by delegates of the Repatriation Commission on claims for pension. Decisions of the VRB must be made under and in accordance with Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986. Upon its establishment, the VRB adopted the aim of doing all it could to ensure that those seeking a review receive quickly their proper entitlement under Repatriation law.<sup>45</sup>

3.67 The Board reported that the VRB 'finalised high numbers of applications for review at a rate which exceeded lodgement of new applications... decisions and reasons were of a consistent professional quality with a complaint rate across all activities ...registering below

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43 Royal Australian Navy Relief Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 2

44 Royal Australian Navy Relief Trust Fund Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 3, 4

45 Veterans' Review Board Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 7, 8

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one-third of 1%'. The VRB managed in excess of 15,000 files for the year and supported and conducted almost 6,000 hearings.<sup>46</sup>

3.68 The Committee notes the VRB's intention to structure future annual reports on an 'outcomes' format to facilitate greater accountability in the VRB operations. As an interim measure the 1999–2000 report presented performance measures as five desired outcomes with a summary of VRB's performance for the year. The Committee looks forward to the new report format and continued critical analysis by the organisation of its service delivery.<sup>47</sup>

3.69 The Committee considers this annual report to be well produced and is written in a clear and concise manner, with good use made of tables. The Committee finds that the report complies with all reporting requirements for statutory authorities as outlined in the 1982 *Guidelines*.

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46 Veterans' Review Board Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 5

47 Veterans' Review Board Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 1–4

### *Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio*

#### **Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office (ASNO)**

3.70 *The Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office Annual Report 1999–2000* was tabled in the Senate on 10 October 2000.

3.71 The Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office (ASNO) was established in August 1998 to combine the functions of the Australian Safeguards Office (ASO), the Chemical Weapons Convention Office (CWCO) and, following ratification, the Australian Comprehensive Test-Ban Office (ACTBO). The directorships of these organisations are now combined by the role of the Director-General, ASNO.<sup>48</sup>

3.72 The Australian Safeguards Office and the Chemical Weapons Convention Office function under, and ensure the effective operation of, the *Nuclear Non-Proliferation (Safeguards) Act 1987* and the *Chemical Weapons (Prohibition) Act 1994*. ASNO administers both acts.<sup>49</sup>

3.73 The Director stated in his ‘year in review’ that ASNO’s principal responsibilities are, ‘to ensure that Australia is in compliance with its international treaty commitments to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and to contribute to the development of strengthened non-proliferation verification regimes. Its primary focus is thus international and national security. ASNO’s activities are also central to government policy regarding the mining and export of uranium.’<sup>50</sup>

3.74 The Director went on to report that as a centre of technology excellence, ASNO has accrued significant professional skills and expertise (which, he claimed, are hard to find and maintain in Australia). This skills-base also provides DFAT with a critical source of long term, stable, professional staff with its own international network of specialised knowledge.<sup>51</sup>

3.75 The Committee notes that the report includes a useful section at the front of the report which outlines ASNO’s operating environment, the role of each office and its relevant legislation. This helps the reader grasp the complex nature of the organisations dealt with in this report.<sup>52</sup>

3.76 The 1999–2000 joint report is informative and well written. The Committee finds that the report complies with the reporting requirements for statutory bodies.

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48 The Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 1–5

49 The Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 1–11

50 The Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 13

51 The Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 13

52 The Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 1–11

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### **Australian Trade Commission (Austrade)**

3.77 The *Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) Annual Report 1999–2000* was presented to the President of the Senate on 26 October 2000 and tabled in the Senate on 30 October 2000. Austrade was established under the *Australian Trade Commission Act 1985* and functions under section 8 of the act.

3.78 Austrade is a business-focussed statutory authority within the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio. Austrade is ‘dedicated to helping Australian business—especially small and medium enterprises—find export and investment opportunities overseas through the resources of around 100 offices across Australia and the world. Austrade works closely with the department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to enhance exports, and with the Department of Industry, Science and Resource to attract inward investment’.<sup>53</sup>

3.79 The Managing Director, in the Year in Review, noted that ‘Austrade performed solidly in 1999–2000 against a range of performance measures and meeting the outcomes set out by the government in the portfolio budget statements. Our client satisfaction rating increased to 81.8 per cent, while dissatisfaction fell. The value of exports we helped generate increased by 24 per cent to \$7.47 billion. We introduced 1,241 companies to exporting, helped 3,966 existing exported into new markets, and delivered 4,530 qualified opportunities to firms...’<sup>54</sup>

3.80 This claim is borne out by the statistics in the section entitled ‘Tracking our performance’, in which performance was measured against a number of performance criteria. Of particular interest was the assessment of performance by outcomes and outputs. In each outcome and output, Austrade’s performance was measured against the annual target by quality, quantity and price. The uncluttered, easy-to-read table format gave the reader a clear view of Austrade’s performance for the year.<sup>55</sup>

3.81 Austrade has produced another comprehensive and well-structured review of program activities and performance outcomes. The Committee finds that it meets all the guidelines for annual reports of statutory authorities.

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53 Australian Trade Commission Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 5

54 Australian Trade Commission Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 6

55 Australian Trade Commission Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 4–31

## NON-STATUTORY AUTHORITIES

### Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)

3.82 The *Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) Annual Report 1999–2000* was presented to the Temporary Chair of Committees on 25 October 2000 and tabled in the Senate on 30 October 2000. AusAID is an autonomous agency within the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio. The Director General of AusAID is responsible to the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for administration of the agency and is a member of the DFAT Executive.<sup>56</sup>

3.83 AusAID administers Australia's overseas aid program. The objective of the aid program is to advance Australia's national interest by assisting developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development.<sup>57</sup>

3.84 The Director General, in his overview, reported that 1999–2000 was one of accomplishments and new challenges. 'The successes of the aid program were recognised internationally, with Australia's progress in implementing the policy framework of *Better Aid for a Better Future* strongly praised when reviewed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee.'<sup>58</sup>

3.85 The Director concluded in his remarks that the aid program had delivered significant achievements against the performance targets and benchmarks that were established at the start of the year. 'The program...has had a positive impact on the lives of millions of people, and improved the capacity of our aid partners to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development.'<sup>59</sup>

3.86 AusAID has produced a well-written report which gives a comprehensive coverage of the of agency's activities for the year 1999–2000. The Committee notes, in particular, the detailed information given in section 2 entitled 'performance reporting'. This information is supported by photographs, tables and graphs, which provide the reader with a rounded account of each area of responsibility.<sup>60</sup>

3.87 The Committee considers this annual report to be informative, well produced and written in a clear and concise manner. The Committee finds that the report complies with all reporting requirements for non-statutory authorities.

Sandy Macdonald  
**Chair**

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56 Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 10

57 AusAID Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 9

58 AusAID Annual Report 1999–2000, p. 3

59 AusAID Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 3, 7

60 AusAID Annual Report 1999–2000, pp. 18–77