

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

SENATE

RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT

LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

**REPORT ON THE EXAMINATION OF
ANNUAL REPORTS**

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REVIEW OF ANNUAL REPORTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Senate Standing Orders

1.1 In accordance with Senate Standing Order 25 (21), annual reports of departments and agencies shall stand referred to the legislation committees in accordance with an allocation of departments and agencies in a resolution of the Senate. Each committee shall:

- (a) Examine each annual report referred to it and report to the Senate whether the report is apparently satisfactory.
- (b) Consider in more detail, and report to the Senate on, each annual report which is not apparently satisfactory, and on the other annual reports which it selects for more detailed consideration.
- (c) Investigate and report to the Senate on any lateness in the presentation of annual reports.
- (d) In considering an annual report, take into account any relevant remarks about the report made in debate in the Senate.
- (e) If the committee so determines, consider annual reports of departments and budget-related agencies in conjunction with examination of estimates.
- (f) Report on annual reports tabled by 31 October each year by the tenth sitting day of the following year, and on annual reports tabled by 30 April each year by the tenth sitting day after 30 June of that year.
- (g) Draw to the attention of the Senate any significant matters relating to the operations and performance of the bodies furnishing the annual reports.
- (h) Report to the Senate each year whether there are any bodies which do not present annual reports to the Senate and which should present such reports.¹

1.2 In accordance with Standing Order 25(21), *Procedural Orders of Continuing Effect*, the Senate agreed that two departments should be allocated to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee:

1 *Standing orders and other orders of the Senate*, February 2000, pp 27-28. (This Standing Order was amended 24 August 1994, 13 February 1997, 11 November 1998 and 3 December 1998).

Transport and Regional Services and

Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry.²

Requirements and purpose of annual reports

1.3 Annual reports are required to adhere to the *Requirements for Annual Reports* (updated May 2000), issued by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The requirements were approved by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit on 5 April 2000, under subsections 63(2) and 70(2) of the *Public Service Act 1999*.

1.4 The primary purpose of the annual reports of departments is accountability, in particular to the Parliament. Further, annual reports serve to inform the Parliament (through the responsible Minister), other stakeholders, educational and research institutions, the media and the general public about the performance of departments in relation to services provided. They are a key reference document, a document for internal management and form part of the historical record.³

1.5 Requirements for non-statutory authorities are outlined in the *Reporting requirements for the annual reports of non-statutory bodies*, dated 8 December 1987. Statutory authorities whose operations are not similar to departments are to comply with the *Guidelines for the Content, Preparation and Presentation of Annual Reports by Statutory Authorities (1982)*.

Reports dealing with Government Companies

1.6 In its report entitled *Government companies and their reporting requirements* published in November 1989, the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration noted that ‘reporting requirements under companies legislation are less than the requirements faced by Departments and statutory authorities’.⁴ Notwithstanding this view, the Committee examined these reports in order to establish that comprehensive and useful information has been presented.

1.7 The Committee considers that accountability to Parliament should be the central objective of annual reports and therefore the need for Government companies to comply with the *Reporting requirements for the annual reports of non statutory bodies*.⁵

Timing of presentation of reports

1.8 As stated in Standing Order 25(21)(f), legislation committees are required to report on annual reports tabled by 31 October each year by the tenth sitting day of the following year. Committees are also required to report on annual reports tabled by 30 April each year by the tenth sitting day after 30 June of that year.

2 *Standing orders and other orders of the Senate*, Procedural orders of continuing effect, Committees: No 1, February 2000, p 117.

3 *Requirements for Annual Reports*, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, May 2000, p.2.

4 Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration, *Government Companies and their reporting requirements*, November 1989, p. 2.

5 Senate. *Hansard*, Vol S.124, 8 December 1987, pp. 2643-5.

Reports referred to the Committee

1.9 This report examines the annual reports referred to the Committee between 1 November 2000 and 30 April 2001. The Committee has also included a number of additional annual reports tabled between 30 April 2001 and 30 June 2001.

1.10 During this period twenty-four reports were referred to the Committee. These reports included:

- eight statutory authorities;
- one non-statutory authority;
- three companies;
- two acts and
- ten other reports not requiring review.

A complete list of the reports referred to the Committee appears at Appendix 1.

Departmental Annual Reports

1.11 The annual reports of the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry were examined in the *Report on the Examination of Annual Reports No 1 of 2001*.

General Comments

1.12 In accordance with the Senate Standing Orders, the Committee is required to report to the Senate on whether the reports are ‘apparently satisfactory’. In making this assessment, the Committee considers aspects such as the timeliness of presentation and compliance with relevant reporting guidelines.

1.13 The Committee is pleased to note that the annual reports examined adhere to the reporting requirements satisfactorily and have maintained a high standard of presentation. Where relevant, the majority of reports detail programs and activities with a focus on performance measurement against outcomes and goals in relation to forecasts listed in Portfolio Budget Statements.

1.14 The Committee has made individual comments in this report on each of the annual reports examined. Subject to these assessments, the Committee considers that all annual reports examined in this report are ‘apparently satisfactory’.

Reports not examined

1.15 The Committee is not obliged to report on corporate plans or statements of corporate intent. Two corporate plans, two statements of corporate intent and three movement compliance statements were referred to the Committee:

Airservices Australia – Corporate Plan July 2000 – July 2005;

Airservices Australia – Movement Compliance Statement for Sydney Airport for the period 1 July to 30 September 2000;

Airservices Australia – Movement Compliance Statement for Sydney Airport for the period 1 October to 31 December 2000;

Airservices Australia – Movement Compliance Statement for Sydney Airport for the period 1 January to 31 March 2001;

Australian Rail Track Corporation Ltd – Statement of Corporate Intent 2000/01;

Civil Aviation Safety Authority – Corporate Plan 2000-2001 to 2002-2003 and

Sydney Airport – Statement of Corporate Intent 2000/2005.

1.16 The Committee also received two annual reports for Regional Forest Agreements as follows:

Regional Forest Agreement for the South-West Forest Region of Western Australia – June 2000 and

Victorian Regional Forest Agreements – East Gippsland, Central Highlands and North East Victoria --June 1999.

1.17 These annual reports fulfil obligations under specific clauses stated in the Regional Forest Agreements to report annually on the milestones set out in the agreements. As such, the Committee is not obliged to report on them.

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Senator Winston Crane

Chairman

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

28 August 2001

CHAPTER 2

ANNUAL REPORTS OF STATUTORY AUTHORITIES

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio

Australian Horticultural Corporation

2.1 The annual report of the Australian Horticultural Corporation (AHC) was tabled in the Senate on 26 June 2001. The report was prepared under the *Australian Horticultural Corporation Act 1987* and section 9 of the *CAC Act 1997*.

2.2 The Committee notes that this is the final report of the Corporation and covers the period from July 2000 to January 2001. On 1 February 2001, AHC and the Horticultural Research and Development Corporation (HRDC) were restructured into the newly formed Horticulture Australia.¹

2.3 The report provides a concise overview of the activities and achievements of the Corporation during its final seven months of operation. All reporting requirements have been met. The report also provides a summary of the crop production and activities and financial performance of the Australian Dried Fruits Board.

Australian Wool Research and Promotion Organisation

2.4 The final report of the Australian Wool Research and Promotion Organisation (AWRAP) was tabled in the Senate on 19 June 2001. The report covers the period from 1 July to 31 December 2000. On 1 January 2001, AWRAP was converted from a Commonwealth Statutory Authority to a Corporations Law company under the provisions of the *Wool Services Privatisation Act 2000*.

2.5 The letter of transmittal indicates that the final report was prepared in accordance with the *Australian Wool Research and Promotion Act 1993* in relation to the reporting of financial arrangements and the activities of its subsidiaries. Additionally, the letter indicates that the report was also prepared in accordance with the requirements of Part 2, Section 10 of the *Wool Services Privatisation Act 2000* and Section 9 of the *CAC Act 1997*.

2.6 The Committee notes that some performance targets were not achieved due to the establishment of the new companies. However, unmet or deferred targets were primarily either benchmark and market research and did not impact on overall performance with the majority of targets being achieved. The report provides an overview of the operational activities of both AWRAP and its subsidiary, The Woolmark Company and has met all reporting requirements.

1 Australian Horticultural Corporation Final Annual Report, p. 14.

Wheat Export Authority

2.7 The report of the Wheat Export Authority (WEA) for 1999-2000 was tabled in the Senate on 6 February 2001. The 1999-2000 annual report provides an overview of the first full year of operations, by the Authority since establishment on 1 July 1999. The report states that the WEA was established as part of the restructure of the former Australian Wheat Board. Its role is to control the export of wheat from Australia, monitor the export performance of the Australian Wheat Board (AWB) (International) Ltd and examine and report on the benefits to growers of that performance.²

2.8 WEA's annual report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Wheat Marketing Act 1989* and Section 9 of the *CAC Act 1997*.

2.9 The report provides an overview of the Authority's activities. Performance measurement of outputs has been assessed in accordance with the project activities against performance indicators. All reporting requirements have been met.

Transport and Regional Services Portfolio

Airservices Australia

2.10 The 1999-2000 annual report of Airservices Australia was tabled in the Senate on 5 December 2000. It has been prepared in accordance with the *Air Services Act 1995* and *CAC Act 1997*.

2.11 The report provides a comprehensive overview of Airservices Australia's corporate objectives and activities during 1999-2000. Performance has been measured against strategies and key performance indicators outlined in its corporate plan. The report of operations details the achievements of corporate objectives and key business strategies including, safety, environment, operational effectiveness, customers and markets, employees and owners.³

2.12 The report notes that there have been a number of highlights during 1999-2000, with one particular highlight being the official implementation of The Australian Advanced Air Traffic System (TAAATS) on 1 March 2000. The report has made good use of the appendices by including detailed information on the reports legislative requirements. All reporting requirements have been met.

Australian National Railways Commission

2.13 The annual report of the Australian National Railways Commission for 1999-2000 was tabled in the Senate on 28 November 2000. The Commission operates under the requirements of the *National Railways Commission Act 1983*.

2.14 The report notes that the Commission focussed on the continued winding up of its activities during 1999-2000, with an expectation that the Act be repealed on 31 October 2000.

2 Wheat Export Authority Annual Report 1999-2000, p. 5.

3 Airservices Australia Annual Report 1999-2000, p. 16.

In relation to this, the report also notes that the Commission further reduced staff from four to two employees at the end of June 2000.⁴ The report outlines a number of wind-up activities including locomotive leases, the Environmental Remediation Programme and disputes and personal injury claims. Reporting requirements have been met.

Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)

2.15 The 1999-2000 annual report of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority was tabled in the Senate on 7 November 2000. The Civil Aviation Safety Authority operates in accordance with the requirements of the *Civil Aviation Act 1988*. This annual report has been prepared in accordance with the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 (CAC Act)* and *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act Orders 1998*.

2.16 The report notes that CASA continues to undergo restructure and carry out its strategic vision in accordance with its Charter. The Chairman's report states that 1999-2000 was a year of consolidation with focus on various aspects of restructure and improvement. Also noted, were the challenges CASA dealt with in relation to the aviation fuel crisis and media focus on the major airlines and accident investigations.

2.17 In terms of performance, the report presents a positive outcome for the Authority during the reporting year. Specifically, the report notes that a number of priorities identified have been completed with significant progress made on those priorities not yet finalised. Performance measurement has been assessed in accordance with the priorities and critical success factors outlined in the Corporate Plan.⁵ The report provides a comprehensive overview of the Authorities performance by detailing milestones, operational achievements and internal imperatives. The Authority also provided a concise overview of issues impacting on CASA, including the Avgas fuel contamination crisis.

2.18 The report also notes the impact of restructure on staff turnover rates and cites a 20 percent turnover rate adjusted to 8.6 percent, if voluntary redundancies were excluded. It is expected that staff turnover will stabilise during 2000-2001 as restructuring is fully implemented.⁶

2.19 The overall presentation of the report is high. The report is presented in four sections with section one providing an introduction and overview of CASA's role and structure. Section two details performance reporting, section three details the financial operations and section four contains appendices detailing other compliance and statistical information.

Stevedoring Industry Finance Committee

2.20 The 1999-2000 annual report of the Stevedoring Industry Finance Committee was tabled in the Senate on 6 March 2001. The Committee operates in accordance with the *Stevedoring Industry Finance Committee Act 1977*.

4 Australian National Railways Commission Annual Report 1999-2000, pp 2, 6.

5 Civil Aviation Safety Authority Annual Report 1999-2000, p. 15.

6 Civil Aviation Safety Authority Annual Report 1999-2000, p. 66.

2.21 The report notes that the Stevedoring Industry Finance Committee inherited liabilities from its predecessor organisation, the Australian Stevedoring Industry Authority in relation to claims for asbestos-related diseases. As at 30 June 2000, the Committee had 97 claims against it, with more compensation claims expected over the next 15 to 20 years. The financial statements provide details of unquantifiable contingencies related to this. As such, the Delegate of the Auditor-General representing the Australian National Audit Office has expressed some concern regarding the ability of the Committee to continue as a going concern. Funding is allocated from income received from interest on \$12.2 million from the Waterfront Industry Reform Authority levy ceased in 1995.

Casino Surveillance Authority

2.22 The annual report for 1999-2000 was tabled in the Senate on 7 February 2001. The report has been prepared in accordance with Section 42 of the Territory of Christmas Island *Casino Control Ordinance 1988*.

2.23 The Authority's report indicates that the casino licence was cancelled on 28 July 1998, resulting in a cessation of operations. As such, the report states that the Casino Controller has no significant events or operational activities to report for the 1999-2000 financial year.

Conclusion

2.24 The annual reports of the statutory authorities examined in this report are considered by the Committee to be apparently satisfactory.

CHAPTER 3

ANNUAL REPORTS OF NON STATUTORY AUTHORITIES, GOVERNMENT COMPANIES AND REPORTS DEALING WITH ACTS AND OTHER BODIES

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio

Murray-Darling Basin Commission

3.1 The 1999-2000 annual report of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission was tabled on 5 December 2000. The Commission was established under the *Murray-Darling Basin Agreement 1992* through a legal agreement with the Commonwealth Parliament, the State Parliaments of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland and a memorandum of understanding with the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory. As such, the Commission is a unique organisation, owned by the six governments in an effort to ensure effective management of the Murray-Darling river catchments. The report also incorporates the annual report of the Ministerial Council's Community Advisory Committee.

3.2 The primary focus of this report is on activities the Commission has carried out on behalf of the Ministerial Council in 1999-2000.

3.3 The report notes that a number of significant initiatives were implemented during 1999-2000. These include the release of the Salinity Audit, completion of a Human Dimension Strategy, a review on the cap on water diversions and activation of the ten project boards driving public policy development within the Murray-Darling Basin initiative.¹

3.4 The report provides a well presented and detailed account of the Commission's activities, particularly in relation to natural resource management and water resources and asset management. The Commission has met all reporting requirements.

Companies

Landcare Australia Limited

3.5 The Landcare Australia annual report for 1999-2000 was tabled in the Senate on 7 February 2001. Landcare Australia Limited is a Commonwealth owned non-profit company limited by guarantee. It was incorporated on 10 October 1989. Landcare Australia focuses efforts on creating environmental awareness and raising funds.

3.6 Funding is provided through a combination of Commonwealth appropriation and corporate sponsorship. Sponsorship for Landcare activities is often provided through the

1 Murray-Darling Basin Commission Annual Report 1999-2000, p. 3.

Landcare Foundation. It is administered jointly by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (AFFA) and Environment Australia.

3.7 The report notes that a number of planning targets was achieved during 1999-2000. These included a total of \$15.5 million raised through sponsorship, fee for services from the Commonwealth Government, media support and project support.² Other achievements included increases in participation by farmers. Olympic Landcare activities also raised participation levels by the general community.

3.8 The report provides a concise review of all campaigns and activities generally and in each of the States and Territories.

Others

Australian National Residue Survey

3.9 The Australian National Residue Survey (NRS) annual report for 1999-2000 was tabled on 23 May 2001. The Committee notes that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry sought an extension for the tabling of this report from the responsible Minister on 26 February 2001. The Committee also notes the reasons for delay cited in the request for extension.

3.10 The report states that the NRS is 'not a single survey, but a program of work that includes the management of monitoring, surveillance and compliance-residue prevention programs and related activities.'³ It operates under the *National Residue Survey Administration Act 1992*. This Act established the NRS Reserve for funding purposes. Other legislation pertinent to NRS activities includes the *National Residue Survey (Customs) Levy Act 1998* and the *National Residue Survey (Excise) Levy Act 1998*.⁴

3.11 The report provides details on the eight NRS programs. These are Animal Products, Grains and horticultural products, Fisheries and aquaculture products, Surveillance, compliance and prevention programs, Laboratory procurement and performance evaluation, External projects, Business support and Community Service Obligations. Performance has been measured against performance indicators and achievements.

Regional Forest Agreement for the South-West Forest Region on Western Australia and Victorian Regional Forest Agreements

3.12 As discussed in Chapter 1 paragraphs 1.16 and 1.17, the Committee also received the above reports. These reports were tabled in the Senate on 23 May 2001 and 7 February 2001 respectively.

3.13 As stated in paragraph 1.17, these reports provide details of the milestones set out in each agreement. The Committee is not required to report on Regional Forest Agreement annual reports.

2 Landcare Australia Annual Report 1999-2000, p. 2.

3 National Residue Survey Annual Report 1999-2000, p. 4.

4 National Residue Survey Annual Report 1999-2000, p. 3.

Transport and Regional Services Portfolio

Companies

Australian Rail Track Corporation Limited

3.14 The 1999-2000 annual report of Australian Rail Track Corporation Limited (ARTC) was tabled in the Senate on 28 November 2000.

3.15 The report provides an overview of the ARTCs major activities for the reporting year. The ARTC aims to improve the competitiveness of rail against road travel and is the principal provider for interstate rail access. The reporting year was characterised by a number of achievements. These included meeting Australian Transport Council standards on interstate gauge train lengths, maximum speeds and axle loads, improvements to reliability and transit times and yields for train operators and track infrastructure.

Maritime Industry Finance Company Limited

3.16 The 1999-2000 annual report was tabled on 1 November 2000. The Maritime Industry Finance Company Limited (MIFCo) is a wholly owned Commonwealth company, established on 8 April 1998. The Company is responsible for facilitating the Government's waterfront reform agenda. The Company funds redundancy related payments in line with reform and restructuring of the stevedoring industry.⁵

3.17 The report notes that MIFCo funded 527 redundancies during the financial year and executed funding deeds with three stevedoring employers.

Acts

3.18 The Committee received two Acts as follows:

- *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995* – National Office of Local Government – Report for 1999-2000 and
- *Stevedoring Levy (Collection) Act 1998* – Report 2001.

3.19 Under the terms of the procedural order, the Committee is not required to report on these reports. However, the Committee considers the reports to be useful and relevant documents.

3.20 Conclusion

3.21 The Committee considers that the annual reports of the non-statutory authorities and companies examined in this report are apparently satisfactory.

5 Maritime Industry Finance Company Annual Report 1999-2000, p. 1.

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF ANNUAL REPORTS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE DURING THE PERIOD 1 NOVEMBER 2000 TO 30 JUNE 2001 AND DATE OF TABLING IN THE SENATE

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY PORTFOLIO

Date Tabled

Statutory Authorities

- Australian Horticultural Corporation –
Final Report July 2000-January 2001 26 June 2001
- Australian Wool Research and Promotion Organisation –
Final Report July 2000-January 2001 19 June 2001
- Wheat Export Authority – Report 1999-2000 6 February 2001

Non-Statutory Bodies

- Murray-Darling Basin Commission – Report 1999-2000 5 December 2000

Companies

- Landcare Australia Limited – Report 1999-2000 7 February 2001

Other

- Australian National Residue Survey – Report 1999-2000 23 May 2001
- Regional Forest Agreement for the South-West Forest
Region of Western Australia – Report June 2000 23 May 2001
- Victorian Regional Forest Agreements – Report 1999 7 February 2001

TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Statutory Authorities

- Airservices Australia – Report 1999-2000 5 December 2000
- Australian National Railways Commission – Report 1999-2000 28 November 2000
- Civil Aviation Safety Authority – Report 1999-2000 7 November 2000
- Stevedoring Industry Finance Committee – Report 1999-2000 6 March 2001
- Territory of Christmas Island – Casino surveillance Authority – Report 1999-2000 7 February 2001

Companies

- Maritime Industry Finance Company Limited – Report 1999-2000 1 November 2000
- Australian Rail Track Corporation Limited – Report 1999-2000 28 November 2000

Acts

- *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995* – National Office of Local Government – Report 1999-2000 on the operation of the Act 6 March 2001
- *Stevedoring Levy (Collection) Act 1998* – Report 2001 27 February 2001

Other

- Airservices Australia – Movement compliance Statement for Sydney Airport for the period 1 July to 30 September 2000 6 December 2000
- Airservices Australia – Movement compliance Statement for Sydney Airport for the period 1 October to 31 December 2000 27 March 2001
- Airservices Australia – Movement compliance Statement for Sydney Airport for the period 1 January to 31 March 2001 19 June 2001
- Airservices Australia – Corporate Plan July 2000 to June 2005 19 June 2001
- Australian Rail Track Corporation Limited – Statement of Corporate Intent 2000-2001 29 November 2000

- Civil Aviation Safety Authority – Corporate Plan for 2000-2001 to 2002-2003 28 November 2000
- Sydney Airports Corporation Limited – Statement of Corporate Intent – 2000-2005 6 December 2000