

The Senate

Rural and Regional Affairs and
Transport Legislation Committee

Annual reports (No. 2 of 2003)

September 2003

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ISBN 0 642 71303 0

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE	iii
REVIEW OF ANNUAL REPORTS	1
INTRODUCTION	1
Senate Standing Orders	1
Requirements and purpose of annual reports	2
Reports dealing with Government Companies.....	2
Timing and presentation of reports.....	3
Reports referred to the Committee	3
Reports not examined	3
General Comments	4
APPENDIX 1	15
LIST OF ANNUAL REPORTS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE	15
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY PORTFOLIO	15
TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO.....	16

REVIEW OF ANNUAL REPORTS

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 *Standing orders and other orders of the Senate*, February 2002, pp. 27-28. (This Standing Order was amended 24 August 1994, 13 February 1997, 11 November 1998, 3 December 1998 and 13 February 2002).

Requirements and purpose of annual reports

1.2 Annual reports are required to adhere to the *Requirements for Annual Reports* (updated June 2002), issued by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The requirements were approved by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, under subsections 63(2) and 70(2) of the *Public Service Act 1999*.

1.3 The Committee notes amendments to the 2001 version including the addition of mandatory reporting requirements for Fraud Control Guideline certification. The Committee has paid particular attention to this requirement for all reports finalized by 30 June 2002.

1.4 The primary purpose of annual reports of departments is accountability, in particular to the Parliament. 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. Annual reports are a key reference document and a document for internal management. They form part of the historical record.²

1.5 Requirements for non-statutory authorities are outlined in the *Reporting requirements for the annual reports of non-statutory bodies*, dated 8 December 1987³.

1.6 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)*⁴.

Reports dealing with Government Companies

1.7 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’.⁵ Notwithstanding this view, the Committee examined these reports in order to establish that comprehensive and useful information has been presented.

1.8 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*

2 *Requirements for Annual Reports*, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, June 2002, p. 3.

3 Senate *Hansard*, 8 December 1987, pp. 2643-5.

4 Senate *Hansard*, 11 November 1982, pp. 2261-3.

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

bodies.⁶ Government companies are also expected to comply with the provisions of sections 9 and 36 of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*.

Timing and presentation of reports

1.9 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.

1.10 The Committee is required to table this report on 16 September 2003.

Reports referred to the Committee

1.11 This report includes annual reports referred to the Committee between 31 October 2002 and 30 April 2003.

1.12 During this period 16 annual reports were referred including:

- a) 5 statutory authorities;
- b) 2 companies and
- c) 9 other reports not requiring review.

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

Reports not examined

1.14 The Committee is not obliged to report on Acts, Statements of corporate intent, surveys or Corporate Plans. Three reports on Acts and/or programmes associated with an Act, one Corporate Plan and three Statements of Corporate Intent and two erratums were referred to the Committee as follows:

Australian National Residue Survey – Results - Report for 2001-02;

Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995 - National Office of Local Government - Report for 2001-02 on the operation of the Act;

Regional Forest Agreement between the Commonwealth and Tasmania - Reports - Inquiry on the progress with implantation of the Tasmania Regional Forest Agreement (1997)-Final recommendations report, December 2002, Tasmanian Government implementation - 2001;

Airservices Australia - Corporate plan July 2002 to June 2007;

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

Bankstown Airport Limited - Report for 2001-02 - Statement of corporate intent 2002;

Camden Airport Limited - Report for 2001-02. Statement of corporate intent 2002;

Hoxton Park Airport Limited - Report for 2001-02. Statement of corporate intent 2002;

Department of Transport and Regional Services - Report for 2001-02 - Erratum and

National Road Transport Commission - Report for 2001-02 - Erratum

1.15 The Committee notes that three progress reports for the Australian Land Transport Development Program were tabled for the preceding three financial years. The Committee considers the tabling of retrospective reports to be unacceptable and not conducive to Parliamentary accountability. The Committee reminds the Department of Transport and Regional Services that section 41 of the *Australian Land Transport Development Act 1988* requires the Minister to table a report in the Parliament on the operations of the Act, as soon as practicable after 30 June each year.

General Comments

1.16 In accordance with 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 timeliness of presentation and compliance with relevant reporting guidelines (see paragraphs 1.2, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.7).

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

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

Senator Bill Heffernan

Chair

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and
Transport Legislation Committee

September 2003

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF ANNUAL REPORTS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE DURING THE PERIOD 31 OCTOBER 2002 TO 30 APRIL 2003 AND DATE OF TABLING IN THE SENATE

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY PORTFOLIO

Date Tabled

Statutory Authorities

Australian Landcare Council - Report for 2001-02	5 February 2003
Christmas Island Casino Surveillance Authority - Report for 2001-02	5 February 2003
Wheat Export Authority - Report for 1 October 2001 to 30 September 2002	4 March 2003
Landcare Australia Limited - Report for 2001-02	26 March 2003

Non-Statutory Authorities

<i>Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995</i> - National Office of Local Government - Report for 2001-02 on the operation of the Act	26 March 2003
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Other

National Residue Survey – Results - Report 2001-02	3 December 2002
Regional Forest Agreement between the Commonwealth and Tasmania Reports-Inquiry on the progress with implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (1997)-Final recommendations report, December 2002. Tasmanian Government implementation-2001.	4 March 2003

TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO**Date Tabled*****Statutory Authorities***

Civil Aviation Safety Authority - Report 2001-02 19 November 2002

Companies

Sydney Airports Corporation Limited-Report for 2001-02 13 November 2002

Australian Rail Track Corporation Limited (ARTC) - Report for 2001-02
4 December 2002

Other

Department of Transport and Regional Services – Report 2001-02
Erratum 19 November 2002

Bankstown Airport Limited - Report for 2001-02
Statement of corporate intent 2002 4 December 2002

Camden Airport Limited - Report for 2001-02
Statement of corporate intent 2002 4 December 2002

Hoxton Park Airport Limited - Report for 2001-02
Statement of corporate intent 2002 4 December 2002

National Road Transport Commission - Report for 2001-02
Erratum 10 December 2002

Airservices Australia – Corporate plan July 2002-June 2007 5 March 2003