

Introduction

Referral of the inquiry

- 1.1 On 8 May 2007 the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Hon Ian Macfarlane MP, wrote to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry and Resources (the Committee) asking it to conduct a case study into the relative state of development of selected renewable energy sectors in Australia, as part of a broader inquiry into the development of Australia's non-fossil fuel energy industry. The terms of reference for the case study are provided on page *x* of the interim report.

Conduct of the case study

- 1.2 A media release announcing the inquiry was issued on 11 May 2007. The Committee's terms of reference were advertised and written submissions invited in the *Australian Financial Review* on 18 May 2007, the *Bulletin* magazine on 19 May 2007, and in *The Australian* on 23 May 2007.
- 1.3 The Committee wrote to 160 companies, associations, organisations and individuals inviting them to make submissions to the inquiry. These included participants in the Australian electricity supply industry, renewable energy generators and associations, companies developing renewable energy technologies, environmental groups, renewable energy research institutes and scientific organisations. The Committee invited submissions from all state and territory governments and from local governments.
- 1.4 The Committee received 149 written submissions and supplementary submissions, which are listed at Appendix A. The Committee also

received 124 exhibits, which included ancillary material provided by witnesses at public hearings and various technical documents. A list of the exhibits is at Appendix B.

- 1.5 Public hearings were conducted by the Committee in Canberra during May, June and August 2007. In total, six witnesses were examined at three public hearings. The dates of the hearings, together with the names of witnesses who appeared before the Committee are at Appendix C.
- 1.6 Inspections were held by the Committee at the CSIROs National Solar Research Facility at Newcastle and at Solar Heat and Power's solar-coal facility at the Liddell power station in Muswellbrook.
- 1.7 Access to the published submissions to the inquiry, transcripts of evidence taken at public hearings and an electronic copy of the interim report is available on the internet from the Committee's web site:
<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/isr/renewables/report.htm>

Structure of the report

- 1.8 In addition to this introductory chapter, the report comprises two chapters.
- 1.9 Chapter two presents an overview of the:
 - renewable energy sources in primary energy supply and demand;
 - renewable energy contribution to electricity generation and projections for Australia and the global outlook;
 - electricity supply industry in Australia; and
 - Australian government renewable energy policies and programmes.
- 1.10 Chapter three presents a description and background information on each of the eight renewable energy sectors and technologies under examination in the Committee's case study. In turn, the chapter provides an overview of:
 - solar energy (photovoltaics and solar thermal);
 - ocean energy (tidal and wave energy);
 - geothermal energy;
 - wind energy;
 - energy storage;
 - hydrogen; and
 - bioenergy.