

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 7 February 2013 the Senate referred the following documents to the committee for examination and report in relation to its portfolios:

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2013 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2012-2013].
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2013 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2012-2013].
- Final Budget outcome for 2011-2012; and
- Issues from the advances under the annual Appropriation Acts for 2011-2012.¹

1.2 The committee is responsible for the examination of the following portfolios:

- Health and Ageing;
- Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; and
- Human Services.

1.3 The committee was required to report to the Senate on its consideration of 2012-2013 additional estimates on Tuesday 19 March 2013.²

Details of hearings

1.4 The committee considered the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements (PAES) 2012-2013 for the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio, the Human Services portfolio, and the Health and Ageing portfolio, at hearings from 13 February 2013 to 15 February 2013 (inclusive). The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda outlined as follows:

- Wednesday 13 February 2013 – Health and Ageing portfolio
- Thursday 14 February 2013 – Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio and Human Services portfolio
- Friday 15 February 2013 – Cross Portfolio – Indigenous Matters

1.5 The committee heard evidence from the following Senators:

- Senator the Hon Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers (representing the Minister for Families, Housing, Community

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 132, 7 February 2013, p. 3603.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 121, 1 November 2012, p. 3239.

Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Minister for Health and Ageing).

- Senator the Hon Kim Carr, Minister for Human Services.
- Senator the Hon Don Farrell, Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water (representing the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and all relevant Ministers for the Cross Portfolio – Indigenous Matters).

1.6 Evidence was also provided by the following:

- Ms Jane Halton, Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing;
- Mr Finn Pratt, Secretary of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs;
- Ms Kathryn Campbell, Secretary of the Department of Human Services;
- Ms Jennifer Taylor, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace relations;
- Mr David Learmonth, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing; and
- officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

1.7 The committee also considered budget expenditure at a hearing on 15 February 2013 on cross portfolio Indigenous matters pursuant to Resolution of the Senate of 26 August 2008.³ Explanations relating to the estimates were received from Senator the Hon Don Farrell. Officers from the following portfolio Departments were in attendance:

- Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs;
- Health and Ageing; and
- Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

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

Questions on Notice

1.9 In accordance with Standing Order 26, the date for submission to the committee of written answers to questions or additional information relating to the expenditure is 5 April 2013.

3 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 22, 26 August 2008, p. 683.

1.10 Answers to questions taken on notice and tabled documents relating to the committee's hearings will be tabled in the Senate. Answers to questions on notice and additional information may be accessed via the committee's website.

Hansard transcripts

1.11 The committee discussed many of the expenditure proposals and information contained in the PAES. These discussions are detailed in the committee's *Hansard* transcripts of 13 February 2013 to 15 February 2013 (inclusive), copies of which will be tabled in the Senate. *Hansard* transcripts of the estimates proceedings are also accessible on the committee's website at http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_ca.

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

Changes in the PAES

1.13 The committee notes the establishment of the National Health Funding Body in the Health and Ageing portfolio since the Budget 2012-13. This new Portfolio agency was established on 25 June 2012 under the *National Health Reform Act 2011* to:

provide transparent, comparable and efficient administration of Commonwealth and state and territory funding of the Australian public hospital system, and support the obligations and responsibilities of the Administrator of the National Health Funding Pool under common multi-jurisdictional health reform legislation.⁴

1.14 The committee also notes Ministerial changes in the Health and Ageing and Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio since the publication of the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements:

- In the Health and Ageing portfolio, on 2 February 2013 the Hon. Melissa Parke MP was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health;⁵
- In the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio, on 4 February 2013 the Hon. Mark Butler MP replaced the Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP as the Minister for Housing and Homelessness and the Hon. Melissa Parke MP was sworn in as Parliamentary Secretary for Homelessness and Social Housing.⁶

4 Health and Ageing, *Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2012-13*, p. 3.

5 Health and Ageing, *Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2012-13*, p. 3.

6 Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2012-13*, p. 3.

1.15 Finally, the committee notes a change to the name of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), in the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio. Following the replacement of the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, the agency's name has been changed to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. The PAES states that:

the outcome has been updated to reflect the shift in focus from equal opportunity for women to equality between the genders and associated responsibilities.⁷

Procedural issues

1.16 The following procedural issue during the committee's hearings was noted.

Grounds for not answering questions

1.17 The secretary of the Department at one point also claimed legal professional privilege as a reason for not releasing legal advice. The senator asking the question, however, appeared already to have moved on and did not press the matter. The committee also notes that no formal claims were made for public interest immunity. Departments should be aware of and adhere to the order of the Senate of 13 May 2009.

7 Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2012-13*, p. 3.