

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 12 May 2015, the Senate referred the following two documents to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee (the committee) for examination and report:

- particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2016 [Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-16]; and
- particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2016 [Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015-16].¹

1.2 The committee is required to examine the 2015-16 budget estimates contained in these two documents in relation to the Agriculture portfolio and the Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio. Following examination, the committee is required to table its report on the 2015-16 budget estimates on 23 June 2015.²

Budget Estimates hearings

1.3 The committee examined witnesses from both portfolios at hearings held between 25 and 28 May 2015. The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda as follows:

- 25 and 26 May 2015—Agriculture portfolio; and
- 27 and 28 2015—Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio.

1.4 The committee heard evidence from the following senators:

- Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture (representing the Minister for Agriculture); and
- Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women and Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection (representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development).

1.5 Evidence was also provided by:

- Mr Phillip Glyde, Acting Secretary of the Department of Agriculture;
- Mr Mike Mrdak, Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development; and

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 92, 12 May 2015, pp 2561-2562.

2 *Journals of the Senate*. No. 75, 9 February 2015, p. 2049.

- officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

1.6 The committee thanks the parliamentary secretary, minister, departmental secretaries and officers for their assistance and cooperation during the hearings.

Questions on notice

1.7 In accordance with Standing Order 26, the committee is required to set a date for the lodgement of written answers and additional information. The committee resolved that written answers and additional information be submitted by 10 July 2015.³

Record of proceedings

1.8 This report does not attempt to analyse the evidence presented during the hearings. However, it does provide a summary of some of the key issues that were covered by the committee for each portfolio.

Note on references and additional information

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

1.10 Copies of the proof Hansard transcripts, documents tabled at the hearings, and additional information received after the hearings will be tabled in the Senate and available on the committee's website.

3 Once received, answers to questions on notice will be published at the following website address:
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_Estimates/rtratctte/estimates/bud1516/index