

Chapter 1

Introduction

Reference

1.1 On 12 May 2009 the Senate referred the following documents to standing committees for examination and report:

- Particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2010
- Particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2010.¹

1.2 The committee was required to report to the Senate by 23 June 2009.²

Hearings

1.3 The committee conducted public hearings on the Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy portfolio on 25 and 26 May 2009 and on the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio on 27 and 28 May 2009. The agenda is at Appendix 1.

1.4 Links to the transcripts of the public hearings, and to responses and additional information, are available on the Internet at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eca_ctte/estimates/bud_0910/index.htm

1.5 Written answers and additional information provided to the committee on notice arising from the hearings are tabled in the Senate and also compiled as volumes of Additional Information. The answers are also posted on the committee's web page.

Questions on notice – date for response

1.6 In accordance with Standing Order 26(9)(a), the committee has fixed Friday, 31 July 2009 as the date for the return of written answers or additional information in response to questions placed on notice.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 67, 12 May 2009, p. 1920.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 43, 12 November 2008, pp 1159.

Procedural and other matters

Late return of responses to questions on notice

1.7 In previous reports the committee has expressed its concern about past failures to provide responses in a timely manner and its expectation that responses to questions on notice should be provided to it by the due date.

1.8 The committee notes that answers were still being provided to the secretariat during this round of hearings – some seven weeks after the date the committee had set for the return of answers.

1.9 In setting 31 July 2009 as the deadline for answers to questions on notice from the current round of hearings, the committee believes that it is allowing ample opportunity for answers to be carefully considered and submitted in a timely manner.

Comprehensiveness of Budget Estimates process

1.10 As the then Chair noted in previous estimates,³ the committee expects that all agencies will be available for the main round of Budget Estimates, unlike Supplementary Estimates where senators nominate agencies they wish to examine.

1.11 For this round the committee again continued its practice of listing all government agencies and companies in the program under the relevant departmental outcome. It is left to the discretion of officials to determine whether company representatives need to attend the hearings in person or whether departmental officers are sufficiently knowledgeable to respond to the committee's inquiries on their behalf.

1.12 The committee believes that, by including all relevant portfolio bodies in the hearing program, senators are made aware of the opportunity to question them.⁴

Portfolio budget statements

1.13 The Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) 2009-10 reflect changes in reporting from the outcome/output structure to a program reporting framework. The statements also include revisions made to General Government Sector (GGS) entities outcome statements under the Operation Sunlight Outcome Statements Review. As a result of these changes both the Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolios have undergone reorganisation of their structures and each PBS contains a transition table reflecting the restructures. These tables are reproduced below:

3 Proof *Committee Hansard*, 25 May 2005, p. 55.

4 *Budget Estimates 2004-05*, Report of the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Legislation Committee, June 2004, p. 13.

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy⁵

2008-09 Budget year

Outcome 1: Development of a vibrant, sustainable and internationally competitive broadband and communications sector which promotes the digital economy for the benefit of all Australians

Output Group 1.1: Policy advice and program management that delivers competitively priced, accessible and high quality broadband and other communication services and that supports the digital economy	
Administered Items:	
<i>ABC & SBS Digital Interference Scheme</i>	P 1.3
<i>Australian Broadband Guarantee</i>	P 1.2
<i>Community Broadcasting Foundation¹</i>	P 1.3
<i>Connect Australia</i>	P 1.2
<i>Cyber-safety</i>	P 1.2
<i>Digital Television Switchover</i>	P 1.3
<i>e-Security</i>	P 1.2
<i>ICT Centre of Excellence</i>	P 1.2
<i>International Organisations Contributions</i>	P 1.2
<i>National Transmission Network</i>	P 1.3
<i>Residual Funding Pool</i>	
<i>Regional Equalisation Plan</i>	P 1.3
<i>Regional Telecommunications Inquiry response³</i>	P 1.2
<i>Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities</i>	P 1.2
<i>Telecommunications Consumer Representation and Research²</i>	P 1.2
<i>Television Towers</i>	P 1.3
Departmental Outputs:	
Program Management	P1.1, 1.2 & 1.3

1 The Community Broadcasting Foundation program has been renamed the Community Broadcasting Program and now includes funding for the Radio for the Print Handicapped, (RPH Co-operative Ltd).

2 The Telecommunications Consumer Representation and Research program has been renamed the Consumer Representation Grants Program.

3 The Regional Telecommunications Inquiry Response has been renamed the Regional Telecommunications Review Response

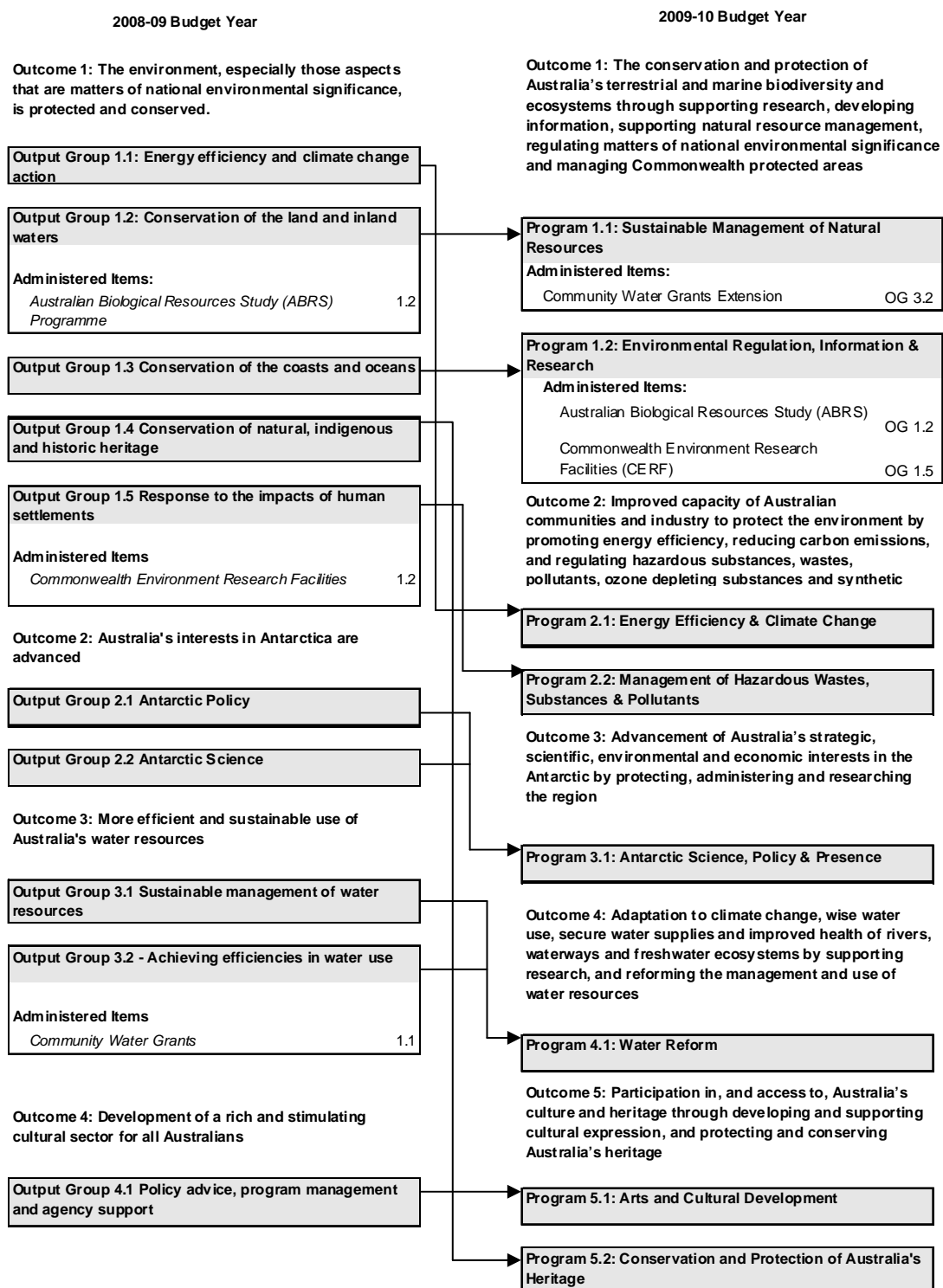
2009-10 Budget year

Outcome 1: Develop a vibrant, sustainable and internationally competitive broadband, broadcasting and communications sector, through policy development, advice and program delivery, which promotes the digital economy for all Australians

Program 1.1: Broadband and Communications Infrastructure	
Administered Items:	
<i>International Organisations Contributions</i>	
<i>National Broadband Network</i>	
Program Support:	
<i>Policy & Program Support</i>	
Program 1.2: Telecommunications, Online and Postal Services	
Administered Items:	
<i>Consumer Representation Grants Program²</i>	
<i>Australian Broadband Guarantee</i>	
<i>Connect Australia</i>	
<i>Cyber-safety</i>	
<i>e-Security</i>	
<i>ICT Centre of Excellence</i>	
<i>Regional Telecommunications Review Response³</i>	
<i>Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities</i>	
Program Support:	
<i>Policy & Program Support</i>	
Program 1.3: Broadcasting and Digital Television	
Administered Items:	
<i>ABC & SBS Digital Interference Scheme</i>	
<i>Community Broadcasting Program¹</i>	
<i>Digital Television Switchover</i>	
<i>National Transmission Network</i>	
<i>Residual Funding Pool</i>	
<i>Regional Equalisation Plan</i>	
<i>Television Towers</i>	
Program Support:	
<i>Policy & Program Support</i>	

5 Portfolio Budget Statements 2009-2010, Budget Related Paper No. 1.3, Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio, p. 31.

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts⁶



6 Portfolio Budget Statements 2009-2010, Budget Related Paper No. 1.3, Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Portfolio, p. 31.

Acknowledgements

1.14 The committee thanks Senators Conroy, McLucas, Carr, Arbib and Wong, officers from portfolio departments and agencies, and Broadcasting, Hansard and the Secretariat for their assistance during this Budget Estimates process.