

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations presents its report to the Senate.

1.2 On 13 February 2008¹ the Senate referred the following documents to the committee for examination and report in relation to the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio:

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2008 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2007-2008];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2008 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2007-2008];
- Issues from the Advance to the Finance Minister as a final charge for the year ended 30 June 2007; and
- Final budget outcome 2006-07—Report by the Treasurer (Mr Costello) and the Minister for Finance and Administration (Senator Minchin), September 2007.

1.3 Standing committees are required to report to the Senate on 18 March 2008.

Restructure of the portfolio

1.4 The committee notes that the Administrative Arrangements Order (AAO) issued on 3 December 2007 significantly altered the portfolio groups under its purview. This change reflects the amalgamation of the majority of the two former departments—the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations—into the new Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

1.5 Specifically, the AAO resulted in the transfer of all functions and agencies relating to science and research to the new Innovation, Industry, Science and Research portfolio, now under the purview of the Senate Standing Committee on Economics. The Radioactive Waste Management function was transferred to the Resources, Energy and Tourism portfolio under the same committee.

1.6 In addition, the two agencies of Indigenous Business Australia and Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace were transferred to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, under the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio along with the following functions:

- Community Development Employment Projects; and

1 Senator John Faulkner, *Journals of the Senate Hansard*, No. 2, 13 February 2008, p. 111

- Disability Support Pension.

1.7 Further to this the AAO of 25 January 2008 transferred the 'families and children have choices and opportunities' function from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to this portfolio. This function includes youth programs, youth engagement, early childhood education and other child care issues. Appendix 1 outlines the department and agencies for which the committee now has oversight.

Restructure of departmental outcomes

1.8 The committee notes that the creation of the new Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations resulted in substantial changes to the outcome structures for the department. A table illustrating the changes to the outputs for each outcome is provided at Appendix 3.

Hearings

1.9 The committee conducted public hearings on the 20 and 21 February 2008. Although the committee's two former portfolios have been combined, the committee—for reasons of expediency—retained the division between the education related outcomes, examined on 20 February 2008, and employment and workplace relations outcomes and agencies, examined on 21 February 2008.

1.10 In total the committee met for 15 hours and 15 minutes, excluding breaks. The committee took into account the Additional Estimates Portfolio Statements 2007-2008 provided by the departments and also the related annual reports for 2006-2007.

1.11 The following groups and agencies were released from the hearings without examination:

- Cross portfolio;
- Children's Group & Child Care Management System Taskforce;
- International Education Group; and
- Comcare.

1.12 Appendix 2 of this report lists the table of contents of the Hansard transcripts. These transcripts are available on either the committee's homepage under estimates or on the Hansard website: <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/commtee/comsen.asp>

Questions on notice

1.13 The committee draws the attention of the departments and agencies to the agreed deadline of Friday 11 April 2008 for the receipt of answers to questions taken on notice from this round, in accordance with Standing Order 26.

1.14 For this round, written questions on notice were received from Senators Bernardi, Boswell, Fierravanti-Wells, Mason, Minchin, Siewert and Stott Despoja.