

Chapter 1

Overview

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

1.2 On 10 May 2011¹ 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 2012;
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2012; and
- Particulars of proposed expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2012.

1.3 Standing committees are required to report to the Senate on 21 June 2011. This report of the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee is provided to the Senate in fulfilment of that requirement.

Portfolio coverage

1.4 The committee has responsibility for examining the expenditure and outcomes of the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio. Appendix 1 lists the department and agencies under this portfolio.

1.5 The National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (operating as the Australian Skills Quality Authority), due to commence operations from 1 July 2011, was called before the Senate for the first time.

Hearings

1.6 The committee conducted four days of hearings, examining Employment and Workplace Relations outcomes and agencies on 30 and 31 May 2011 and Education outcomes and agencies on 1 and 2 June 2011. In total the committee met for 35 hours and 28 minutes, excluding breaks.

1.7 The following outcomes and agencies appeared before the committee:

- Outcomes 1 — 5
- Fair Work Australia
- Fair Work Ombudsman

1 *Journals of the Senate No. 28*, 10 May 2011, p. 878.

- Australian Building and Construction Commission
- Comcare
- Safe Work Australia
- National Vocational Education and Training Regulator
- Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
- Skills Australia
- Australian Learning and Teaching Council

1.8 The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership was released from the hearings without examination.

Public interest immunity claims

1.9 On 13 May 2009, the Senate passed an order relating to public interest immunity claims.² The order sets out the processes to be followed if a witness declines to answer a question. The full text of this order has previously been provided to departments and agencies and was incorporated in the Chair's opening statement on the first day of the budget estimates hearing.

1.10 The issue of public interest immunity was not raised during the hearings.

Questions on notice

1.11 The committee has drawn the attention of the department and its agencies to the agreed deadline of Friday 22 July 2011 for the receipt of answers to questions taken on notice from this round, in accordance with Standing Order 26.

1.12 For this round, approximately 541 written questions on notice were received from Senators Abetz, Birmingham, Bushby, Cameron, Fisher, Mason, Nash, Ronaldson, Scullion and Siewert.

Note on Hansard page referencing

1.13 Hansard references throughout this report relate to proof Hansard page numbers. Please note page numbering may differ between the proof and final Hansard.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 68, 13 May 2009, p. 1941. The order was moved by Senator Cormann.