

The Senate

Employment, Workplace Relations
and Education Legislation Committee

Additional estimates 2002–03

March 2003

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Chair:	Senator John Tierney	(LP) NSW
Members:	Senator George Campbell (Deputy Chair)	(ALP) NSW
	Senator Kim Carr	(ALP) VIC
	Senator David Johnston	(LP) WA
	Senator Natasha Stott Despoja *	(AD) SA
	Senator Guy Barnett	(LP) Tas

Substitute Members:

Senator Andrew Murray* (AD) WA for Senator Stott Despoja for workplace relations matters
Senator Cherry (AD) QLD to substitute for Senator Stott Despoja for employment matters
Senator Allison (AD) VIC to substitute for Senator Stott Despoja for matters relating to schools and training

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Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee

REPORT TO THE SENATE

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

INTRODUCTION

1.2 On 12 December 2002 the Senate referred to the committee the particulars of proposed additional expenditure for 2002-2003 in relation to the Employment and Workplace Relations and the Education, Science and Training portfolios.

1.3 Senator the Hon Richard Alston was the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. The committee heard evidence from Senator Alston, the department and related agencies on the proposed estimates for the Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio. The following agencies appeared before the committee: Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency; Comcare; the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission and the Office of the Employment Advocate.

1.4 The committee also heard evidence from Senator the Hon Richard Alston, as the Minister representing the Minister for Education, Science and Training. Additionally, it heard from officers of the department and related agencies on the proposed additional estimates for the Education, Science and Training portfolio including the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation; Australian Research Council; and the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation.

1.5 The committee took into account the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2002-2003 provided by the departments and also their Annual Reports for 2001-2002. Review of the proposed additional expenditure for the portfolio was carried out over three days.

1.6 Senators present at the hearing held on Wednesday 12 February 2003 were Senators Tierney (Chair), G Campbell (Deputy Chair), Barnett, Carr, Johnston, Buckland, Collins, Eggleston, Kirk, Ray, Sherry, Stephens and Wong.

1.7 Senators present at the hearing held on Thursday 13 February 2003 were Senator Tierney (Chair), Senators G Campbell (Deputy Chair), Carr, Johnston, Stott Despoja, Allison, Barnett, Crossin, Eggleston, Stephens and Webber.

1.8 Senators present at the hearing held on Friday February 2003 were Senator Tierney (Chair), Senators Barnett, Carr, Johnston, and Crossin.

1.9 Written Questions on Notice were received from Senators Allison, Carr, Crossin and Stott Despoja.

1.10 The committee tables for the information of the Senate copies of transcripts of evidence of committee proceedings of Wednesday 12 February, Thursday 13 February and Friday 14 February 2003 and a table of contents to the transcripts. The answers taken on notice at the committee's hearings will be tabled in the Senate under separate cover in numbered volumes entitled *Additional information received* relating to the examination of additional estimates for 2002-2003. Lengthy documents provided as part of answers and unsuitable for inclusion in the additional information volumes that are furnished as part of the answers will be tabled separately and available on request.

MATTERS RAISED AT HEARINGS

1.11 The following is an indicative, but not exhaustive, list of issues that received consideration during the estimates' hearings. Full details are provided in the Hansard transcript of proceedings.

Employment and Workplace Relations Portfolio

Office of the Employment Advocate (OEA)

- Indemnity ruling by OEA/Minister in legal case
- Specified Partner Program
- Model clause in AWAs for traineeships
- Cashing out leave entitlements in AWAs
- Interim Building Industry Taskforce
- OEA ambassadors

Outcome 2 – Higher productivity, higher pay workplaces

- Workplace Relations Amendment (Termination of Employment) Bill 2002
- Ratification of ILO Convention 182
- A unified workplace relations system
- Living Wage Case
- SDAEA roping-in award case
 - Survey to businesses
- Federal redundancy case
- General Employee Entitlements and Redundancy Scheme
- Special Employee Entitlements Scheme

-
- Scheme for Ansett Group Employees
 - Interim Building Industry Taskforce
 - Alleged underpayment of international workers
 - Service station ‘drive offs’

Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWWA)

- Paid maternity leave
- Effects of cashing out leave entitlements under AWAs

National Occupational Health and Safety Commission

- Workplace fatalities
- Asbestos handling/removal
 - Mesothelioma cases

Comcare

- OH&S issues at the National Gallery of Australia

Outcome 1 – An effectively functioning labour market

- Transition to work
- Upgrade of Job Network software
- Modelling on possible expenditure on labour market programs
- Centrelink breaching process
- Research findings on Work for the Dole
- Employment Services 3 contract
- Corporate interface and software issues for Job Network members
- Privacy issues with Job Network software

Education, Training and Youth Affairs Portfolio

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

- CSIRO strategic plan
- CSIRO administration costs

- Possible staff redundancies
- Flagship projects
- Intention to sell the *Franklin*
- Refit contract for the *Southern Surveyor*
 - Copyright issues with new A-frame equipment
- Nuclear waste disposal

Australian Research Council (ARC)

- Federation Fellowships
- SES staff ratio
- Discovery grants program

Enterprise and Career Education Foundation

- Disability and Indigenous programs

Cross Portfolio Questions

- Changes to procurement thresholds before contracts must go to open tender
- Underspends of budget

Issues relating to Science Group – Output 3.2

- Mt Stromlo Observatory rebuilding plans
 - Involvement of Chief Scientist
- Radioactive Waste Repository
- Maralinga Rehabilitation Technical Advisory Committee [MARTAC]

Issues relating to Higher Education Group – Outputs 2. 1 and 3.1

- Textbook subsidy scheme
- Departmental submission to ACCC hearings in Townsville on voluntary student unionism
- Regional protection fund
- PELS and HECS schemes and debt levels
- Number of postgraduate places and funding
- Mt Stromlo Observatory rebuilding plans

-
- Paid maternity leave in universities
 - University finances
 - RMIT profile projections
 - Higher education budgets
 - Liquid assets of universities
 - Nurse and teacher education

Issues relating to Vocational Education and Training Group – Outcome 2

- New ANTA agreement

Issues relating to Indigenous Group – Outputs 1.2 and 2.1

- Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme [IESIP] expenditure
- Indigenous Education Direct Assistance [IEDA]
- Workplace learning
- Abstudy review
- Government schools funding

Issues relating to Schools Group – Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 2.3

- Supplementation funding for government schools
- Government and non-government schools funding comparison
- Establishment grants
- Teaching supply and demand; teachers' education and professional development
- Schools Transitional Emergency Assistance [STEA]

Issues relating to International Group – Outputs 2.1 and 3.3

- Projections of international student numbers
- Legitimacy of some international providers

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE AND SUPPLEMENTARY HEARINGS

1.12 The Standing Orders require the committee, after considering the proposed expenditure and agreeing on its report to the Senate, to fix a date for the submission of any written answers or additional information and for the commencement of supplementary hearings. The committee has agreed that written answers and additional information should be submitted by Tuesday 18 March 2003.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1.13 The committee is grateful for the assistance given to it by Senator the Hon Richard Alston and officers of the departments and agencies concerned.

Senator John Tierney
Chair

March 2003

Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee

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