

Chapter 1

Budget Estimates 2005-06

Introduction

1.1 On 10 May 2005, the Senate referred to the committee for examination the following documents:

- Particulars of proposed expenditure for the service in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2006;
- Particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2006;
- Particulars of proposed expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2006;

The Senate also referred the following:

- Particulars of certain proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2005;
- Particulars of proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2005; and
- The annual Tax Expenditures Statement.

Portfolio coverage

1.2 The committee has responsibility for examining the expenditure and outcomes of the following:

- Parliamentary departments;¹
- Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio; and
- Finance and Administration portfolio.

Appendix 1 lists the departments and agencies under the portfolios mentioned above.

Hearings

1.3 The committee held four days of public hearings from Monday, 23 to Thursday, 26 May 2005. Copies of the committee's transcript of evidence are tabled in

1 As a matter of comity between the Houses, it is traditional that neither House inquires into the operations of the other House. For this reason, neither the annual report of, nor the proposed expenditure for, the Department of the House of Representatives is referred to a Senate committee for review.

four volumes of *Hansard* for the information of the Senate. Copies of *Hansard* are available on the internet at the following address: <http://aph.gov.au/hansard>.

1.4 Further written explanations furnished by departments and agencies will be tabled, when received, in volumes entitled Additional Information. That information is also available on the committee's internet page, found at the following address: http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/fapa_ctte/estimates/index.htm

1.5 As a matter of Parliamentary Privilege, all information is 'tabled' on receipt.

1.6 Over the course of the four days' hearings—totalling over 42 hours—the committee took evidence from the President of the Senate, Senator the Honourable Paul Calvert; the Minister for Defence, representing the Prime Minister, Senator the Honourable Robert Hill; the Minister for Finance and Administration, Senator the Honourable Nick Minchin; and the Special Minister of State, Senator the Honourable Eric Abetz, together with officers of the departments and agencies concerned.

Questions on notice

Explanations for late receipt of answers

1.7 The committee reminds Commonwealth officers that when delays in answering questions on notice are likely to occur, agencies are expected to provide explanations for the delay. The committee appreciates that the nature of some questions may unavoidably mean delays. However, the committee will only accept these delays where acceptable explanations are provided.

Deadline for submitting answers

1.8 The due date for submitting responses to questions on notice from the budget estimates round is 8 July 2005.

Examination of departments and agencies—the remaining structure of the report

1.9 The following sections of the report list the issues considered by the committee and discuss some of these in detail.