

Chapter 1

Budget Estimates 2013–14

1.1 On 14 May 2013, the Senate referred the following to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee (the committee):

- Particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014;
- Particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014; and
- Particulars of proposed expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014.

Portfolio coverage

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

- Parliament;¹
- Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio; and
- Finance and Deregulation Portfolio.

Portfolio Budget Statements

1.3 The Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) for 2013–14 for the parliamentary departments and portfolios under the committee's oversight were tabled on 14 May 2013. The committee notes in this year's statements some agencies have consolidated existing programs or outcomes and some have moved to reporting at program level rather than at the program component level. These included the Department of the Parliamentary Services, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), the Australian National Audit Office and the Australian Public Service Commission. The committee notes the explanation included in the PM&C Portfolio Budget Statement that:

The changes to the level of disclosure, and the consolidation of programs, in the 2013–14 PB Statements does not reduce the transparency of information, nor does it change the accountability of PM&C. The level of disclosure reflects the current and future direction of PM&C and ensures readability is consistent across agency statements in line with guidance set by the Department of Finance and Deregulation.²

1 As a matter of comity between the Houses 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.

2 *Portfolio Budget Statements 2013–14, Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio*, p. 21.

Hearings

1.4 The committee held public hearings from Monday 27 May to Thursday 30 May 2013. The parliamentary departments were examined on 27 May, the Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio on 27 and 28 May, and the Finance and Deregulation Portfolio on 29 and 30 May 2013.

1.5 The committee took evidence from the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon. John Hogg; Senator the Hon. Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Leader of the Government in the Senate, and Senator the Hon. Jan McLucas, Minister for Human Services, representing the Prime Minister; and Senator the Hon. Penny Wong, Minister for Finance and Deregulation, together with officers of relevant departments and agencies. The committee expresses its appreciation for the assistance of the President, Ministers and the officers who appeared before it.

1.6 The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security were released from the hearing on 28 May 2013 without examination, while the following agencies were not required to attend the hearings:

- Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation;
- ASC Pty Ltd;
- Australian River Co Ltd;
- Independent National Security Legislation Monitor;
- National Australia Day Council; and
- COAG Reform Council Secretariat.

Questions on notice and Hansard transcripts

1.7 Most departments and agencies provided answers to questions on notice from the additional estimates hearings in February this year by the due date of 2 April 2013. However, the committee again notes the late submission of a number of answers to questions on notice for the Finance and Deregulation Portfolio, with only six out of a total of 97 outstanding answers provided by the due date.

1.8 The committee has set 12 July 2013 as the date for the return of answers to questions on notice arising from the Budget Estimates hearings. This information, together with the Hansards transcripts of proceedings of hearings, are published on the committee's website at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=fapa_ctte/estimates/bud_1314/index.htm

Note on references

1.9 References to the estimates Hansard are to the proof Hansard; page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcript.