

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1.1 On 4 December 2008, the Senate referred the following documents to the Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport (the committee) for examination and report in relation to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio and the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government portfolio:

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2009 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2008-2009];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2009 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2008-2009];
- Final budget outcome 2007-2008; and
- Issues from the Advance to the Finance Minister as a final charge for the year ended 30 June 2008.<sup>1</sup>

1.2 The committee was required to report to the Senate on its consideration of 2008-2009 additional estimates on 17 March 2009. On 12 March 2009, the Senate granted an extension for the committee to report on 31 March 2009.

1.3 The committee's additional estimates hearings were originally scheduled for 9 and 10 February 2009. On 5 February 2009, the Senate resolved that 'the additional estimates hearings of standing committees scheduled for the week beginning 9 February 2009 not take place'.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the hearings were rescheduled for the week beginning 23 February 2009.

1.4 The committee considered the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2008-2009 for both portfolios at hearings on 23 and 24 February 2009. The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda as follows:

- Monday 23 February 2009 – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio.
- Tuesday 24 February 2009 – Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government portfolio.

1.5 The committee heard evidence from Senator the Hon Nick Sherry, Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law, representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, representing the Minister for

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1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 52, 4 December 2008, p. 1446.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 55, 5 February 2009, p. 1553.

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Evidence was also provided by Dr Conall O'Connell, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Mr Michael Taylor, Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, and officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

1.6 The committee thanks the ministers, departmental secretaries and officers for their assistance and cooperation during the hearings.

### **Changes to departmental structures**

1.7 The committee notes that changes have been made to the departmental structure for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry since the 2008–09 Budget Estimates round. The current and previous structures are summarised in Appendix 4.

1.8 The committee also notes that changes have recently been made to the departmental structure of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, which are summarised in Appendix 4.

### **Questions on Notice**

1.9 In accordance with Standing Order 26, the committee is required to set a date for the lodgement of written answers and additional information. The committee requested that written answers and additional information be submitted by Wednesday 15 April 2009.

### **Additional information**

1.10 Answers to questions taken on notice at the committee's additional estimates hearings will be tabled in the Senate in separate volumes entitled 'Additional information relating to the examination of additional estimates 2008-2009 – February 2009 - Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport'. Documents not suitable for inclusion in the additional information volumes will be available on request from the committee secretariat.

1.11 Answers to questions on notice received from the departments will also be posted on the committee's website at a later date.

### **Note on references**

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