

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1.1 On 26 November 2009, the Senate referred the following documents to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee (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 2010 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2009-2010];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2010 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2009-2010];
- Final budget outcome 2008-2009; and
- Issues from the advances under the annual Appropriation Acts for 2008-09.<sup>1</sup>

1.2 The committee was required to report to the Senate on its consideration of 2009-2010 additional estimates on 23 February 2010.

1.3 The committee considered the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2009-2010 for both portfolios at hearings on 8 and 9 February 2010. The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda as follows:

- Monday 8 February 2010 – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio.
- Tuesday 9 February 2010 – Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government portfolio.

1.4 The committee heard evidence from Senator the Hon Nick Sherry, Assistant Treasurer, representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry,<sup>2</sup> and Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, representing the Minister for 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 Mike Mrdak, 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.

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1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 104, 26 November 2009, p. 2907.

2 Senator Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, and Senator Mark Arbib, Minister for Employment Participation and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Government Service Delivery, also represented the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for short periods.

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

### **Changes to departmental structures**

1.6 The committee notes that changes have been made to the departmental structure for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry since the 2009–10 Budget Estimates round. From 1 July 2009, all of the department's quarantine and biosecurity functions have been brought together in the new Biosecurity Services Group. This includes the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS); Biosecurity Australia; the biosecurity areas of the Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health Division; and the Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit.<sup>3</sup>

1.7 The committee also notes that a change has been made to the departmental structure of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government since the 2009–10 Budget Estimates round. As at 1 July 2009, the National Transport Strategy division was incorporated into the Infrastructure and Surface Transport division.

### **Questions on Notice**

1.8 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 14 April 2010.

### **Additional information**

1.9 Answers to questions taken on notice at the committee's budget estimates hearings will be tabled in the Senate in separate volumes entitled 'Additional information relating to the examination of additional estimates 2009-2010 – February 2010 - Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee'. Documents not suitable for inclusion in the additional information volumes will be available on request from the committee secretariat.

1.10 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**

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

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3 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, *Annual Report 2008-09*, pp x and xix.