

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 7 February 2013, 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, the Infrastructure and Transport portfolio, and the Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport portfolio:

- particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2013 [Appropriation Bill (No.3) 2012-13];
- particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2013 [Appropriation Bill (No.4) 2012-13];
- final budget outcome 2011-12; and
- issues from the advances under the annual Appropriation Acts for 2011-12.¹

1.2 The committee was required to report to the Senate on its consideration of 2012-13 additional estimates on 19 March 2013.

Variation of portfolios

1.3 On 8 February 2012, the Senate amended the continuing order relating to the allocation of departments and agencies to committees. The change of allocations resulted in the committee changing its name from Rural Affairs and Transport, to Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, and also taking responsibility for the oversight of the Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport portfolio.

Additional Estimates hearings

1.4 The committee considered the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2012-13 for all portfolios at hearings on 11 and 12 February 2013. The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda as follows:

- Monday 11 February – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio.
- Tuesday 12 February – Infrastructure and Transport portfolio; and Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport portfolio.

1.5 The committee heard evidence from:

- Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister Assisting on Queensland Flood Recovery;
- Senator the Hon Kim Carr, Minister for Human Services representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport; and

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 132, 7 February 2013, p. 3606.

- Senator the Hon Kate Lundy, Minister for Sport, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting for Industry and Innovation, representing the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, and Minister for the Arts.

1.6 Evidence was also provided by:

- Mr Andrew Metcalfe AO, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry;
- Mr Mike Mrdak, Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure and Transport;
- Mrs Glenys Beauchamp, Secretary for the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport; and
- officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates.

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

Changes to departmental structures

1.8 Mr Metcalfe, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry informed the committee of changes to the department's structure in his opening statement on Monday, 11 February 2013, which have occurred since Supplementary Budget Estimates of October 2012.

1.9 In October 2012, the Live Animal Export Division was established with the primary purpose of implementing new regulatory processes resulting from the Farmer Review and the implementation of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System. The division is also responsible for providing strategic policy advice, managing stakeholder and client relations.²

1.10 In February 2013, the Post Entry Quarantine Program was established to provide strategic leadership for the program of works underway across the department to deliver the Government's new post entry quarantine facility in Melbourne.³

1.11 Currently underway is a merger of the Agricultural Productivity, Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Change divisions, essentially turning three divisions into two divisions to reflect the changing nature of the business covered by those divisions. The merger is expected to be finalised in March 2013.⁴

Questions on notice

1.12 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

2 *Estimates Hansard*, 11 February 2013, p. 5.

3 *Estimates Hansard*, 11 February 2013, p. 5.

4 *Estimates Hansard*, 11 February 2013, p. 5.

resolved that written answers and additional information be submitted by 5 April 2013.

Additional information

1.13 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 2012-13, February 2013, 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.

1.14 Answers to questions on notice received from the departments will also be posted on the committee's website at a later date.⁵

Note on references

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

5 Answers to questions on notice, once received, will be published at the following website address:

www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/estimates/index.htm

