

1. INTRODUCTION

Establishment of the Select Committee

1.1 On 23 May 1980, the Senate established the Select Committee and appointed Senators D. S. Jessop, J. W. Knight, the Hon. D. McClelland, C. V. J. Mason, A. J. Missen and S. M. Ryan as members. At its first meeting on 23 May 1980, Senator Jessop was elected Chairman and Senator McClelland was appointed Deputy-Chairman.

1.2 Senator Ryan resigned from the Select Committee on 21 August 1980 and was replaced by Senator E. A. Robertson.

1.3 Senator Knight died on 4 March 1981 and was replaced on the Select Committee by Senator J. P. Sim on 31 March 1981.

Conduct of the Inquiry

1.4 Due to the rather specialised nature of the Inquiry, the Committee did not advertise in the national press for submissions. Instead, it made direct approaches to organisations and individuals having a particular interest in, or involvement with, Parliament's appropriations and staffing. The Committee also obtained from the Presiding Officers and staffs of the United Kingdom House of Commons, the Canadian Senate and House of Commons and the United States' Senate and House of Representatives information concerning their practice in funding and staffing their legislatures.

1.5 In September 1980, the Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons kindly allowed the Committee to take advantage of his private visit to Australia and Senator Missen, on behalf of the Committee, discussed with him the arrangements made following the passage of the *House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978*. Similarly, in November 1980, the Chairman, Senator Jessop, was able to take advantage of a visit to Canada and the United Kingdom on other business to have discussions with the Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons as well as Members and officers of the United Kingdom House of Commons.

1.6 During the course of the Inquiry the Committee received fifteen formal submissions. Four individuals, and eight organisations represented by twenty-three persons gave further evidence during five days of public hearings. In addition, the views of a number of other interested organisations and individuals were presented to the Committee.

Submissions

1.7 The submissions received by the Committee were relatively few in number owing to the specialised nature of the Inquiry. Nonetheless, the information gathered by the Committee is comprehensive and provides a proper basis for consideration of the issues central to the reference.

1.8 There was general recognition that Parliament should have control of its own appropriations and staffing and an indication was given by witnesses from the appropriate Parliamentary and Government departments that there would be no legal, technical or administrative obstacles in making suitable arrangements. It was recognised that the view could be taken that such a goal might be at variance with the interests of the Executive in maintaining absolute discretion in all aspects of Commonwealth funding. However, this attitude ignores the doctrine of the separation, or tripartition of powers, which is enunciated in the Constitution and cited by witnesses as strongly supporting the objective of autonomy and independence for the Parliament in relation to its own appropriations and staffing.

Acknowledgements

1.9 The Committee expresses its thanks to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Commonwealth Government and the individuals who participated in the Inquiry. A list of witnesses who gave evidence at the public hearings of the Committee is contained in Appendix 7. A list of the persons and organisations who presented a submission or other material is contained in Appendix 8.

1.10 The Committee also acknowledges the valuable assistance provided by the Presiding Officers and staffs of the United Kingdom House of Commons, the Canadian Senate and House of Commons and the United States' Senate and House of Representatives.

1.11 In addition, it is worthy of note that the appearance of the Speaker of the House of Representatives before the Committee, on 12 February 1981, was the first occasion in the history of the Commonwealth Parliament that a Speaker has appeared before a Senate Committee.