

Appendix 1 Conduct of Inquiry

Appointment and Terms of Reference

On 25 March 1999 the Senate re-established the Select Committee on Information Technologies to:

- a) evaluate the development of self-regulatory codes in the information industries;
- b) monitor the personal, social and economic impact of continuing technological change created by industries and services utilising information technologies;
- c) examine the Government's decision to establish a regulatory framework relating to illegal or offensive material published and transmitted through online services such as the Internet; and
- d) inquire into and report on such other matters as may be referred to it by the Senate.

On 31 March 1999 the Committee resolved to complete the inquiry commenced by the former Committee in the 38th Parliament, namely:

To evaluate the appropriateness, effectiveness and privacy implications of the existing self-regulatory framework in relation to the information and communications industries and, in particular, the adequacy of the complaints regime.

Advertising the inquiry

The former Committee advertised its proposed inquiry in *The Weekend Australian* on 22 November 1997, calling for written submissions to be lodged by 5 January 1998. In addition, the Committee wrote to relevant Federal Government Ministers, State and Territory governments, and organisations and individuals with an interest in the various media sectors, inviting submissions.

Evidence to the inquiry

The Committee received 68 submissions from organisations and individuals. Due to the length of time that had lapsed since the first submissions were received in the previous Parliament, many submitters were requested to provide an updated version of their original submission. Details of all submissions received are listed in Appendix 2.

During the course of the inquiry, the Committee also received additional information relating to the written submissions and follow-up from evidence, details of which are listed in Appendix 3.

Course of inquiry

Public hearings were held in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra in February 1998, and in Canberra, Sydney and Adelaide in April 1998. Further hearings were held in Canberra on 11 June and in Sydney on 11 August 1998. A list of witnesses who gave evidence is set out in Appendix 4.

The transcripts of evidence are available at the Committee's website:

<http://www/aph/gov.au/it>

The Committee also conducted a private briefing with Dr Michael Stace, Executive Director of the New Zealand Broadcasting Standards Authority and held a videoconference with the Rt Hon Lord Wakeham, Chairman of the Press Complaints Commission in the United Kingdom, in February 1998.

The Committee Chair and then Secretary attended a hearing of the Complaints Committee of the Australian Press Council in an observer capacity on 25 February 1998. Further, on 23 April 1998 the Committee inspected the facilities of the Ten Network in Sydney.

The Committee's predecessor compiled in excess of 2000 pages of submissions and transcripts of evidence during the 38th Parliament. In its November 1998 *Report on the Need for the Committee in the Thirty-ninth Parliament*, the then Committee noted that, while it had prepared and deliberated on a substantial report on self-regulation, there were several developments scheduled for resolution in the following year, which it felt needed to be scrutinised prior to this report's finalisation. For example, the revision of two major self-regulation codes, the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters, Commercial Radio Codes of Practice and the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations, Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice.

In preparing this report, therefore, the Committee drew on all the evidence received by its predecessor, plus material received once the Committee had ceased to exist (between November 1998 and March 1999), the updated advice received by the current Committee from several of the witnesses who had given evidence at hearings during 1998 and other recent events which have occurred, relevant to the Committee's inquiry. As a result, significant parts of the original report have been re-written.