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The Parliament of the
Commonwealth of Australia

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EXPENDITURE

Report

Work and progress - Unfinished
Inquiries report

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Secretary: Mrs S.M. Harlow

1. The nominee of the Chairman of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts who, in accordance with Clause (2) of the Resolution of Appointment, is a member of the Expenditure Committee.

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**WORK AND PROGRESS : UNFINISHED INQUIRIES REPORT
REPORT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXPENDITURE

1. On 4 May 1983 the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure was appointed to:

- a) consider any papers on public expenditure presented to the House and such of the estimates as it sees fit to examine;
- b) consider how, if at all, policies implied in the figures of expenditure and in the estimates may be carried out more economically;
- c) examine the relationships between the costs and benefits of implementing government programs; and
- d) inquire into and report on any question in connection with public expenditure which is referred to it by resolution of the House.

2. In December 1983 the Speaker agreed to a significant restructuring of the Committee's Secretariat. The effect of this restructuring has been to enlarge the staffing of the Secretariat and to broaden the range of expertise available to the Committee. Recruitment of additional staff made available through the restructuring was completed in June 1984.

Final Reports

3. During the 33rd Parliament the Committee has tabled the following final reports. These are set out below.

. Lighthouses: Do we keep the Keepers?

4. This report was tabled on 8 December 1983. It was prepared in response to a reference by the Minister for Transport who sought the Committee's assistance in examination of the issues surrounding the unmanning of Australian lighthouses. The Committee recommended a structured approach to decisions about lightstation unmanning and developed objective criteria for such decisions. The Government is expected to respond to the Committee's report in the 1984 Budget Session of Parliament.

. The Way we Play: Commonwealth Assistance for Sport and Recreation

5. Examination of the Commonwealth Government's programs of assistance to sport and recreation led the Committee to recommend measures which would focus Government assistance in this field less narrowly on elite sports and sports people. The report was tabled on 8 December 1983 and the Government's response, which supported the general thrust of the report and accepted a high proportion of the Committee's recommendations, was presented to Parliament on 13 September 1984.

. Payments to athletes and teams who did not participate in 1980 Moscow Olympics

6. In this brief report, which was tabled on 10 April 1984, the Committee reported on the nature, purpose, and procedures associated with payments to athletes and teams who did not participate in the 1980 Olympic Games. The Committee found some deficiencies in the Department of Finance arrangements through which the payments were made. These deficiencies were subsequently remedied.

. Management of the Main Battle Tank: Who was Outgunned?

7. This report reviewed the Auditor-General's Efficiency Audit of the management of the main battle tank by the Department of Defence and was tabled on 4 June 1984. The Committee was critical of the Auditor-General's review and, as a result of his suggestion that the Efficiency Audit Division of his Office be disbanded, the Committee agreed to examine in detail the efficiency review mechanisms in the Australian Public Service.

. Ringing in the Changes: Telecom's Zonal Charging Policies

8. The Committee noted that significant population changes had occurred since Telecom's zonal boundaries were established in 1960. The effect of population changes was particularly evident in outer metropolitan zones. The Committee therefore recommended changes to the structure of Telecom's charging zones and other measures to improve services provided to Telecom clients. The report was tabled on 4 October 1984 and in it, the Committee indicated that a second stage to this inquiry, to examine Telecom's services to rural areas, would be undertaken.

. In a Home or At Home: Accommodation and Home Care for the Aged: A Follow-up Report

9. In October 1982 the Committee presented a report entitled In a Home or At Home: Accommodation and Home Care for the Aged. No Government response to this report has yet been made but the Committee had observed that a number of the recommendations made in the report had been implemented. The Committee therefore resolved to prepare a follow-up report to examine the extent of action in this field. Although the central recommendation of the original report, the establishment of an Office of Aged Care, had not been implemented, the Committee found that there had been a number of improvements in delivery of services to the aged.

Partially Completed Inquiries

10. The Committee has also tabled an interim report and an information paper during the 33rd Parliament. These documents represent partially completed reports.

Interim Report:

. Aboriginal Development Commission: Interim Report on Efficiency and Effectiveness of Expenditure

11. In February 1984 the Committee agreed to conduct an inquiry into programs of expenditure funded by the Aboriginal Development Commission. The Committee carried out extensive inspections, met with representatives of Aboriginal communities and conducted both public and in-camera hearings. An interim report was prepared and tabled in October 1984. The Committee strongly supported the continuance and strengthening of the ADC as a focus for Aboriginal development. However, significant improvements to the Commission's administration were recommended.

12. The Committee has agreed to prepare a more detailed report on its inquiry into ADC programs and a confidential report which deals with issues of a serious nature it has had drawn to its attention during the course of its inquiry. Evidence and minutes of Committee proceedings were tabled with the interim report. It is unlikely that further evidence will be collected.

Information Paper:

Invalidity Provisions of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme.

13. An information paper prepared by the Committee on the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme has been tabled. The Committee believes that the paper raises sufficient issues to warrant further inquiry and has indicated that it wishes to pursue this subject through further inquiry.

Incomplete Inquiries

14. The Committee has three incomplete inquiries. They, and their current status are:

Funding of the Arts

15. This inquiry was originally advertised in 1982. Action on the inquiry was deferred because of a federal election in 1983 and to await the outcome of other investigations in this field. The inquiry was readvertised in June 1984 and 70 submissions have been received to date. The Committee has begun inspections and hearings in Melbourne and Darwin associated with this inquiry. However, the range of information in the submissions received so far indicate that there is intense interest in this subject and that extensive hearings and inspections will be required.

Inquiry into Public Service Efficiency Review Mechanisms

16. This inquiry was advertised in June 1984 and 15 submissions have been received. The inquiry has stimulated significant interest within the Public Service and the Committee has held private meetings with representatives of government departments and other interested authorities. It is expected that the inquiry will be a fairly complex one involving

extensive hearings and examination of review mechanisms in other governmental systems. The Committee will, therefore, be unable to complete its inquiry within the present Parliament.

Telecom: Rural Charging Policies

17. In finalising its report on Telecom's zonal charging policies, Ring in the Changes, the Committee became aware that a similar review of Telecom charging policies in rural areas would be appropriate. It has therefore resolved to advertise such an inquiry at the earliest opportunity. It is unlikely that the advertisement of this inquiry could be completed within the remaining period of the present Parliament.

18. It is recommended that the Committee be reconstituted in the new Parliament. It is further recommended that the new Parliament give its new Committee power to consider and make use of the records of the present Committee in order to carry forward and ultimately to report on the work carried out during the present session.

LEO McLEAY, MP

October 1984

Chairman