

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Terms of reference

1.1 This report sets out the findings of the Select Committee on Certain Aspects of Queensland Government Administration related to Commonwealth Government Affairs (committee).

1.2 On 30 September 2014, the Senate established a committee to inquire into:

(1) (a) the amount of Commonwealth funds allocated or paid to the State of Queensland since 26 March 2012, with particular reference to:

(i) the purposes for which the funds were appropriated by the Parliament,

(ii) performance measures in relation to Commonwealth funds paid to the State of Queensland,

(iii) identified breaches of funding agreements or conditions,

(iv) the proportion of the Queensland State budget derived from Commonwealth funds, and

(v) whether any Commonwealth funds have been used by the State of Queensland for state government advertising or party political purposes,

(b) the administration of the Queensland courts and judicial system insofar as it relates to cross vesting arrangements, with particular reference to judicial independence and separation of powers;

(c) approval process for the development of projects for the export of resources or services insofar as they are administered by the Commonwealth or under a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth;

(d) the extent to which Queensland State Government policies and practices are consistent with Australia's obligations under international environmental law instruments;

(e) whether it is appropriate for the Federal Minister for the Environment to delegate his approval powers to the Queensland State Government under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* by way of approval bilateral agreements or strategic assessments;

(f) the extent to which Queensland State Government policies and practices are consistent with Australia's obligations under international human rights instruments, with particular reference to:

(i) the administration of prisons, and

(ii) detention without trial; and

(g) any other matter the committee considers relevant.

(2) the adequacy of Commonwealth oversight of the approval of coal seam gas projects in Queensland.¹

Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 The committee was created by the Senate on 30 September 2014 to report by 27 March 2015.

1.4 The inquiry was advertised nationally in *The Australian* on 5 November 2014. The committee received a total of 167 submissions. They are listed in Appendix 1.

1.5 The committee held a total of six public hearings in the State of Queensland. These were conducted in Brisbane, Surfers Paradise, Cairns and Toowoomba. The public hearings and witnesses are listed in Appendix 2.

Acknowledgments

1.6 The committee appreciates the time and effort of individuals and organisations who provided written and oral submissions to the inquiry. Their work has assisted the committee considerably in its inquiry.

Structure of the report

1.7 The report is structured as follows. Concerns relating to public administration are considered in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 considers a number of environmental concerns.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 57, 30 September 2014, pp 1542–1545.