

Chapter 1

Background to the inquiry

The Energy White Paper

1.1 On 15 June 2004 the Government released its Energy White Paper (EWP), titled *Securing Australia's Energy Future*.¹ The EWP sets out the Government's strategy for Australia's future energy development. As with White Papers in general, it is a declaration of intent, or a blueprint, of how future energy goals will be met. The Prime Minister has stated that three themes underpin the Government's approach to energy policy: prosperity, security and sustainability.²

Terms of reference and conduct of the inquiry

1.2 On 24 June 2004 the Senate referred this inquiry to the Committee to examine the budgetary and environmental implications of the EWP and report by 2 September 2004. Because of the short timeframe, the Committee determined to write directly to relevant government departments to invite submissions. The Committee received 10 submissions, as listed at Appendix 1.

1.3 In order to explore the issues in more detail, the Committee held three public hearings in Canberra on 4, 5 and 10 August 2004 respectively. A list of individuals and organisations who gave evidence at these hearings is at Appendix 2.

1.4 Because of the timing of the October 2004 federal election, the Committee was unable to complete its inquiry by the end of the 40th Parliament and presented an interim report to this effect to the President of the Senate on 2 September 2004.³

1.5 On 8 December 2004, the Senate referred the inquiry back to the Committee for report by 10 March 2005, giving the Committee the power to consider and use the records of the previous inquiry. The reporting date was extended on 9 February 2005 to 18 April 2005.

1.6 The inquiry was again publicised on the parliamentary website and a range of organisations was contacted to invite submissions. The Committee received a further 11 submissions, also listed at Appendix 1.

1 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Securing Australia's Energy Future* (EWP), 2004.

2 EWP, Prime Minister's Foreword, p. iii.

3 Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee, *Budgetary and environmental implications of the Government's Energy White Paper: Interim Report*, September 2004.

1.7 In order to explore the issues raised by these submissions in more detail, the Committee held a public hearing in Canberra on 18 March 2005. A list of those who gave evidence at that hearing is at Appendix 2.

Outline of the report

1.8 Chapter 2 provides an overview of the EWP and the Government's key initiatives.

1.9 Chapter 3 examines key issues raised in submissions and evidence.

1.10 In Chapter 4 the Committee presents its conclusions and recommendations.

Acknowledgements

1.11 The Committee wishes to express its appreciation for the cooperation of all witnesses to its inquiry, whether by making submissions, by personal attendance at a hearing or by giving both oral and written evidence.

Notes on references

1.12 References in this report are to individual submissions as received by the Committee rather than a bound volume of submissions. References to Committee Hansard are to the proof Hansard: page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcript.