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Opening Statement to Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings  
Senate Economics Legislation Committee  
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In June 2012, I indicated my intention to staff to revisit the structure of the Department following the machinery of government changes announced in December 2011.

One of the key drivers of this review was to ensure the Department is making the best use of its valuable resources and to maximise the synergies that now lie within the new Department. As a result of the review, I announced changes to the Department's structure on Thursday 27 September which will become effective from Monday 22 October.

I would like to provide the following summary of the key changes for the information of the Committee.

A Small Business Division has been created to provide specific focus on small business issues. Earlier today the Minister for Small Business announced the appointment of Mr Mark Brennan as the Australian Small Business Commissioner. This is an important position which will provide additional support for Australia's two million small businesses. The Commissioner will work directly with the Minister for Small Business, and will be supported by the Office of the Small Business Commissioner, which will be located within the Department.

A new International Education and Science Division has been created with the merger of international education and international science functions to take advantage of common international activities.

The Divisions of Research and Science and Infrastructure have been combined to create a Science and Research Division. A separate SKA Office has been created for the SKA Project and I will be looking to fill the role of SKA Project Director in the coming months.

The re-named Tertiary Quality and Student Support Division will have responsibility for a range of regulatory functions for tertiary education and will include education services for overseas students and the Tuition Protection Scheme.

The renamed Skills Connect Division will focus on the development of simpler and more responsive administration of Commonwealth direct funded skills programs as well as the

re-engineering of existing Commonwealth skills programs into the new Skills Connect national program.

I am keen for the Department to develop a 'no wrong door' approach to program delivery in the states and territories across the Department's programs. With this in mind an 'in principle decision' has been taken to explore how best to undertake more of the delivery of skills programs in state and territory office locations. This change potentially involves the relocation of staff, and a full consultation process with affected staff will take place before any final decision is taken on this change.

Finally, I have recently created the position of Chief Economist and appointed Mr Mark Cully. I have asked Mark to work across the Department to maximise the opportunities arising from the expanded Department as well as strengthen the strategic focus of our policies and programs from an economic research perspective.

I am personally committed to building one Departmental culture, not a replication of existing practices, rather a new and collaborative culture that reflects the new Department and its new purpose.

The review appears to have been received positively by staff and the Department is now working on its implementation and the delivery of its expanded agenda.

With the Chairman's agreement, I would like to table a copy of the revised organisation structure for the information of the Committee.