



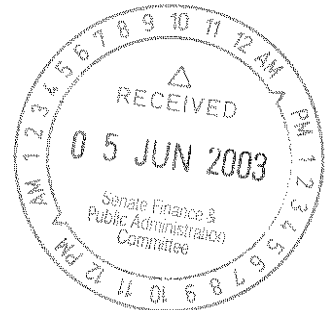
AUSTRALIAN SENATE

CLERK OF THE SENATE

hc/let/13974

4 June 2003

Senator B. Mason  
Chair  
Finance and Public Administration  
Legislation Committee  
S1.35  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Senator Mason

#### RELEVANCE OF QUESTIONS IN ESTIMATES HEARINGS

During the current round of estimates hearings the issue of relevance of questions has been raised on several occasions.

In 1999, following estimates hearings, the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee made a supplementary report to the Senate on claims by Senator Ian Macdonald that questions asked at the hearings were not relevant to the estimates. The Senate referred the matter to the Procedure Committee. In its Second Report of 1999, the Procedure Committee endorsed (without dissent) the following test of relevance of questions at estimates hearings:

Any questions going to the operations or financial positions of the departments and agencies which are seeking funds in the estimates are relevant questions for the purpose of estimates hearings.

The Senate endorsed (without dissent) this statement by the Procedure Committee on 22 November 1999.

The stated relevance test for questions at estimates hearings is therefore the test adopted by the Senate.

As the events of 1999 seem not to be universally recalled, I request that this letter be circulated to all members of the committee.

Yours sincerely

(Harry Evans)