

The Senate

Finance and Public Administration
Legislation Committee

Additional estimates 2002–03

March 2003

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Senator Lyn Allison	Senator Sue Mackay
Senator the Hon Paul Calvert	Senator Jan McLucas
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ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2002-03

INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 12 December 2002 and 6 February 2003, the Senate referred to the Committee for examination and report the following documents:

- Issues from the Advance to the Finance Minister as a final charge for the year ended 30 June 2002;
- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure for the service of the year ending on 30 June 2003 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2002-2003];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2003 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2002-2003];
- Statement of savings expected in annual appropriations made by Act No. 43 of 2002 [*Appropriation Act (No. 1) 2002-2003*] and Act No. 44 of 2002 [*Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2002-2003*]; and
- Final budget outcome 2001-2002.

1.2 The Committee is required to report to the Senate by 19 March 2003.

Portfolio Coverage

1.3 The Committee has responsibility for the following portfolios, departments and agencies:

- Parliament;
- Prime Minister and Cabinet; and
- Finance and Administration.

Hearings

1.4 The Committee held public hearings on 10 and 11 February 2003. Copies of the Committee's transcript of evidence are tabled in two volumes of *Hansard* for the information of the Senate. Further written explanations furnished by departments and agencies will be tabled, when received, in volumes entitled Additional Information.

1.5 The Committee received evidence from the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon Paul Calvert; Senator the Hon Robert Hill, Minister for Defence representing the Prime Minister; Senator the Hon Nick Minchin, Minister for Finance and Administration; and Senator the Hon Eric Abetz, Special Minister of State responsible for Outcome 3 of the Department of Finance and Administration and for the Australian Electoral Commission, and also representing the Prime Minister and the

Minister for Finance and Administration, together with officers of the departments and agencies concerned.

GENERAL ISSUES

1.6 In this report, the Committee presents a number of the specific matters raised during its examination of the additional estimates of the portfolios it oversees. Before going to those issues, the Committee draws attention to three general matters that emerged during its considerations.

Correction to evidence

1.7 The Committee notes the following corrections to evidence provided subsequent to the hearings.

1.8 On 19 February 2003, Mr Hamburger, Assistant Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat—Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet—corrected his evidence relating to the number of Cabinet documents returned by former minister Dr Wooldridge. In his evidence Mr Hamburger originally stated:

We are not precise to the last document yet, but it is of the order of 600 that were returned.¹

1.9 After checking PM&C records following the hearing, Mr Hamburger confirmed that the number of documents returned by Dr Wooldridge and destroyed by the Cabinet Secretariat was 720.

1.10 On 24 February 2003, the Clerk of the Senate corrected his evidence to a question asked by Senator Murray. The question related to the frequency of publication of the *Questions on Notice Summary*. At the hearing Mr Evans said that the document was an annual publication when in fact it is six-monthly.

1.11 On 26 February 2003, Mr Bolton, Secretary of JHD, corrected his evidence to questions relating to work done on the tennis courts at Parliament House. The correction provides details of the budget for the project and the cost when completed. Furthermore, information provided details of the costs associated with the first project on the tennis courts in the 2001-02 financial year.

1.12 The Committee registers its appreciation of these prompt corrections to evidence.

1 *Committee Hansard*, F&PA 182

Responses to Questions on Notice

1.13 The promptness with which the corrections above were provided to the Committee stands in sharp relief to the belated provision of answers to questions on notice that the Committee experienced with the PM&C portfolio.

1.14 A number of questions on notice for PM&C at the November 2002 Budget Supplementary Estimates hearing remained out standing at the week prior to the Additional Estimates hearing. Answers were due by 17 January 2003. At that time 17 questions in the PM&C Portfolio remained unanswered.

1.15 PM&C supplied 11 of those answers on 3 February and the final six on 7 February 2003, that is one working day before the Committee's hearings with PM&C started. Moreover, answers to questions outstanding from the May 2002 Budget Estimates hearing were only supplied on the morning of the Department's appearance on 10 February 2003.

1.16 The Committee also notes that one of the answers concerned a question on notice overdue from a select committee inquiry that concluded in October 2002. In the section of the report on PM&C, the Committee examines this example in detail.

1.17 The Committee is concerned with the practice of submitting late answers. In particular, it observes that providing answers immediately before a Department's appearance does not allow the Committee sufficient time to adequately examine the answers.

1.18 The Committee reminds agencies of Standing Order 26(9) that empowers the Committee to set a date for the receipt of questions on notice. Agencies are obliged to comply with Committee deadlines. As is discussed later in the report, the Committee has asked the President and Clerk of the Senate to propose options that would strengthen compliance with deadlines for questions on notice, both for Committees and the Senate *Notice Paper*.

1.19 The Committee also draws the attention of agencies to the point that failure to comply with a requirement of a Senate committee may constitute contempt.

Improving PAES Transparency

1.20 The Committee is pleased to see the inclusion in DOFA's Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements (PAES) of expenditure items that are rephased. It notes that the PAES clearly identifies the reason for the rephrasing and its budgetary impact. In this case, it involves funding of \$1.54 million for the Australian Antarctic Territory Extended Continental Shelf project being moved forward (ie. 'rephased'), offset by

Government assistance of \$0.1 million to research organisations associated with major political parties, producing a net saving of \$1.44 million.²

1.21 In the Committee's view, this is a good example that clearly identifies what has been rephased and its effect in dollar-terms on the portfolio's budget. The inclusion of information in this format enhances the transparency of the PAES, particularly as it helps with tracking changes to the timing (or phasing) of expenditure items.

1.22 The Committee welcomes DOFA's initiative in improving the transparency of its own budget statements in this regard. It also notes DOFA's evidence that there are no reasons for not adopting such an approach to reporting rephased items in the broad guidance DOFA issues to agencies on preparing PAES and Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS).

1.23 The Committee urges DOFA to develop, in consultation with other agencies if required, advice on the format for reporting rephased expenditure for inclusion in its broad guidance on PBS and PAES.

PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS

1.24 None of the Parliamentary departments sought additional appropriations in the 2002-03 financial year and therefore Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements were not prepared.

1.25 Witnesses from the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff were not called to give evidence on this occasion.

Department of the Senate

1.26 Issues raised by members of the Committee and other senators in attendance included the:

- powers and procedures of Australian Parliamentary Committees meeting overseas;
- Podger review and new security arrangements for gaining access to areas of the building; and
- length of time taken to provide answers to questions on notice.

1.27 The Committee discussed the potential benefits for some inquiries of parliamentary committees taking evidence in foreign countries. The Committee was advised, however, of the barriers facing this practice. In addition to budgetary

2 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2002-2203, Finance and Administration Portfolio, p.26

constraints, Australian committees have limited powers in foreign jurisdictions, especially in relation to the protection of foreign witnesses giving evidence.³

1.28 The Committee questioned the Department about developments flowing from the Podger review into the administration of Parliament House. The President of the Senate, Senator Calvert, informed the Committee of new security arrangements in operation; automated security pass access into the Senate and House of Representatives car parks; and security screening of members of Parliament entering the building. Evidence given indicated that other aspects of the Podger review were currently before the Senate Appropriations and Staffing Committee and that no recommendations, other than those relating to security, had been implemented.

1.29 Committee members explored the problem of late answers to questions on notice, both for those on the *Notice Paper* and taken at estimates hearings. Advice was sought from the President and the Department on ways to overcome non-compliance with deadlines and reduce its incidence. The Clerk outlined several options to address the matter, including:

- drawing the statistical information contained in the *Questions on Notice Summary* to the attention of ministers and departments via the President and the Clerk respectively;
- adding estimates questions to the terms of standing order 74, which deals with questions on notice lodged on the *Notice Paper*; and
- requiring departments to table or present reports explaining any failure to provide answers on time.⁴

Department of the Parliamentary Library

1.30 Issues raised by members of the Committee and other senators in attendance included:

- statement of cash flows reported for the 2001-02 financial year;
- employee leave entitlements; and
- *Bills Digests*.

1.31 A matter was raised relating to figures reported in the Department's (DPL) annual report for 2001-02.⁵ Committee members questioned the seemingly large increase in proceeds from maturity of term deposits and purchase of term deposits,

3 In additional information provided on 24 February 2003, the Clerk forwarded a paper titled, 'Overseas Travel by Senate and Joint Committees' that elaborates on the issues surrounding this matter.

4 The Clerk of the Senate, on 24 February 2003, provided the Committee with additional information on this matter. The information will be included in the Committee's volumes of additional information which will be tabled in the Senate in due course.

5 Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2002, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Report for 2001-02, p.39

during the financial years 2000-01 to 2001-02. Mr Johnston, Assistant Secretary, Resource Management, explained that the increase had arisen mainly due to variations in interest rates and the level of average funds held over the year. Mr Templeton, Secretary, added that with the Government's revised agency banking scheme under the accrual accounting arrangements the department no longer received a net benefit from investing.

1.32 Members of the Committee questioned DPL on employee leave entitlements, in particular the department's liability for excess or overdue leave. Mr Johnston informed the Committee that DPL should, in theory, carry no excess or overdue leave. The department's certified agreement provides for leave to be paid out as of 1 April each year where staff have more than 40 days leave credit. Managers are expected to monitor leave levels and ensure their staff take reasonable leave during the year, while allowing for cases where a staff member might want to build up leave for a major holiday.

1.33 A question was asked on the feasibility of updating the *Bills Digests* in light of further information coming out of committee reports and other sources. Committee members noted that *Bills Digests* are heavily used and referenced within parliament and that a consolidated memorandum of a matter would be useful. The Department explained that such an undertaking would require additional resources. Further questions were put to the department on the possibility of producing a supplementary publication with concise information linking the business on the *Notice Paper* with the *Bills Digests*. Dr Verrier, Head of Information and Research Services, agreed to take note of the suggestion and discuss it with DPL's legal team and staff who work on the digest.

1.34 In addition, Dr Verrier informed the Committee of a new DPL initiative titled an 'advertisement of legislative highlights' which provides links to material on legislation.

Joint House Department

1.35 Issues raised by members of the Committee and other senators in attendance included:

- lighting in the Senate and House of Representatives Chambers;
- security issues, including restricted access in the Ministerial wing, first floor courtyard above the President's office, and theft in Parliament House;
- work and maintenance carried out in Parliament House and grounds; and
- water use and conservation in and around Parliament House.

1.36 Security matters were raised, including questions relating to the restricted access signage in the corridor between the Prime Minister's office and the Cabinet room. The Committee was told that restrictions only apply to visitors in the building and do not affect 'authorised personnel' such as parliamentary pass holders. Mr Lucas, Security Controller, explained that this measure was his initiative following discussions between him and staff of the Prime Minister's personal protection unit.

1.37 Committee members sought further information relating to water use in and around Parliament house in the context of the current drought. Capturing run-off water and other conservation projects are intended to be looked at over the coming years. JHD noted, however, that a catchment system may not be viable at this time due to the age and size of the building. JHD undertook to make reports on the matter available to the Committee as soon as practicable.

1.38 Answers to follow-up questions from previous hearings revealed that the incidence of theft in Parliament House offices had declined. Mr Bolton, Secretary, explained that most cases of the theft involved items left unattended or unsecured.

PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET PORTFOLIO

1.39 No departments or agencies in the Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio sought additional appropriations in the 2002-03 financial year and therefore a Portfolio Additional Estimates Statement was not prepared.

1.40 Witnesses from the Office of National Assessments; Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman; and Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security were not called to give evidence on this occasion.

Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General

1.41 Issues raised by members of the Committee and other senators in attendance included the:

- Governor-General's travel expenditure;
- inquiry into complaints of child sex abuse in the Brisbane diocese of the Anglican Church;
- maintenance and use of the Governor-General's Canberra residence and of Admiralty House in Sydney; and
- Governor-General's media exposure surrounding the predeployment of HMAS *Kanimbla*.

1.42 Questions were asked about the higher travel expenditure of the Governor-General's first year in office compared with his predecessor's final year. Mr Bonsey, Official Secretary, told the Committee that the figures in question were typical of every Governor-General's first year in office. This reflects, in large measure, the established practice of official visits to each of the states when a Governor-General assumes office.

1.43 Committee members questioned Mr Bonsey about whether any Commonwealth moneys were used in relation to the inquiry into complaints of child sex abuse in the Brisbane diocese of the Anglican Church. Mr Bonsey told the Committee that the office had not paid any travel or legal costs relating to the matter.

1.44 Members of the Committee also questioned Mr Bonsey regarding his role in preparing a media statement following comments made by the Governor-General at the deployment of defence personnel on HMAS *Kanimbla* to the Middle East. Mr Bonsey told the Committee that it was his initiative as he felt there was a misunderstanding developing in the media following the Governor-General's comments. Mr Bonsey also indicated that he drafted the statement for the Governor-General's approval, prior to its release.

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

1.45 Issues raised by members of the Committee and other senators in attendance included:

- matters outstanding in relation to SIEVX;
- cabinet documents in possession of former ministers;
- the World Cup Cricket 2003;
- the deployment of Australian Defence Force personnel to Iraq;
- the Centenary Medal;
- National Security Campaign Taskforce, counter terrorism and related government advertising campaigns; and
- the Prime Minister's Code of Conduct in relation to declaration of gifts.

1.46 The Committee raised the matter of a diplomatic cable of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, dated 23 October 2001 relating to the sinking of a vessel known as SIEV X (Suspected Illegal Entry Vehicle X). SIEV X sank on 19 October 2001 with the loss of 353 lives while transiting from Indonesia to Christmas Island.

1.47 In addition to questions about the circulation of the cable within government and intelligence that informed it, members of the Committee explored the delay in providing the cable to the Senate. The Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident had originally requested it on 30 July 2002 but the cable had not been produced when that Committee tabled its report on 23 October 2002. Following this Committee's request for it during the November 2002 Supplementary Estimates, PM&C provided the cable to the Committee on 3 February 2003.

1.48 Officers from PM&C cited two reasons for the delay. First, an 'administrative oversight' had meant the Select Committee did not receive the cable. The Committee notes that DFAT advised PM&C of the sections of the cable that could be declassified in August 2002, ie. while the Select Committee was still running.⁶ Apparently PM&C overlooked the cable during September-October in the lead up to the Select Committee tabling its report.

6 Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, Additional Estimates 2002-2003, Evidence FAD&T 203-204

1.49 The second factor was a ‘slight delay’ following the November 2002 Supplementary Estimates when PM&C questioned DFAT’s view that the addressees on the cable should be deleted. In the event, the cable was released with some sections censored on national security grounds but with the list of addressees disclosed.

1.50 The Committee’s concerns about delays in answering questions on notice mentioned earlier in this report extend to delays in providing evidence to all Senate committees. Such delays are particularly problematic in case of select committees which have a finite life compared with standing committees. As this example shows, delays in providing answers can deny committees the opportunity to scrutinise relevant evidence fully and thus hamper their ability to report on matters referred to them by the Senate.

1.51 In relation to the Australian cricket team’s matches in the World Cup in Zimbabwe, the Minister and officials were asked if the Government made any formal requests to the International Cricket Council (ICC) for a change in venue. The Minister tabled a letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, to the President of the ICC, Mr Gray. The letter expressed the Government’s view that matches should not be played in Zimbabwe for political and security issues. However, it did recognize that the World Cup is an event organized by an independent sporting organisation and that it was a decision for that organisation as to where matches are played.

1.52 The Committee attempted to explore several issues to do with the Government’s counter terrorism advertising campaign, in particular the cost, the process for selecting consultants, the research informing the campaign and the methodology for evaluating its impact on public perception. While information on the budget and selection process was provided, PM&C said that the research findings are considered confidential at this stage. It indicated that, in accordance with longstanding practice, consideration would be given to releasing the research findings at the end of the campaign. When asked to provide a copy of the research questionnaire PM&C took it on notice so see if that information could be provided to the Committee.

1.53 Committee members also attempted to find out how the advertising campaign would be evaluated. To the Committee’s frustration, a definitive response was not forthcoming during the hearing. Instead, witnesses answered in vague, circular terms. PM&C ultimately took the matter on notice, assuring the Committee it would provide information on the benchmarks, criteria and guidelines that will be used to evaluate the campaign.

1.54 As all Senate Committees make clear at the start of hearings, the Senate has reaffirmed on a number of occasions that there are no areas in connection with the expenditure of public funds where any person has discretion to withhold details or explanations from the Parliament or its Committees unless the Parliament has expressly provided otherwise.

Australian National Audit Office

1.55 Issues raised by members of the Committee and other senators in attendance included:

- accounting standards;
- the ANAO's lease on Centenary House;
- restatement of the Commonwealth revenue with GST properly included as a Commonwealth tax;
- fraud risk strategies and whistleblowing; and
- employee leave entitlements.

1.56 Committee members sought clarification on the differences in financial reporting between the Government Financial Statistics (GFS) and the Consolidated Financial Statements (CFS), the latter which reflect the principles articulated in Australian Accounting Standards 31 (AAS31). Mr Barrett, Auditor-General, stated that under the AAS 'revenues' are defined as:

Inflows or other enhancements, or savings in outflows, of future economic benefits in the form of increases in assets or reductions in liabilities of the entity, other than those relating to contributions by owners, that result in an increase in equity during the reporting period.⁷

1.57 The GFS framework, on the other hand, captures:

All transactions that increase the net worth of the general government sector.⁸

1.58 Mr Barrett also observed that, among other differences, the GFS framework is economically oriented, whereas the CFS framework is accounting oriented.

1.59 The Committee was informed of the harmonisation process currently underway with public sector accounting standards converging with private sector standards. The Government has also committed the Commonwealth to harmonising its standards with international accounting standards from 1 January 2005.

1.60 The Auditor-General expressed some concerns that he and other Australian auditors-general share that the push to harmonise standards needs to take into account differences between the public and private sector. Mr Barrett also referred to the time pressures that Australian audit offices face in developing the new standards. Noting the limited expertise available in this field of accounting, Mr Barrett indicated that he and his counterparts had agreed to pool staffing resources to work on this project.

7 *Committee Hansard*, F&PA 101

8 *Committee Hansard*, F&PA 102

Australian Public Service Commission

1.61 Issues raised by members of the Committee and other senators in attendance included:

- requests for reviews of actions affecting former APS employees;
- remuneration—funding pay increases; overlapping salary ranges; and mobility between government agencies; and
- the effects of devolved staffing policies in the APS relating to pay and working conditions.

1.62 A matter was raised relating to former APS employees not being able to pursue complaints before the Public Service Commission or Merit Protection Commissioner. Mr Lamond, Merit Protection Commissioner, stated that:

The only capacity that is provided for a review is under the Public Service Regulations. Under regulation 7.2 an individual can seek a review of an action insofar as it is related to previous employment if it affected their separation benefits.⁹

1.63 Nonetheless, Mr Podger, Public Service Commissioner, said that he has on occasion exercised his discretion to refer such cases back to the agencies concerned with the suggestion that they might wish to review them. However, Mr Podger indicated that he has limited scope under the legislation to intervene directly in departmental decisions of this kind. In terms of amending the legislation to enable ex-employees cases to be reviewed, Mr Podger pointed out that there would be a concern not to expand the role of the APS Commission into areas where Government policy places the onus on agencies to deal with particular matters.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION PORTFOLIO

1.64 The Department of Finance and Administration (DOFA) and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) were the only agencies within the portfolio to seek additional appropriations for the 2002-03 financial year.

1.65 Witnesses from the Commonwealth Grants Commission, CSS Board, PSS Board and AEC were not called to give evidence on this occasion.

Department of Finance and Administration

1.66 The Department of Finance and Administration prepared a Portfolio Additional Estimates Statement to seek additional appropriations for the 2002-03 financial year. Approximately \$32.2 million is sought for:

⁹ *Committee Hansard*, F&PA 229

- funding for enhanced budget advisory capacity (\$3.5 million);
- funding for enhanced budget information system (\$1.7 million);
- funding for the review of corporate governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders (\$0.7 million);
- additional resourcing for public sector superannuation advice (\$3.0 million);
- funding for the assistance to research organisations associated with major political parties (\$0.1 million);
- additional funding for administration of electorate and ministerial offices (\$4.4 million);
- increased funding for electorate office relief (\$2.2 million);
- costs associated with the administration of two additional electorate offices as a result of the most recent redistribution of electorates (\$0.7 million);
- funding for legal assistance to Ministers (\$0.2 million);
- adjustment to the Capital Use Charge and economic parameters (\$1.4 million);
- capital funding for the winding-up of Employment National (\$12.7 million); and
- capital funding for an enhanced budget information system (\$5.1 million).

1.67 The funding increases have been offset by the following reduction to annual appropriation for 2002-03:

- the rephasing of the Australian Antarctic Territory Extended Continental Shelf project (\$1.5 million); and
- reclassification of the Life Gold Pass from annual appropriation to Special Appropriation (\$1.4 million).

1.68 Issues raised by members of the Committee and other senators in attendance included:

- the financial reports of the Australian Industry Development Corporation (AIDC);
- asset sales, including the sale of Sydney basin airports;
- the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF);
- DOFA's involvement in the costings for the deployment of Australian Defence Force personnel to Iraq;
- Members of Parliament life gold pass and the requirement for spousal entitlements;
- the administration of parliamentarians electorate offices, including maintenance and leasing arrangements; and
- parliamentarians entitlements, including the use of private plated cars and printing allowance.

1.69 A robust debate arose over financial reporting and accounting practices associated with the Australian Industry Development Corporation (AIDC). In contention was a concern that a possible \$2 billion loss had not been disclosed as a result of a change in the accounting standards used to report elements of AIDC's financial assets in its 1997 and 1998 annual reports.

1.70 DOFA's response indicated that the changed accounting treatment at the time reflected the impending sale of AIDC's assets and had been recommended by the Corporation's accountants. It also stated that the Corporation's joint auditors, the ANAO and Ernst & Young, had endorsed the accounts for 1997 and 1998. In a press release prompted by the Committee's examination, the AIDC made the same points. Rather than a \$2 billion loss, DOFA stated that AIDC's financial statements showed slight increases in both its net equity and cash flow between 1997 and 1998.

1.71 DOFA agreed, nonetheless, to a suggestion from the Committee that it ask the Auditor-General to examine the AIDC's accounting arrangements since that time to check that the treatment of accounts was sound and did not conceal any losses. The Committee looks forward to seeing the outcome of the Auditor-General's investigation of the matter, assuming he agrees to the request.

1.72 Committee members inquired of DOFA's role in costing Australia's recent military deployments to the Middle East and the likely cost of both current deployments and if Australian forces were to be involved in combat in Iraq. Consistent with its general role in verifying the costs of government initiatives, DOFA said it had worked with the Department of Defence on costing the 'predeployment' of Australian military units to the Middle East.

1.73 DOFA suggested that the question of operational costs should be referred to Defence, that is, the department responsible for this matter. DOFA did state, nonetheless, that 'some' of the cost for those forces *predeployed* to the Middle East – as distinct from the cost involved if Australian forces were to be committed to military action if war occurred – would be met out of the current budget allocation to Defence. DOFA also indicated it would seek clearance from Defence to disclose when both departments started working on the costings of the Middle East deployments.

1.74 In light of recent media attention surrounding the use of parliamentarians printing entitlements, Committee members noted the merits of reporting publicly on the use of this entitlement. Although the entitlement is capped, concerns were raised that the cap itself may create an incentive for some members to increase their printing usage beyond what would normally be the case.

1.75 DOFA was asked if they could provide the Minister with regular reports so that he could detect and address any concerns if they arose. Ms Mason, General Manager, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services, told the Committee that briefings were provided to the Minister on various matters when required. She indicated that it would be possible for DOFA to provide the Minister with regular reports on the use of printing entitlements.

ComSuper

1.76 ComSuper was examined in concurrence with DOFA output 2.2.2 Public sector superannuation advice. Issues raised by members of the Committee and other senators in attendance included:

- the revision of Commonwealth superannuation special appropriation and Commonwealth superannuation employer contributions;
- choice of superannuation funds; and
- the affect of salary increases through Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) and Certified Agreements (CAs) on superannuation salary rates.

Australian Electoral Commission

1.77 The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) prepared a Portfolio Additional Estimates Statement which revised its appropriations for the 2002-03 financial year. Funding will be reduced by \$1.1 million due to the revision of the Capital Use Charge for 2002-03 offset by an economic parameter update.

1.78 Due to time constraints, the Committee did not examine the AEC during the hearings with members instead lodging questions on notice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.79 The Committee expresses its appreciation of the service provided by the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff in recording and broadcasting the Committee's hearings and transcribing them so promptly; and the service provided by Committee Room attendants in preparing the rooms and providing refreshments for witnesses during the hearings.

1.80 The Committee also wishes to thank all ministers and departmental and agency officers for their assistance.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

1.81 The Committee has set 26 March 2003 as the date by which responses to questions on notice should be received.

Senator Brett Mason

Chair

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