

The Senate

Rural and Regional Affairs
and Transport
Legislation Committee

Annual reports (No. 2 of 2020)

October 2020

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Chapter 1

Overview

1.1 The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee's (the committee) report on annual reports provides an overview of the committee's examination of annual reports for the 2018–19 financial year, tabled between 1 November 2019 and 30 April 2020. The committee is responsible for examining the annual reports of departments and agencies within the following portfolios:

- Agriculture, Water and the Environment; and
- Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.¹

1.2 This is the second of the two reports on annual reports that the committee is required to produce in 2020.

Terms of reference

1.3 Under Senate Standing Order 25(20), annual reports of departments and agencies shall stand referred to the legislation committees in accordance with an allocation of departments and agencies in a resolution of the Senate. Each committee is required to:

- (a) Examine each annual report referred to it and report to the Senate whether the report is apparently satisfactory.
- (b) Consider in more detail, and report to the Senate on, each annual report which is not apparently satisfactory, and on other annual reports which it selects for more detailed consideration.
- (c) Investigate and report to the Senate on any lateness in the presentation of annual reports.
- (d) In considering an annual report, take into account any relevant remarks about the report made in debate in the Senate.
- (e) If the committee so determines, consider annual reports of departments and budget-related agencies in conjunction with examination of estimates.
- (f) Report on annual reports tabled by 31 October each year by the tenth sitting day of the following year, and on annual reports tabled by 30 April each year by the tenth sitting day after 30 June of that year.
- (g) Draw to the attention of the Senate any significant matters relating to the operations and performance of the bodies furnishing the annual reports.
- (h) Report to the Senate each year whether there are any bodies that do not present annual reports to the Senate that should present such reports.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 42, 13 February 2020, p. 1269.

Purpose of annual reports

1.4 The tabling and scrutiny of annual reports by Senate committees under Standing Order 25(20) is an important element in the process of government accountability to Parliament. Annual reports place information about government departments and agencies on the public record in relation to the performance, activities, management and financial position of the reporting body. They are a primary accountability mechanism and assist the Parliament in the effective examination of the performance of departments and agencies, and the administration of government programs.

Reports referred to the committee

1.5 In accordance with Standing Order 25(20)(f), this report examines the following annual reports, tabled in the Parliament or presented out of session to the President of the Senate and referred to the committee between 1 November 2019 and 30 April 2020:

Agriculture, Water and the Environment portfolio

- Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC)—Annual Report 2018–19;
- Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC)—Annual Report 2018–19;
- Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC)—Annual Report 2018–19;
- Regional Investment Corporation—Annual Report 2018-19;²
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (AgriFutures Australia)—Annual Report 2018-19;
- Australian Livestock Export Corporation Limited (LiveCorp)—Annual Report 2018-19;
- Dairy Australia Limited—Annual Report 2018-19;
- Wine Australia—Annual Report 2018-19; and
- Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority – Annual Report 2015-16.

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio

- North Queensland Water Infrastructure Authority (NQWIA) – Annual Report 2018-19;³

2 This report was presented out of sitting in the Senate on 29 October 2019 and in the House of Representatives on 25 November 2019. Though this report would, therefore, normally be examined in the first report on annual reports, it will be analysed in greater detail in this report.

3 This report was presented out of sitting in the Senate on 30 October 2019 and in the House of Representatives on 25 November 2019. Though this report would, therefore, normally be examined in the first report on annual reports, it will be analysed in greater detail in this report.

- National Capital Authority (NCA) – Annual Report 2018-2019;
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) – Annual Report 2018-19; and
- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) – Annual Report 2018-19.

Reports not examined

1.6 The committee is not obliged to report on Acts, statements of corporate intent, surveys, policy papers, budget documents, corporate plans or errata. Accordingly, the following documents were referred to the committee but have not been examined in this report:

- Murray-Darling Basin Authority – Basin Plan Annual Report 2018-19;
- Northern Basin Commissioner – First Year Report 2019;
- Report to the Parliament in relation to the Funding Agreement 2017-21 with the Australian Livestock Export Corporation Limited (LiveCorp) for the financial year 2018-19;
- Report to the Parliament in relation to the Statutory Funding Agreement 2017-21 with Dairy Australia Limited for the financial year 2018-19;
- Airservices Australia – Report on Movement Cap for Sydney Airport – Third Quarter 2019 - 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2019; and
- Airservices Australia – Report on Movement Cap for Sydney Airport – Fourth Quarter 2019 - 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2019.

Annual reporting requirements

1.7 The *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) establishes a performance reporting framework for all Commonwealth entities and companies. The performance framework is based on section 38 of the PGPA Act which requires all Commonwealth entities to measure and assess their performance.

1.8 Section 39 of the PGPA Act requires all Commonwealth entities to prepare an annual performance statement and include those statements in their annual reports. Entities use the annual performance statements to report on the results achieved against the targets, goals and measures established at the beginning of a reporting year in corporate plans and Portfolio Budget Statements.

1.9 The performance framework established under the PGPA Act includes the requirement for Commonwealth entities to prepare a corporate plan and annual performance statements. The *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule 2014), established under the PGPA Act, details the requirements for the corporate plan, annual performance statements as well as the guidelines for annual reports.⁴

⁴ See *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (Sections 16E, 16F and 27A).

1.10 Below is a summary of the legislative authority and requirements for the different types of bodies under which annual reports are prepared:

Non-corporate Commonwealth entities:

- PGPA Act, section 46 and the PGPA Rule 2014, Division 3A(A);
- for portfolio departments and executive agencies, the *Public Service Act 1999*, subsections 63(2) and 70(2);
- for parliamentary departments, the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, section 65l; and
- for statutory bodies, relevant enabling legislation.

Corporate Commonwealth entities

- PGPA Act, section 46 and the PGPA Rule 2014, Division 3A(B); and
- for statutory bodies, relevant enabling legislation.

Commonwealth companies

- PGPA Act, section 97, which also refers to requirements under the *Corporations Act 2001* and the PGPA Rule, Part 3-3; and
- for statutory bodies, relevant enabling legislation.

Non-statutory bodies

- the annual reporting requirements are contained in the government response to the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration's Report on Non-Statutory bodies.⁵

Timeliness

1.11 Standing Order 25(20)(c) requires the committee to report to the Senate on the late presentation of annual reports. In assessing the timeliness of the presentation of annual reports, the committee assesses the presentation against the requirements of different categories of bodies, the PGPA Rule 2014 and other legislative requirements.

Commonwealth entities

1.12 Section 46 of the PGPA Act requires Commonwealth entities, both corporate and non-corporate, to prepare an annual report and provide it to the responsible minister by the 15th day of the fourth month after the end of the reporting period, which translates as 15 October. Certain agencies, however, may have a specific date stipulated by their enabling legislation.

1.13 Formerly, annual reports of non-corporate entities had to be presented by the responsible Minister to each House of Parliament on or before 31 October each year.⁶ There is no longer an explicit stipulation for this to occur as the PGPA Rule is silent

5 Senate Hansard, 8 December 1987, pp. 2642–45.

6 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Requirements for Annual Reports for Departments, Executive Agencies and Other Non-Corporate Entities*, 25 June 2015, p. 2.

on the matter. However, the PGPA Rule does recommend that such reports be tabled before Supplementary Budget Estimates.

Commonwealth companies

1.14 Section 97 of the PGPA Act sets out the requirements for the provision of annual reports of Commonwealth companies to the responsible minister. Under subsection 97(2) of the PGPA Act a company is to provide a report:

- (a) if the company is required by the *Corporations Act 2001* to hold an annual general meeting—the earlier of the following:
 - (i) 21 days before the next annual general meeting after the end of the reporting period for the company;
 - (ii) 4 months after the end of the reporting period for the company; and
- (b) in any other case—4 months after the end of the reporting period for the company; or the end of such further period granted under subsection 34C(5) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901*.

1.15 Subsection 97(5) of the PGPA Act states that:

- (5) If the Commonwealth company is a wholly-owned Commonwealth company, or is not required to hold an annual general meeting, the responsible Minister must table the documents in each House of the Parliament as soon as practicable after receiving them. In all other cases, the responsible Minister must table the documents in each House of the Parliament as soon as practicable after the annual general meeting of the company.

PGPA Rule 2014

1.16 The PGPA Rule 2014 states that annual reports for corporate Commonwealth entities, non-corporate Commonwealth entities and Commonwealth companies must comply with the *Guidelines for the Presentation of Documents to the Parliament*,⁷ which is prepared by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.⁷

1.17 The guidelines advise that for all entities:

As per past practice, it is expected that the responsible Minister will present the report to each House of Parliament on or before 31 October. If the Senate Supplementary Budget Estimates hearings are scheduled to occur prior to 31 October, it is best practice for annual reports to be tabled prior to those hearings. This ensures that annual reports are available for scrutiny by the relevant Senate standing committee.⁸

1.18 Entities reporting in accordance with their own legislation are often required to prepare for the relevant minister their annual report 'as soon as is practicable' after

7 See PGPA Rule 2014, sections 17AB, 17BC and 28C.

8 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Guidelines for the Presentation of Documents to the Parliament (including Government Documents, Government Responses to Committee Reports, Ministerial Statements, Annual Reports and other Instruments)*, August 2016, pp. 4–5.

the end of the particular period to which the report relates. The committee draws attention to subsections 34C(2) and 34C(3) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901*, which stipulate that where no date for providing a report to a minister is specified, the report should be presented no more than six months after the reporting period, and the minister must provide the report to the Parliament within 15 days after the minister receives it.

Timeliness of reports examined

1.19 The presentation of annual reports to the Parliament has two elements with regard to timeliness: the provision of the report to the minister and the presentation of the report to the Parliament.

1.20 Appendix 1 sets out a complete list of documents referred to the committee during the period 1 November 2019 and 30 April 2020 (including those not examined). This appendix includes references to the relevant legislation, the letter of transmittal dates, the dates on which the annual reports were sent to, and received by, the relevant minister, and the dates on which the annual reports were tabled in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

1.21 The committee notes that the following bodies did not present an annual report to the entity's responsible minister by 15 October as stipulated by section 46(2) of the PGPA Act:

- Australian Livestock Export Corporation Limited (LiveCorp);
- Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC);
- Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC);
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Agrifutures Australia); and
- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR).

1.22 The committee notes correspondence from the Cotton Research and Development Corporation and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation that states that they presented their annual report to the responsible minister on 11 October 2019 and 15 October 2019 respectively as stipulated by section 46(2) of the PGPA Act. However, the committee also notes that information provided by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to the House of Representatives upon presentation of the report indicated that the reports were submitted on 21 October 2019.

1.23 The committee notes that the following bodies did not table their annual reports in either the House of Representatives or the Senate prior to the commencement of Supplementary Budget Estimates:

- Regional Investment Corporation;
- North Queensland Water Infrastructure Authority;
- National Capital Authority;
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority;

- Australian Livestock Export Corporation Limited (LiveCorp);
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Agrifutures Australia);
- Fisheries Research and Development Corporation;
- Grains Research and Development Corporation;
- Cotton Research and Development Corporation;
- Wine Australia; and
- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR).

1.24 The committee reminds all agencies that it is best practice for annual reports to be tabled prior to the commencement of Supplementary Budget Estimates. The committee further notes that it is possible for agencies to table their annual reports out-of-sitting to ensure that they meet their statutory obligations and to ensure that reports are available to senators before Supplementary Budget Estimates. The timely tabling of annual reports allows senators sufficient time to consider their detail before the hearings

1.25 The committee will continue to monitor the timeliness of the tabling of future annual reports and encourages the aforementioned entities to table their annual reports prior to Supplementary Budget Estimates.

Senate debate

1.26 Senate Standing Order 25(20) requires the committee to take into account any relevant remarks about reports made in debate in the Senate. The committee notes that the annual reports examined in this report have not been the subject of comments or debates in the Senate.

Bodies not presenting annual reports to the Senate

1.27 The committee is required to report to the Senate on whether there are any bodies which should have presented an annual report to the Senate but did not. The committee is satisfied that there are no such bodies at this time.

Apparently satisfactory

1.28 Standing Order 25(20)(a) requires the committee to report to the Senate on whether the annual reports of departments and agencies in its portfolio are 'apparently satisfactory'. In making this assessment, the committee considers aspects including timeliness of presentation and compliance with the relevant reporting requirements.

1.29 The committee considers that the majority of annual reports referred during the reporting period were 'apparently satisfactory'. The following chapter examines selected annual reports in further detail.

Chapter 2

Annual reports of agencies

2.1 The Committee selected the annual reports of the following bodies for closer examination:

Agriculture portfolio

- Dairy Australia;
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Agrifutures); and
- Regional Investment Corporation.

Infrastructure portfolio

- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

Dairy Australia

2.2 The 2018–19 Annual Report of Dairy Australia was tabled in the Senate on 26 February 2020. The report provides an overview of the activities and achievements of the agency over the previous year.

Chair's report

2.3 The Chair, Mr Jeff Odgers, identified the agency's key obstacles and achievements, including:

- the decrease in milk production by 5.7 per cent to 8.8 billion litres;
- survey data showing nearly two in three farmers have attended regional engagement activities and events;
- further developments in the Datagene, DairyBio and DairyFeedbase investments; and
- the continued progress of the Australian Dairy Plan alongside Australian Dairy Farmers, Australian Dairy Products Federation and Gardiner Dairy Foundation.

2.4 Mr Odgers also acknowledged that Dairy Australia's next strategic plan will be put on hold pending the outcomes of the Australian Dairy Plan. The plan is due to include recommendations for future priorities following an industry wide consultation process.¹

Strategic priorities

2.5 The agency identifies its purpose as follows:

Our purpose is to support the profitability and sustainability of dairy farming... We provide practical tools, services and advice to assist farming operations and the dairy supply chain. Our investments in innovation are

¹ Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 2.

focused on increasing farm productivity and the global competitiveness of our industry.²

2.6 The agency has identified three strategic priorities to achieve this purpose:

- profitable dairy farms;
- capable people; and
- a trusted dairy industry.³

2.7 Dairy Australia reports that the three strategic priorities are developed and reviewed annually and are used to guide the agency's investment activities.⁴

Strategic Priority One: Profitable dairy farms

2.8 Dairy Australia separates its activities under this priority into two categories: pre-farmgate and post-farmgate. Pre-farmgate activities relate directly to improving farm profitability by balancing cost of production, risk, and return on investment. The reported focus of Dairy Australia's activity is in providing research and development into productivity improvement.

2.9 Post-farmgate activities focus on improving sustainability and opportunities for suppliers. Dairy Australia claims to achieve this through supply chain cost reductions and improved access in international markets.⁵

2.10 Projects undertaken by Dairy Australia to achieve this strategic priority include:

- Animal Health and Welfare – On-Farm;
- Farm Management Business Capability;
- Animal Nutrition and Feed Systems;
- AgTech and Innovation;
- On-Farm Nutrient Management; and
- International Market Support in China, Japan and South-East Asia.⁶

Strategic Priority Two: Capable people

2.11 Under Strategic Priority Two, Dairy Australia reportedly engages in programs that aim to enhance the farming capability of industry participants. This is done primarily through extension services and education activities that assist in the

2 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 2.

3 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 15.

4 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 15.

5 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 15.

6 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 80.

adoption of new technologies. This strategic priority also aims to attract people to the dairy industry and assist with career transitions.⁷

2.12 Projects undertaken by the agency designed to further this aim include:

- Regional Development Programs;
- Large Supplier Engagement; and
- Workforce Strategy, Planning and Action.⁸

Strategic Priority Three: Trusted dairy industry

2.13 The final reported strategic priority for Dairy Australia focuses on maintaining long-term consumer trust in the dairy industry and its products. This involves the collection of statistics and data that is then distributed to industry stakeholders, and influencing government policy and industry with research insights. Dairy Australia is also responsible for the maintenance of the sector's Sustainability Framework to set and measure goals against sustainability credentials.⁹

2.14 Projects undertaken under this strategic priority include:

- Primary Schools Engagement;
- Human Health and Wellness – Partnerships and Engagement;
- Managing Supply Chain, Food Safety and Integrity Issues; and
- Human Nutrition Research and Sciences.¹⁰

2.15 Dairy Australia also reported on its investment activity during the reporting period. Funding against each strategic priority was reportedly allocated with short-term and long-term benefits in mind and was undertaken following consideration of the benefit-cost ratio for each project. The agency anticipates that 48 per cent of investments will achieve project benefits within the next two years. Funding against each priority was as follows:

- profitable dairy farms - \$31.51 million;
- capable people - \$15.55 million; and
- trusted dairy industry – 11.7 million.¹¹

Staffing information

2.16 Dairy Australia reported 174 employees as at 30 June 2019. Of these, 40 per cent are based in regional areas and 67 per cent are female. Women account for 57 per cent of staff members at executive level. Dairy Australia also reported that they

7 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 15.

8 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 80.

9 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 15.

10 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 80.

11 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 18–19.

support 70 staff members in various dairy regions as part of the Regional Development Program¹²

Financial information

2.17 Dairy Australia reported a comprehensive loss of \$2.93 million in 2018–19 (compared to a \$3.8 million profit in 2017–18). This was due mainly to a \$2 million decrease in external contributions and a \$2 million increase in business and organisational performance expenses.¹³

2.18 Key financial details include:

- total expenses—\$58.79 million;
- total income through levies, government matching payments, external contributions, distributions from investments, and royalties—\$55 million; and
- total assets—\$38.87 million.¹⁴

Committee comments

2.19 The agency has apparently not completely fulfilled its obligations under the *2017 Dairy Australia Statutory Funding Agreement*. Under section 33.5(j) of the agreement, the agency is required to report details of senior executive and board remuneration. This detail has not been included.

2.20 The committee considers the report otherwise satisfactory.

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Agrifutures Australia)

2.21 The 2018–19 Annual Report of Agrifutures Australia presented information on the operations and performance of the agency. The report was tabled in the Senate on 27 November 2019.

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer's review

2.22 The Chair, Ms Kay Hull AM, highlighted several aspects and challenges of Agrifutures' performance in agricultural research and development, including:

- dealing with the effects of record domestic drought;
- the management of 105 projects with a total investment of over \$15 million;
- the staging of the evokeAG conference in February 2019; and
- the administration of programs including the Agrifutures Rural Women's Award, the Agrifutures Horizons Scholarship and the Agrifutures Ignite Network.¹⁵

12 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 24.

13 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 46.

14 Dairy Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 46.

15 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 12–13.

Goals and performance measurement

2.23 Agrifutures reports that its purpose is:

To invest in research and development that is adopted and assists rural industries to be productive, profitable and sustainable.¹⁶

2.24 With regard to this purpose, Agrifutures divides its commitments into four distinct arenas. Success in each arena is measured against a total of 18 KPIs, of which 16 were achieved during the reporting period. The first unachieved KPI related to attracting students to the agriculture industry. 1,500 students graduated from university agricultural science courses during 2018-19 against a goal of 1,800 students. The second unachieved KPI related to stakeholders rating the value of Agrifutures information, products and services as high or very high. Against a target of 75 per cent, the annual stakeholder's survey indicated that 66 per cent of stakeholders rated the value of Agrifutures information as high or better.¹⁷

Arena 1: People and leadership

2.25 The reported goal of the people and leadership arena is to support the people driving Australian rural industries by providing them with learning opportunities and experiences. This includes increasing support for the adoption of research and development outcomes as well as support for the research itself.¹⁸

2.26 Agrifutures reports that support from the agency comes in forms including awards and scholarships. The Agrifutures Rural Women's Award is one such initiative. The award aims to acknowledge the role women play in rural businesses and communities and gives the winner funds to continue projects as well as access to professional development networks and opportunities. The report also highlighted the Agrifutures Horizon Scholarship, providing financial and professional support to students enrolled in agriculture-related degrees, and the Agrifutures Ignite Network, for rural leaders and entrepreneurs to connect.¹⁹

Arena 2: National challenges and opportunities

2.27 The reported outcome of this arena is to identify and address challenges and opportunities that are common across rural industries. Unlike other research and development corporations (RDCs), Agrifutures manages research for a diverse range of industries. According to the agency, this places them in a unique position of being able to assist with cross-sectoral research.²⁰

2.28 One of the key programs featured in the report is the National Rural Issues Program. The program invests in research to inform public policy where there may be cross-sectoral and national interests. Agrifutures reported the delivery of four

16 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 8.

17 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 17–23.

18 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 30.

19 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 31–35.

20 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 40.

sponsored studies during the reporting period with collaboration between other RDCs, government and industry. There were also five collaboratively funded projects with engagement from ten RDCs and the National Farmers' Federation. This work was reportedly initiated through the Emerging National Rural Issues Forum.²¹

2.29 Agrifutures touted the success of the first evokeAG conference. The staging of the conference aims to drive innovation in rural industries by bringing together investors, producers, agribusiness and international delegates. The event drew 1,191 delegates and 115 speakers, including 33 speakers from overseas. Key program elements included Pitch Tent, where 13 pitches were made, Startup Alley, where startups could showcase their business to industry, and Future Young Leaders, where emerging thought leaders in the Australian and New Zealand agriculture and food industries could be identified.²²

2.30 The report also highlighted challenges and uncertainty in bilateral trade. An Agrifutures funded report, *Bilateral Trade Wars: Understanding the Implications for Australian Agriculture*, gives stakeholders a roadmap as to how unpredictable trading environments due to trade wars between China and the United States will impact export markets. Agrifutures Managing Director Mr John Harvey identified the dairy industry as an area that could benefit from tariffs imposed by China on US Dairy products, unless there is a free trade agreement formed between Japan and the US. Other industries including wool, sheep and goat meat, and beef may have little noticeable impact. Mr Harvey said that the main takeaway from the report is that trade wars breed uncertainty and that Australia's agricultural stakeholders face the prospect of sudden and unpredictable changes at the global level.²³

2.31 Other reported projects in this arena include:

- biocontrol of weeds;
- securing pollination;
- Australian biomass and bioenergy assessment; and
- climate research strategy for primary industries.²⁴

Arena 3: Growing profitability

2.32 The reported goal of this arena is to enhance the profitability and sustainability of Australia's levied rural industries. Agrifutures supports this goal by investing in research and innovation on behalf of rural industries that do not have their own RDC. These include Australian rice, chicken meat, honey bees, buffalo and deer. The report highlighted some of the work being done through programs in these industries.²⁵

21 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 41–44.

22 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 48.

23 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 46.

24 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 52–63.

25 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 73.

2.33 Agrifutures reported that the gross value product (GVP) of the Australian rice industry during the reporting period was \$174 million. This is down from \$220 million in 2017–18 due to dry conditions that lowered water allocations in the rice producing areas of the southern Murray Darling Basin. The rice program, now in its third year of a five-year strategic plan, focuses on improvements to industry water use while maintaining commercially acceptable yields and quality. This is being pursued through research into new rice varieties and new irrigation management practices.²⁶

2.34 The Australian chicken meat industry had a reported GVP of \$2.78 billion in 2018–19. The current five-year plan is nearing completion and focused on five key objectives:

- deliver safe food and good animal welfare outcomes;
- manage the environment for sustainable development;
- create foundations for the future, including capacity and market insight;
- ensure research adoption via extension and communication; and
- increase the productivity and efficiency of chicken meat production.²⁷

2.35 The agency reported a key focus on food safety in the chicken meat industry during the reporting period. In keeping with this focus, Agrifutures aimed to align investments with the Australian Government's Food Borne Illness Reduction Strategy.²⁸

2.36 Other reported projects in this arena include:

- honey bee and pollination;
- thoroughbred horses;
- ginger;
- tea tree oil; and
- kangaroo.²⁹

Arena 4: Emerging industries

2.37 Agrifutures reports that this arena is dedicated to supporting the establishment of high-potential emerging rural industries. These new industries have high growth potential and include quinoa, truffles, hazelnuts, and alpaca among others.³⁰

2.38 During 2018–19 Agrifutures reported collaborative research and development investments within the coffee, redclaw and truffle industries. Investments included the identification of new Arabica coffee varieties for sub-tropical production, new

26 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 76.

27 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 80.

28 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 80.

29 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 88–111.

30 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 114.

farming methods for breeding consistent stock of craylings, and manuals for pest and disease management aimed at truffle growers.³¹

Financial information

2.39 Agrifutures reported a surplus of \$3.47 million for the reporting period against a budgeted deficit of \$3.65 million. The \$7.1 million difference is primarily due to an additional \$10.6 million in own source revenue. The additional revenue is made up of external contributions, ticket sales and sponsorship for the evokeAG conference, and additional industry contributions. The additional revenue off-set a decrease in revenue from government of \$2.6 million.³²

2.40 Total expenses were reported as being over budget by \$0.9 million. This was mainly due to the contracting of external suppliers and additional expenses relating to the evokeAG conference.³³

Committee comment

2.41 The committee notes that not all requirements under the PGPA Rule 2014 were included in the report. PGPA Rule 17BE(ka) requires statistics on the number of employees of the entity broken down to full-time employees, part-time employees, gender and location. This rule was not listed on the compliance index and the information was not included.

2.42 The Committee considers the Agrifutures report to be reasonably compliant with reporting requirements.

Regional Investment Corporation

2.43 The 2018–19 Annual Report of the Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) contains an account of the corporation's activities. The report was presented to the Senate on 29 October 2019.

Chief Executive's review

2.44 The Chief Executive, Mr Bruce King, highlighted a number of notable achievements over the reporting period, including:

- the establishment of a new head office in Orange, New South Wales;
- the approval of \$155 million in finance for over 160 farmers; and
- the launch of their first natural disaster loan in response to flooding in North Queensland.³⁴

31 Agrifutures Australia, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 115.

32 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Agrifutures Australia), *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 163.

33 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Agrifutures Australia), *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 163.

34 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 6.

2.45 Mr King noted that most of the agencies output during the reporting period were in administering the Farm Investment Loans and Drought Loans. The agency is also anticipating the launch of the AgriStarter Loan in the next reporting period will assist the next generation of farmers.³⁵

Purpose, goals and performance measurement

2.46 The purpose of the RIC is to encourage growth, investment and resilience in Australian farm businesses and rural and regional communities. They aim to encourage growth by delivering the Australian Government's farm business concessional loans and the National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility (NWILF).³⁶

2.47 To achieve this purpose, the RIC outlined five strategic objectives:

- establish corporate capability;
- raise awareness of the RIC and their products;
- use local networks to establish a national footprint;
- provide streamlined and nationally consistent products and services; and
- improve their products and services and explore new offerings.³⁷

2.48 The RIC reported that it had achieved all performance measures with the exception of one. The one measure that went unachieved related to water security and affordability. This was not achieved because no water infrastructure projects were approved during the reporting period.³⁸

Strategic objective 1: Establish our corporate capability

2.49 During the year, the RIC reported that activities towards this objective primarily involved the establishment of the agency and ensuring its value to the agricultural industry. Key achievements include the bulk recruitment process of staff to commence at the beginning of 2019, the establishment of the agency's head office in Orange, NSW, and the consolidation of corporate governance arrangements under relevant legislation. The agency believes their regional presence improves their understanding of existing challenges and how their services can be used to address them.³⁹

Strategic goal 2: Raise awareness of the RIC and our products

2.50 The RIC views the need to increase awareness of their role and products as critical to their success. Throughout their first year the agency has reportedly undertaken several stakeholder engagement events and face-to-face information sessions with farmers. This engagement process also included meeting with local

35 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 6–7.

36 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 8.

37 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 19.

38 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 23.

39 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 25.

governments, academia, and water associations to discuss potential water infrastructure projects.⁴⁰

2.51 Particular focus was given to areas of Queensland and New South Wales that were deemed to be in most need of loans. The RIC stated they made a priority of appearing at a range of field days including AgQuip, the Australian National Field Days, and the Regional Beef Forum to speak with farmers directly. The agency has also utilised the Farm Table online forum to remotely speak with stakeholders.⁴¹

Strategic goal 3: Use local networks to establish a national footprint

2.52 Throughout their establishment year the RIC reportedly prioritised networking with the farming community to gain greater understanding of the issues facing the agriculture industry. Relationship building has also taken place with state and territory governments and their industry partners to better understand their water infrastructure projects.

2.53 In early June 2019, the RIC engaged their first business development manager. The business development manager will be responsible for Queensland, the Northern Territory, and northern South Australia. Additional managers are planned for 2019-20.⁴²

Strategic goal 4: Provide streamlined and nationally consistent products and services

2.54 The RIC reports that they have met their commitment to customers to deliver streamlined and nationally consistent finance to regional Australia. Their achievements under this goal include:

- the implementation of a complaints and feedback register;
- a loan process and an application form review;
- the development of national service standards for program delivery; and
- the drafting of new supporting guidelines for the NWILF to identify water-related project opportunities.⁴³

Strategic goal 5: Improve our products and services and explore new offerings

2.55 According to the report, a key aspect of this strategic goal is the ability to identify emerging issues and respond accordingly through innovative product design. Of particular focus is an investigation into ways in which the RIC can deliver a loan program for farmers to take up climate-smart farming practices and technologies.

2.56 The RIC has reportedly been monitoring demand of their products to better identify barriers to uptake. As of 30 June 2019 the agency had received applications for Farm Investment Loans for an average value of \$693,390 and Drought Loans for

40 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 27.

41 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 28.

42 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 30.

43 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 31.

an average of \$980,076. Program eligibility and loan settings were determined to be key barriers to uptake.

2.57 Additionally, the RIC is in the process of securing a research partner to better understand issues affecting farmers. The agency has reported that the process will be finalised during the next reporting period.⁴⁴

Staffing information

2.58 The RIC has a total of 21 staff: 16 are ongoing and 5 are non-ongoing. Of these staff, 8 are female. All staff members are based in Orange, NSW.⁴⁵

Financial information

2.59 The RIC reported total comprehensive income of \$936,212.⁴⁶ The annual report notes that 2018-19 was the first full year of reporting for the agency. Due to this, the budget was set at a high level and did not set budgeted outcomes over all categories of expense or income.⁴⁷

2.60 Additionally, the agency also reported assets totaling \$9 million against liabilities of \$1.25 million.⁴⁸

Committee comment

2.61 The Committee considers the RIC report to be compliant with reporting requirements.

National Heavy Vehicle Regulator

2.62 The 2018-19 Annual Report of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) was tabled in the Senate on 4 February 2020. The report details the activities of the regulator over the previous year.

Chairman's message

2.63 The Chairman, The Hon Duncan Gay, highlighted a number of NHVR's achievements over the reporting period including:

- the reform of safety duties under Chain of Responsibility (CoR) laws;
- an increase in uptake of safer systems through the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme and the Performance Based Standards scheme; and
- the transition of services from 1 July 2019 to include the ACT and Tasmania in addition to South Australia.

2.64 The Chairman also recognised that the heavy vehicle industry continues to suffer from serious safety incidents. The message stated that there were 162 fatal

44 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018-19*, p. 32.

45 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018-19*, p. 55.

46 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018-19*, p. 39.

47 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018-19*, p. 52.

48 Regional Investment Corporation, *Annual Report 2018-19*, p. 39.

crashes involving trucks during the reporting period. Although there has been a reduction over time, Mr Gay reported that the regulator would continue its determination to reach the safest possible levels of performance.⁴⁹

Purpose and key result areas

2.65 As Australia's national heavy vehicle regulatory body, the purpose of the NHVR is to promote a safe, efficient and productive heavy vehicle industry. Their reported mission is to administer streamlined regulatory services to the Australian heavy vehicle road transport sector while minimising regulatory burden and promoting greater safety and productivity.⁵⁰

2.66 The regulator identifies three key result areas against which they measure their performance:

- safety;
- productivity and sustainability; and
- regulatory capability.⁵¹

2.67 Success in the key result areas are measured against 31 annual indicators. Of these, 16 were achieved, five are in progress, eight were not achieved, and two were reported as not applicable. The indicators deemed not applicable related to the decision to roll over existing service level agreements with jurisdictions taking part in the National Services Transition Project rather than developing a new, short-term framework.⁵²

Key result area one: Safety

2.68 Under this result area the NHVR reportedly aims to pursue initiatives that will improve national heavy vehicle road safety outcomes. This includes adjusting existing regulatory approaches and improving the collection and use of intelligence to enable more effective targeting of high risk operations.⁵³

2.69 A primary focus under this area is the development of a regulatory framework to support the heavy vehicle industry in managing risks to safety. In late 2017–18 a survey was undertaken to determine future approaches to heavy vehicle safety. The resulting report was completed in early 2018–19. The NHVR reportedly tailored new initiatives by drawing on the information gathered. An example of this was the release of a set of guidelines and templates on third-party interactions, safety performance monitoring and developing a positive safety culture to counter a finding that smaller

49 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 7.

50 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 10.

51 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 15.

52 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 34–37.

53 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 17.

businesses were less likely to incorporate safety standards into their work agreements with third parties.⁵⁴

2.70 On 1 October 2018, amendments to CoR provisions in the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) were implemented. The NHVR reports that the amendments align the HVNL more closely with national Work Health and Safety laws and provide greater clarity on the safety obligations of each party in the heavy vehicle supply chain. A number of initiatives were undertaken to spread awareness of the changes, including the release of four educational videos and assorted guidance materials, 42 education sessions and roadside talks, and the promotion of changes through social media and industry publications. Additionally, two CoR Investigator Training courses were held with the reported aim of improving consistency in the application of the laws nationally.⁵⁵

2.71 Other reported highlights in this result area include:

- an increased prosecutions role under the new CoR laws;
- the establishment of a unit to investigate and enforce compliance with the HVNL;
- the development of a fatigue safety strategy; and
- the simplification of the Vehicle Standards certification process.⁵⁶

Key result area two: Productivity and sustainability

2.72 The NHVR reported that the focus of this result area is on the removal of unnecessary regulatory burden in order to continually improve access and productivity. This is pursued through the cooperation of all involved in the heavy vehicle industry and through the adoption of innovative technologies.⁵⁷

2.73 The regulator reported the completion of 41,960 road access applications during 2018–19. This represents an increase of 26 per cent on the previous reporting period. The increase in permit applications is due to greater awareness of the necessity of permits and the shifting of permit functions to the NHVR from the states and territories.

2.74 As part of this shift away from the state and territories, the NHVR is now issuing Class 1, 2, and 3 heavy vehicle access permits across all participating jurisdictions as well as for interstate movements in the ACT, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania. The regulator is reportedly working with transport authorities to seamlessly transfer remaining responsibilities including permits for Class 1 vehicles in Queensland and New South Wales.⁵⁸

54 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 17.

55 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 17.

56 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 18–21.

57 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 23.

58 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 23.

2.75 The NHVR also reported an increase in Performance Based Standards (PBS) vehicle approval applications by 22 per cent, from 387 in 2017–18 to 471 during the reporting period. The regulator highlighted the benefits of PBS approved vehicles in a joint report with the Australian Road Transport Suppliers Association. The report described an increase in adoption of new technologies and designs under the PBS scheme. This increase in adoption has reportedly led to a major crash involvement rate for PBS vehicles that is 46 per cent lower per kilometre travelled than for other freight vehicles.⁵⁹

2.76 Other reported highlights in this result area include:

- an increase in road access for heavy vehicles following extensive work with local government road managers;
- enhancements to the NHVR online portal; and
- the beginning of the consultation and drafting process for the first Heavy Vehicle Productivity Plan.⁶⁰

Key result area three: Regulatory capability

2.77 The NHVR reports that investing in a consistent, transparent and robust regulatory environment is a key goal of this result area. The agency reports a continual commitment to the development of their staff and a positive organisational culture.⁶¹

2.78 Achievements under this result area included the transition of services in Tasmania to the NHVR. On 2 July 2018 the NHVR took on responsibility for delivering services previously administered by the Tasmanian Department of State Growth. Services now located under the NHVR include the investigation and prosecution of heavy vehicle offences and on-road education, safety and compliance for drivers and operators. The transition of services in Tasmania continues the National Services Transition Program that began with South Australia in July 2016. The final phase of regulatory responsibility transitioning is due to commence in 2020–21.⁶²

Staffing information

2.79 The NHVR has a total of 353 staff across the agency as at 30 June 2019. The workforce is comprised of 268 permanent workers, 43 temporary workers and 42 under contract.⁶³

Financial information

2.80 The NHVR reported a total comprehensive income of \$21.2 million during the 2018–19 financial year. This represents an increase of \$10.85 million from the

59 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 26.

60 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, pp. 23–25.

61 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 29.

62 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 29.

63 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 66.

previous reporting period. The increase is mostly attributable to greater regulatory income and a decrease in service agreement payments.⁶⁴

2.81 Regulatory income is provided by participating state and territory government agencies and represents the regulatory component of heavy vehicle registration charges. The charges were reported as the primary source of income for the agency with recorded revenue of \$153.2 million. The main sources of regulatory income are:

- VicRoads (VIC) – \$43.95 million;
- Roads and Maritime Services (NSW) – \$49.1 million;
- Transport and Main Roads (QLD) – \$42.17 million; and
- Department for Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (SA) – \$12.88 million.⁶⁵

Committee comments

2.82 The Committee considers the NHVR report to be compliant with reporting requirements.

Senator Susan McDonald

Chair

64 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 48.

65 National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, *Annual Report 2018–19*, p. 50.

Labor – Additional Comments

1.1 Labor notes the importance of the timely tabling of annual reports of departments to allow for proper scrutiny by the Senate and Parliamentary Budget Estimates.

1.2 It is disappointing that several Research and Development Corporations did not present annual reports to the responsible minister by 15 October as stipulated by section 45(2) of the PGPA Act.

1.3 These organisations must ensure that they do better in meeting their obligations under the PGPA Act.

1.4 Labor is concerned that organisations, such as the Regional Investment Corporation and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, did not table their annual reports in either the House of Representatives or the Senate prior to the commencement of Supplementary Budget Estimates. These organisations are of significant interest to Senators, farmers and to the Australian community, and it is unacceptable they did not provide their annual reports for proper scrutiny.

1.5 Other Research and Development Corporations which need to do better with the timely tabling of their annual reports include the:

- Australian Livestock Export Corporation Limited (LiveCorp);
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Agrifutures Australia);
- Fisheries and Development Corporation;
- Grains Research and Development Corporation;
- Cotton Research and Development Corporation; and
- Wine Australia

1.6 With regards to Dairy Australia not reporting details of senior executive and board remuneration as required under section 33.5(j), is deeply concerning and will add further distress to Australia's dairy farmers who are concerned with how their levy dollars are spent by Dairy Australia.

1.7 Labor urges the Minister for Agriculture, David Littleproud, to ensure these agencies have a clear understanding of their obligations to provide transparent and concise information in their annual reports to the Parliament for proper scrutiny and accountability.

Senator Glenn Sterle

Deputy Chair

Senator Nita Green

Member

Appendix 1

Annual reports tabled during the period

1 November 2019 to 30 April 2020

Agriculture portfolio

Document	Legislation	Date of transmittal letter	Date sent to minister	Date received by minister	Date tabled in Senate	Date tabled in House of Representatives
Corporate Commonwealth entity						
Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 46 of the <i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</i> (PGPA Act)	10 October 2019	11 October 2019	14 October 2019	8 November 2019*	25 November 2019
Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 46 of the PGPA Act	15 October 2019	22 October 2019	29 October 2019	27 November 2019	27 November 2019
Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 46 of the PGPA Act	15 October 2019	21 October 2019	24 October 2019	27 November 2019	27 November 2019
Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 46 of the PGPA Act	15 October 2019	18 October 2019	29 October 2019	27 November 2019	27 November 2019
Regional Investment Corporation – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 46 of the PGPA Act	Not included	9 October 2019	9 October 2019	29 October 2019*	25 November 2019
Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 46 of the PGPA Act	18 September 2019	21 October 2019	24 October 2019	27 November 2019	27 November 2019
Wine Australia – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 46 of the PGPA Act	24 September 2019	4 October 2019	4 October 2019	27 November 2019	27 November 2019
Other body						
Australian Livestock Export Corporation Limited (LiveCorp) – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 68D of the Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997	N/A	22 October 2019	14 November 2019	27 November 2019	27 November 2019
Dairy Australia Limited – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 13 of the Dairy Produce Act 1986	N/A	12 December 2019	20 December 2019	26 February 2020	26 February 2020

Document	Legislation	Date of transmittal letter	Date sent to minister	Date received by minister	Date tabled in Senate	Date tabled in House of Representatives
Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority – Annual Report 2015-16	Sections 41(2) of the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984 and 34C(6) of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901	N/A	15 October 2019	24 October 2019	1 November 2019*	25 November 2019
Acts and other documents						
Murray-Darling Basin Authority – Basin Plan Annual Report 2018-19	Section 52A of the Water Act 2007	N/A	12 February 2020	20 February 2020	23 March 2020	4 March 2020
Northern Basin Commissioner – First Year Report 2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4 February 2020	5 December 2019
Report to the Parliament in relation to the Funding Agreement 2017-21 with the Australian Livestock Export Corporation Limited (LiveCorp) for the financial year 2018-19	Section 68C of the Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997	N/A	22 October 2019	14 November 2019	27 November 2019	27 November 2019
Report to the Parliament in relation to the Statutory Funding Agreement 2017-21 with Dairy Australia Limited for the financial year 2018-19	Section 14 of the Dairy Produce Act 1986	N/A	12 December 2019	20 December 2019	26 February 2020	26 February 2020

Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development portfolio

Document	Legislation	Date of transmittal letter	Date sent to minister	Date received by minister	Date tabled in Senate	Date tabled in House of Representatives
Non-corporate Commonwealth entity						
North Queensland Water Infrastructure Authority (NQWIA) – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 46 of the PGPA Act	1 October 2019	3 October 2019	10 October 2019	30 October 2019*	25 November 2019
National Capital Authority (NCA) – Annual Report 2018-2019	Section 46 of the PGPA Act	10 October 2019	11 October 2019	11 October 2019	7 November 2019*	25 November 2019

Document	Legislation	Date of transmittal letter	Date sent to minister	Date received by minister	Date tabled in Senate	Date tabled in House of Representatives
National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) – Annual Report 2018-19	Section 693 of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 (Qld) and section 46 of the PGPA Act	18 September 2019	29 October 2019	30 October 2019	4 February 2020	5 December 2019
Acts and other documents						
Airservices Australia – Report on Movement Cap for Sydney Airport – Third Quarter 2019 - 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2019	Section 9(3) of the <i>Sydney Airport Demand Management Act 1997</i>	N/A	17 October 2019	29 November 2019	5 February 2020	5 February 2020
Airservices Australia – Report on Movement Cap for Sydney Airport – Fourth Quarter 2019 - 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2019	Section 9(3) of the <i>Sydney Airport Demand Management Act 1997</i>	N/A	13 January 2020	23 January 2020	24 February 2020	24 February 2020

* Presented out of sitting