



## Secretary's Opening Statement

### Education and Employment Committee

#### Supplementary Budget Estimates

23 October 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to make a short opening statement to the committee today.

Committee members will be aware that the Attorney-General's Department has undergone recent Machinery of Government changes. My intention today is to provide you with a short overview of how this change has affected the department and the policies and priorities for which it has responsibility, and of the practical initiatives we have undertaken, and are undertaking, to foster an integrated and cohesive organisation with the capability and capacity to continue to support the Government in a professional manner.

The Administrative Arrangements Order signed on 29 May 2019 effected the transfer of responsibility for Industrial Relations functions from the Employment portfolio to the Attorney-General's portfolio. The transfer of finances and staff were settled within the timeframes set by the Government to implement MoG changes. The date of effect for the transfer of the functions to my department from the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business was 25 July 2019. The full year ASL transfer was 325.2 including 4 ASL from the Service Delivery Office in the Department of Finance. The full year departmental funding transfer was \$62.6m. Administered program funding was also transferred. The funding and staffing for the Industrial Relations functions will form a separate outcome within the department for the portfolio additional estimates statements. In addition, seven agencies have been transferred to the portfolio and they will be included in the additional estimates statements.

In addition to the work that is undertaken within the Industrial Relations Group and with which you are already familiar, the department already had responsibility for developing policy and programs related to Australia's law, justice, security and integrity frameworks, and for providing high quality advice to government and supporting the Attorney-General as a Minister of State and as Australia's First Law Officer.

This includes such matters as:

- legal services to the Commonwealth
- family law
- the legal system and the courts
- constitutional law
- legal assistance and native title
- security and criminal justice
- institutional integrity
- international law and international crime cooperation, and
- administrative support for Royal Commissions

I don't intend to speak further on these areas of responsibility as they fall within the purview of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. Although, I do think it is useful for you to be aware of the scope of policy and program initiatives for which the department now has responsibility.

When the announcement was made about the Machinery of Government changes, I had some but not a great deal of involvement in industrial relations matters and did not fully appreciate how the subject matter would complement the existing work of the department.

There are strong similarities in the type of work performed between the Attorney-General's and Industrial Relations portfolios, whether it be the focus on policy, program and legal matters, the contested nature of some initiatives, the broad consultation and the range of stakeholders from state and territory governments, unions and industry bodies through to citizens with a direct interest in the effect of government policies and services on their lives.

Having been recently reappointed as Secretary of the department for another five years, I look forward to the opportunity to become more involved in this important subject matter and help drive positive policy outcomes for the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations, and for Government.

## **People and Culture**

Our people and culture are critical to our ability to support the Government at a consistently high, professional standard.

I am aware that Machinery of Government changes, or changes of any kind for that matter, can be unsettling to some people and have the potential to disrupt existing business operations. At the same time, change can present opportunities to challenge existing modes of thought, to benefit from diverse perspectives and improve services delivery by adopting better practices from within different organisations.

Therefore, I was very keen to engage positively with Industrial Relations employees from the very beginning, and implement initiatives to facilitate the smooth and effective transfer of employees into the department and foster a positive culture.

- I met with staff shortly after MoG changes were announced to welcome them to the department and provide them with an understanding of what it will mean for them.
- I provided employees with weekly email communication to keep everyone informed about key activities or changes.
- In addition to this, my Chief Operating Officer provided employees with regular updates on other practical matters.
- We organised Corporate Information Sessions at the employees' work location in Civic to provide everyone with important practical information about business processes and systems in relation to HR, ICT and other corporate services.
- We managed a kiosk for around three weeks to provide everyone a chance to speak directly with AGD corporate staff about any type of matter, and to facilitate the issuing of credit cards and security passes ahead of time where possible.

- We also organised a number of Meet and Greet Sessions so that both Industrial Relations employees and non-Industrial Relations employees could start to gain an understanding of the type and nature of each other's work.
- I met with all portfolio agency heads in August this year and will do so again in December to facilitate a shared understanding of key initiatives across the portfolio.

I think these initiatives have gone a considerable way towards forging an integrated, cohesive and functioning organisation. Some further work remains to bring everyone together in the same building and onto the same IT network but I think a solid foundation has been established.

That concludes my opening statement and I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.