

Chapter 2

Annual reports of agencies

2.1 This chapter examines selected annual reports received during the period 1 November 2014 and 30 April 2015.

Agriculture Portfolio

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation—Report for 2013-14

2.2 The chair's report noted that in 2013-14 the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) placed a strong focus on collaboration, acknowledging that the organisation has a solid history of working together with fellow research and development (R&D) corporations, and other industry and government stakeholders. The report provided details on the major collaboration projects undertaken in 2013-14, and outlined the work RIRDC is doing in relation to cross-sector and cross-regional approaches to R&D.¹

2.3 The report flagged that the \$2 million decrease in core funding for 2014-15, coupled with further cuts of \$3 million annually for the following three years announced in the 2014 budget meant that RIRDC would be operating in challenging financial circumstances in the coming years. The report noted that this development had meant that staffing levels and funding for direct research had already been reduced.²

2.4 A significant project undertaken by RIRDC in 2013-14 was the successful development and launch of the Farm Diversity website, an initiative that allows farmers to identify options for diversifying their farming enterprises. RIRDC noted that this project grew out of an awareness of the financial and environmental benefits of diversification, particular in regard to spreading income risk and building resilience.³

2.5 The committee considers the 2013-14 report of RIRDC to be completed to a high standard and compliant with the reporting requirements. In particular the committee commends RIRDC on the comprehensive summary of the 2013-14 R&D outputs and outcomes.⁴

1 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2013-14*, pp 11, 31-35.

2 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2013-14*, pp 13-14.

3 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2013-14*, p. 12, 17.

4 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2013-14*, pp 44-87.

Australian Fisheries Management Authority—Report for 2013-14

2.6 The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) report noted that in 2013-14, the organisation implemented a number of initiatives aimed at improving services to industry and reducing red-tape. The report outlined in particular the improvements made to the online concessions and quota management tool GOFish, and the increased use of multi-year total allowable catches in South Eastern fisheries.⁵

2.7 AFMA outlined the work done in 2013-14 on managing illegal foreign fishing activity, noting that regional cooperation with Papua New Guinea played an important role in combating illegal fishing activities in the Torres Strait. Specifically, the report provided information on the increase in vessels from Vietnam between November 2013 and April 2014 seeking to illegally fish giant clams. AFMA noted that, in conjunction with Border Protection Command, the organisation worked swiftly to intercept and apprehend the vessels. Overall, 26 foreign fishing vessels were apprehended during the 2013-14 reporting period, with successful prosecutions and disposal of vessels following in most cases.⁶

2.8 The committee appreciates the section of the annual report devoted to outlining the major developments in each domestic fishery, in particular the reports against management plans. Overall, the committee considers the 2013-14 report of AFMA to be well presented and compliant with the reporting requirements.

Infrastructure and Regional Development Portfolio

National Capital Authority—Report for 2013-14

2.9 The National Capital Authority (NCA) annual report outlines some of the key achievements of the organisation during the 2013-14 period, mentioning in particular the release of the Report on the Review of National Capital Open Space System and the establishment of an expert Design Review Panel aimed at assisting in evaluating the design merits of major city-shaping projects during their conceptual stages.⁷

2.10 During 2013-14, NCA reported against one outcome; namely, "a national capital which symbolises Australia's heritage, values and aspirations, is internationally recognised, and worthy of pride by Australians". This outcome was comprised of two programs; Program 1.1 National Capital Functions, and Program 1.2 National Capital Estate. The committee notes that NCA did not meet the target deliverables for the three categories encompassed under the "promotion and awareness of the significance of Canberra as the national capital" goal outlined under Program 1.1, falling short on the target numbers for notified events on national land, visitors to the National Capital Exhibition, and visits to online educational materials on the NCA website.

5 Australian Fisheries Management Authority, *Annual report 2013-14*, pp 5, 17.

6 Australian Fisheries Management Authority, *Annual report 2013-14*, pp 31-38.

7 National Capital Authority, *Annual report 2013-14*, pp x-xii, 16-17.

2.11 In addition, the key performance indicator (KPI) stated for the goal was a target of 90 percent of surveyed National Capital Exhibition visitors who reported an increased awareness of the special importance of Canberra as the national capital. Although NCA stated that it achieved this KPI with an actual rate of 97 percent, the committee observes that in failing to provide further contextual details on the statistics of this KPI (for example, the total number of visitors surveyed), it is difficult to accurately gauge performance.⁸

2.12 The committee draws attention to comments made in previous reports on annual reports stating that NCA should focus more on providing an assessment of its performance, rather than on mere descriptions of its activities. While it is acknowledged that there has been some improvement in this area, the committee encourages NCA to place more emphasis on providing clear and substantive assessments of its performance, together with the appropriate context, to aid in the usefulness of future reports.⁹

Senator the Hon Bill Heffernan

Chair

8 National Capital Authority, *Annual report 2013-14*, pp 7-9.

9 See Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee, *Annual reports (No. 2 of 2014)*, p.11.

