

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1.1 On 12 February 2015, the Senate referred the following two documents to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee (the committee) for examination and report:

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2015 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-15]; and
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2015 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2014-15].<sup>1</sup>

1.2 The committee is required to examine the 2014-15 additional estimates contained in these two documents in relation to the Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio and the Agriculture portfolio. Following examination, the committee is required to table its report on the 2014-15 additional estimates on 17 March 2015.<sup>2</sup>

### Additional Estimates hearings

1.3 The committee examined witnesses from both portfolios at hearings on Monday 23 February, Tuesday 24 February and Thursday 5 March 2015. The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda as follows:

- Monday 23 February and Thursday 5 March 2015–Agriculture portfolio; and
- Tuesday 24 February 2015–Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio.

1.4 The committee heard evidence from the following senators:

- Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture (representing the Minister for Agriculture);
- Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women and Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border (representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development); and
- Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz, Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister for Employment and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service (representing the Minister for Agriculture).

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1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 78, 12 February 2015, pp 2178-2179.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 76, 10 February 2015, p. 2116.

1.5 Evidence was also provided by:

- Dr Paul Grimes, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture;
- Mr Mike Mrdak, Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development; and
- officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

1.6 The committee thanks the ministers, parliamentary secretary, departmental secretaries and officers for their assistance and cooperation during the hearings.

### **Changes to departmental structures**

1.7 Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) was undeclared as the horticulture industry services and export body after 3 November 2014 and replaced by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (HIA). HIA was established in accordance with the recommendations of an independent review of HAL in 2014. The financial and other assets of HAL were transferred to HIA under the *Horticulture Marketing and Research and Development Services (Transfer of Industry Assets and Liabilities) Regulation 2014*.

### **Questions on notice**

1.8 In accordance with Standing Order 26, the committee is required to set a date for the lodgement of written answers and additional information. The committee resolved that written answers and additional information be submitted by 17 April 2015.<sup>3</sup>

### **Record of proceedings**

1.9 This report does not attempt to analyse the evidence presented during the hearings. However, it does provide a brief list of some of the key issues that were covered by the committee for each portfolio.

### **Note on references and additional information**

1.10 References to the Hansard transcript are to the proof Hansard; page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcript.

1.11 Copies of the proof Hansard transcripts, documents tabled at the hearings, and additional information received after the hearings are tabled in the Senate and available on the committee's website.

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3 Answers to questions on notice, once received, will be published at the following website address:[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Senate\\_Estimates/rtratctte/estimates/ad1415/index](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_Estimates/rtratctte/estimates/ad1415/index)