

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates February 2017

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications and the Arts

Question No: 258(a)

Department of Communications and the Arts

Hansard Ref: Written, 14/03/2017

Topic: Reviews Commissioned

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

How many reviews were commissioned by the Government in the department/agency in 2015-16 and the current financial year? Please provide details of each review including date commissioned, date report handed to Government, date of public release, terms of reference and committee members.

- (a) How much did each review cost/or is estimated to cost? How many departmental/agency staff were involved in each report?
- (b) What is the current status of each review? Did the Government report within the required timeframe? If not, when is the Government intending to respond to these reports?
- (c) How many review have been commissioned by the Government in the department/agency this financial year to date? Please provide details of each report

Answer:

The Government commissioned no reviews in the Department in the 2015/16 financial year and no reviews were commissioned in the current 2016/17 financial year.

A number of reviews were in progress during these times, but were commissioned prior to the 2015-16 financial year.

Information on these reviews was provided to the Committee in the response to question 182(a) from the Additional Estimates Hearing in February 2016.

The Review of the Australian Communications and Media Authority was commissioned just prior to the 2015-16 financial year. As it was conducted during the timeframes outlined above, details of this review are below:

Review of the Australian Communications and Media Authority

The Review of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) was commissioned on 12 June 2015. The final report was handed to the Government on 17 August 2016. The Government is now considering the final report and its recommendations and a date of public release is yet to be determined.

A Reference Group of Australian and international communications and regulatory experts, rather than a Committee, provided advice for the Review. Members of the Reference Group included:

- Ms Diane Cornell
- Mr Richard Cooper CBE
- Dr Ross Patterson
- Ms Johanna Plante
- Mr Tony Shaw PSM

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- Mr Mark Pearson
- Ms Bridget Fair
- Mr Dan Lloyd
- Ms Fiona Cameron

The *Terms of Reference* for the Review of the ACMA are as follows:

The review will examine and provide a report to the Minister for Communications on:

- The current objectives of the entity as determined by the Government's forward priorities, other reviews and contemporary pressures of the broadening 'digital' character of the sector;
- The efficiency of the ACMA in delivering its functions to support these priorities, any areas requiring improvement, and potential alternative arrangements (including costs/benefit analysis and implementation actions required) that could improve efficiency, where required;
- The recent performance of the ACMA set broadly against the Government's *Regulator Performance Framework* and any areas for improvement;
- The current resource base of the organisation and relative contributions from current sources— i.e. government funding, industry costs recovery and/or levy arrangements and funding from other sources.

The review will also provide recommendations to the Minister for Communications on options for reform in relation to:

- The future objectives and functions of the regulator;
- The appropriate structure, governance and accountability arrangements of the regulator;
- An appropriate resource base for the regulator and the expected relative contribution from government, industry and other sources;
- A proposed transition path to implement preferred alternatives to enable proposed changes (if any) to be put in place by 2016-17.

The review will have regard to:

- The market structure of the communications sector in Australia and relevant changes since 2005;
- The impact of digital network technologies changing media forms and communications platforms;
- Enduring public interest objectives relevant to citizens and consumers as well as industry;
- National and international best practice models of sectoral regulation and regulator governance structures;
- Any announced deregulatory proposals, recognising that these are subject to agreement by the Parliament;
- Evidence and views of the ACMA and its stakeholders in relation to its performance;
- Future spectrum policy and management arrangements under the *Spectrum Review* being undertaken by the Department;
- Any changes to the regulation of infrastructure access arrangements proposed or agreed by Government under the Competition Policy Review;
- Other relevant government policies or matters identified through consultation or research.

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A report of the Review will be provided to the Minister of Communications. The Minister may consult further on the findings of the Review prior to the Government's final decision-making.

- (a) The cost (or is estimated to cost) of the review and departmental staff involvement are outlined in the table below:

Title/Name of Review	Cost/ Estimated Cost (GST inc)	Dept Staff
ACMA Review	\$23,585	7

- (b) The current status of the review, did the Government report in the required timeframe and, if not, when is the Government intending to respond to these reports are outlined in the table below:

Title/Name of Review	Status	Govt Respond on Time?	Govt intending to Respond?
ACMA Review	In Progress	N/A	N/A

- (c) The Government commissioned no reviews in the Department during the current 2016-17 financial year to date.