

Chapter 1

Budget Estimates 2015–16

Introduction

1.1 On 12 May 2015, the Senate referred the following to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee (the committee):

- Particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2016 [Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015–16];
- Particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2016 [Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015–16];
- Particulars of proposed expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2016 [Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2015–16]; and
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2015.¹

1.2 A reporting date of 23 June 2015 was set for the 2015–16 Budget estimates.²

Portfolio coverage

1.3 The committee has responsibility for examining the expenditure and outcomes of the following:

- Environment Portfolio; and
- Communications Portfolio.³

Hearings

1.4 The committee's examination of the Environment Portfolio took place on Monday, 25 May and Tuesday, 26 May 2015. The Communications Portfolio were held on Wednesday, 27 May and Thursday, 28 May 2015.

1.5 The committee took evidence from Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Assistant Minister for Education and Training representing the Minister for the Environment; Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Assistant Minister for Social Services, representing the Minister for Communications; and Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services, representing the Minister for Communications, together with officers of the relevant departments and agencies. The committee thanks the Ministers, departmental secretaries and the officers who appeared before it.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, 2013–15, No. 92, 12 May 2015, p. 2561.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, 2013–15, No. 76, 10 February 2015, p. 2116.

3 *Journals of the Senate*, 2013, No. 1, 12 November 2013, p. 16.

1.6 The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and the Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency were not required to attend.

Questions on notice and *Hansard* Transcripts

1.7 In accordance with standing order 26(9)(a), the committee set Friday, 10 July 2015, as the date for the return of written answers or additional information.

1.8 Written answers and information provided to the committee in response to questions on notice arising from the hearings are tabled in the Senate and posted on the committee's web page. Links to the transcripts of these public hearings and to answers and additional information are available on the Internet at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_Estimates/ecctte/estimates/bud1516/index

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 official Hansard transcript.

1.11 Copies of the 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.