

The Senate

Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee

Budget estimates 2017–18

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Committee membership

Committee members

Senator Jonathon Duniam, Chair (from 21 August 2017)	LP, TAS
Senator Janet Rice, Deputy Chair (from 4 September 2017)	AG, VIC
Senator Anthony Chisholm	ALP, QLD
Senator Linda Reynolds CSC (Chair to 21 August 2017)	LP, WA
Senator Anne Urquhart	ALP, TAS
Senator John Williams	NP, NSW

Substitute member

Senator Scott Ludlam (AG, WA) for Senator Peter Whish-Wilson (AG, TAS) on 25 May 2017

Former member

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Deputy Chair (to 4 September 2017) AG, TAS

Senators in attendance

Senator the Hon Eric Abetz	LP, TAS
Senator Chris Back	LP, WA
Senator Carol Brown	ALP, TAS
Senator David Bushby	LP, TAS
Senator the Hon Kim Carr	ALP, VIC
Senator Sam Dastyari	ALP, NSW
Senator Katy Gallagher	ALP, ACT
Senator Stirling Griff	NXT, SA
Senator Pauline Hanson	PHON, QLD
Senator Skye Kakoschke-Moore	NXT, SA
Senator David Leyonhjelm	LDP, NSW
Senator Sue Lines	ALP, WA
Senator Scott Ludlam	AG, WA
Senator Malarndirri McCarthy	ALP, NT
Senator Bridget McKenzie	NATS, VIC
Senator Nick McKim	AG, TAS
Senator Claire Moore	ALP, QLD
Senator Deborah O'Neill	ALP, NSW
Senator Lee Rhiannon	AG, NSW
Senator Janet Rice	AG, VIC
Senator Malcolm Roberts	PHON, QLD
Senator Rachel Siewert	AG, WA
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Table of contents

Committee membership	iii
Chapter 1: Budget Estimates 2017–18	1
Introduction	1
Portfolio coverage	1
Hearings.....	1
Questions on notice and <i>Hansard</i> transcripts	2
Answers to questions on notice	2
Record of proceedings	5
Note on references and additional information	5
Chapter 2: Portfolio-specific issues	7
Environment and Energy Portfolio.....	7
Communications and the Arts Portfolio	13
Appendix 1: Budget Estimates programs	19
Appendix 2: Tabled documents and additional information	23

Chapter 1

Budget Estimates 2017–18

Introduction

1.1 On 9 May 2017, 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 2018 [Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2017–18];
- Particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2018 [Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2017–18]; and
- Particulars of proposed expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2018 [Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2017–18].¹

1.2 A reporting date of 20 June 2017 was set for the 2017–18 Budget Estimates.²

1.3 On 19 June 2017, the Senate agreed to extend the tabling date to 21 July 2017 to allow the committee to complete its examination of the proposed expenditure and outcomes for the Communications and the Arts Portfolio.³ On 8 August 2017, the Senate granted a further extension of time to report until 13 September 2017.⁴ The reporting date was subsequently extended to 18 October 2017 on 11 September 2017.⁵

Portfolio coverage

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

- Environment and Energy Portfolio; and
- Communications and the Arts Portfolio.⁶

Hearings

1.5 The committee's examination of the Environment and Energy Portfolio took place on Monday, 22 May 2017 and Tuesday, 23 May 2017.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 39, 9 May 2017, p. 1311.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 13, 8 November 2016, p. 412.

3 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 45, 19 June 2017, p. 1472.

4 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 49, 8 August 2017, p. 1607.

5 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 60, 11 September 2017, p. 1932.

6 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 2, 31 August 2016, pp. 75–76.

1.6 The committee's examination of the Communications and the Arts Portfolio was held on Wednesday, 24 May 2017 and Thursday, 25 May 2017. Pursuant to Senate Procedural Order 9B, the committee held a further hearing on 15 June 2017 to continue its examination of the Department of Communications and the Arts Program 1.1: Digital Technologies and Communications and NBN Co Limited (NBN Co).

1.7 The committee scheduled a further hearing on 14 September 2017 to continue its examination of NBN Co. However, this hearing was cancelled due to members' Chamber commitments. The committee was unable to hold a further hearing and therefore concluded its examination of NBN Co.

1.8 The committee took evidence from Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Education and Training representing the Minister for the Environment and Energy; Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources representing the Minister for the Environment and Energy; and Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communications and Minister for the Arts, together with officers of the relevant departments and agencies. The committee thanks the Ministers, departmental secretaries and the officers who appeared before it.

1.9 The following agencies were not required to attend the Budget Estimates hearings:

Environment and Energy Portfolio

- National Wind Farm Commissioner; and
- Sydney Harbour Federation Trust;

Communications and the Arts Portfolio

- Creative Partnerships Australia;
- Australian Film, Television and Radio School;
- Australian National Maritime Museum;
- Bundanon Trust;
- Classification Board; and
- Classification Review Board.

Questions on notice and *Hansard* transcripts

1.10 The committee set Friday, 7 July 2017, as the date for the return of written answers or additional information for the hearings held on 22 to 25 May 2017. The committee agreed to set Friday, 28 July 2017, as the date for the return of answers to questions placed on notice for the hearing held on 15 June 2017.

Answers to questions on notice

1.11 An ongoing issue with estimates answers to questions on notice has been the timeliness of the provision of answers as well as the withholding of information on the

basis of commercial confidentiality. The following comments address these issues in relation to both the Additional Estimates 2016–17 and Budget Estimates 2017–18.

Timeliness of answers to questions on notice

Additional Estimates 2016–17

1.12 The committee's examination of the Environment and Energy Portfolio for the Additional Estimates 2016–17 took place on 27 February 2017. The committee set Friday, 28 April 2017 as the date for the return of answers to questions on notice. The committee received answers to 291 of the 333 questions on notice (including written questions) by the due date. The final answer was received on 18 May 2017.

1.13 The committee's examination of the Communications and the Arts Portfolio took place on 28 February 2017. The committee set Friday, 28 April 2017 as the date for the return of answers to questions on notice. The committee held a further hearing on 24 March 2017. The due date for answers to questions arising from this hearing was Monday, 1 May 2017.

1.14 The Communications and the Arts Portfolio provided 97 of the 295 answers to questions on notice from the hearing on 28 February 2017 by the due date. Of the 117 questions on notice arising from the committee's hearing on 24 March 2017, 44 answers were provided by the due date. In total, 127 answers were received during the committee's Budget Estimates hearings commencing on 22 May 2017.

1.15 At the Budget Estimates hearing on 24 May 2017, the committee noted that many answers from the Department of Communications and the Arts had been received the previous evening. These answers primarily related to NBN Co. It was noted that Labor senators would be requesting a spillover hearing to examine the late responses.⁷

1.16 The committee questioned the Secretary of the department, Dr Heather Smith, about the delays in providing answers. Dr Smith responded that:

I think it is fair to say that we have found it challenging having two estimates in a reasonably short period of time in terms of the spillovers, particularly in relation to NBN. We worked very closely with NBN to ensure timeliness, but I think in this instance in coordinating that it has been difficult and obviously unacceptable from the committee's point of view. So we will seek to double down on our efforts for next time.⁸

1.17 On 7 July 2017, the committee received correspondence from Dr Smith indicating that she had written to all portfolio agency heads reinforcing their obligations to provide timely advice to the committee and setting out the department's

7 Senator Anne Urquhart, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 24 May 2017, p. 3.

8 Dr Heather Smith, Secretary, Department of Communications and the Arts, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 24 May 2017, p. 4.

deadlines for responses to questions on notice. Dr Smith also indicated that discussions had taken place between departmental and agency staff on this issue. Dr Smith concluded that she was confident that there was a positive foundation in place 'to further enhance how the portfolio services the functions and requirements of the Committee'.⁹

Budget Estimates 2017–18

1.18 The committee notes the improved timeliness of the provision of answers to questions on notice from the Communications and the Arts Portfolio for Budget Estimates 2017–18. Of the 333 questions on notice from the hearings on 24 and 25 May 2017, answers for 307 questions were provided by the due date. Of the 84 questions arising from the hearing of 15 June 2017, four were provided by the due date. The final answer from this hearing was provided on 29 August 2017.

1.19 The committee commends the department and portfolio agencies for the improvement in timeliness in the provision of responses from the hearings on 24 and 25 May 2017. However, the lack of timeliness of answers for the hearing on 15 June 2017 was significant. The majority of these questions were directed to NBN Co.

1.20 The committee reiterates the need to ensure that answers are provided by the due date to allow members the opportunity to review answers before the next estimates hearings. The committee does not consider it is acceptable for answers to questions on notice to be provided the night before, or during, the next round of estimates hearings.

Claims of commercial confidentiality

Additional Estimates 2016–17

1.21 The committee has examined answers to questions on notice from Additional Estimates 2016–17 in relation to claims of commercial confidentiality. The committee notes that 15 answers from agencies within the Communications and the Arts Portfolio indicated that information was withheld because of commercial confidentiality or other reasons such as legal professional privilege. The Department of the Environment and Energy withheld information relating to one question on notice claiming confidentiality of legal advice.

Budget Estimates 2017–18

1.22 Information was also withheld in answers to questions on notice for Budget Estimates 2017–18. Information in five answers from the Environment and Energy Portfolio was withheld on the basis of commercial confidentiality. Information in

⁹ Dr Heather Smith, Secretary, Department of Communications and the Arts, correspondence to the committee, dated 7 July 2017.

15 answers from the Communications and the Arts Portfolio was withheld on the basis of commercial confidentiality or cabinet in confidence.

1.23 The committee notes that, generally, answers did not provide the basis of the claim including any commercial harm resulting from the disclosure of the information requested. The committee pursued this matter further in relation to two answers from NBN Co—Nos 298 and 359—relating to the costs of commissioned research and reports.

1.24 The committee wrote to NBN Co drawing to its attention the requirements of Procedural Order No. 10 relating to claims of public interest immunity and Procedural Order No. 11 relating to claims of commercial confidentiality. NBN Co's initial response did not meet the requirements of the orders and the committee wrote to NBN Co a second time. On 11 October 2017, the Minister for Communications, Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, provided a statement of the specific harm to the company's commercial interest that would ensue from disclosure of the information sought.

Record of proceedings

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

Note on references and additional information

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

1.27 The Hansard transcripts of the hearings, answers to questions on notice and information provided to the committee are tabled in the Senate and available on the committee's website at:

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

Chapter 2

Portfolio-specific issues

2.1 This chapter provides an overview of some of the matters raised during the committee's hearings on the Budget Estimates 2017–18. The discussion follows the outcome and agency structure.

Environment and Energy Portfolio

Department of the Environment and Energy

2.2 The committee opened the hearing with the Department of the Environment and Energy. The Secretary, Dr Gordon de Brouwer, noted that the outcome and program structure of the department had changed since the Additional Estimates 2016–17.¹⁰ Other matters discussed included:

- the department's input into the Government's response to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (pp. 5–10);
- a proposed workshop with the Australian Committee for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (ACIUCN) (pp. 6–7);
- the department's promotion of the *State of the Environment Report* to key stakeholder groups (pp. 10–15); and
- the Government's renewable energy target (pp. 15–16).

Outcome 1: Conserve, protect and sustainably manage Australia's biodiversity, ecosystems, environment and heritage through research, information management, supporting natural resource management, establishing and managing Commonwealth protected areas, and reducing and regulating the use of pollutants and hazardous substances

2.3 The committee called officers in relation to Program 1.1: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment. Matters discussed by the committee included:

- funding for the National Landcare Program (pp. 58–59);
- feral cat eradication programs on Kangaroo Island and at the Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary (pp. 61–62);
- the Tamar River dredging program (pp. 63–64);

10 Dr Gordon de Brouwer, Secretary, Department of the Environment and Energy, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2017, p. 4.

- the Threatened Species Commissioner's response to *The Conversation* article 'Government needs to front up billions, not millions, to save Australia's threatened species' (pp. 64–66);
- funding for new Indigenous Protected Areas (pp. 66–68); and
- wild dog control activities under the Western Australian Wild Dog Action Plan (p. 69).

2.4 The committee called officers in relation to Program 1.2: Environmental Information and Research. Matters canvassed included the department's progress towards a common approach to environmental economic accounting and nationally consistent reporting on Australia's environment (pp. 69–71).

2.5 Officers were called in relation to Program 1.4: Conservation of Australia's Heritage and Environment. Matters discussed by the committee included:

- the recovery plan and potential delisting of the white shark under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) (pp. 71–76);
- update on sites nominated for the World Heritage Tentative List (pp. 77–80);
- protection of the hooded plover in the Belfast Coastal Reserve in Victoria (pp. 80–81, 89–91);
- Japanese whaling activities under the New Scientific Whale Research Program in the Antarctic Ocean (NEWREP-A) (pp. 85–86);
- recovery plans for forest-dependent species (pp. 87–88); and
- conditions for the export of platypuses to San Diego Zoo (pp. 6–7).

2.6 The committee called officers in relation to Program 1.5: Environmental Regulation. Matters canvassed included:

- land clearing in the Great Barrier Reef catchment area (p. 89);
- the New South Wales shark management plan (pp. 91–93);
- variations to the conditions attached to the Abbot Point Coal Terminal approval (pp. 94–100);
- proposed amendment to section 487 of the EPBC Act (p. 95);
- the Toondah Harbour Project in Queensland (pp. 101–102); and
- marine farming operations in Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania (pp. 105–108).

2.7 The committee called officers from the department in relation to Program 1.6: Management of Hazardous Wastes, Substances and Pollutants. Matters discussed included:

- standard national approaches to container deposit schemes (p. 69 and 75);
- use of labour hire companies and related agreements by the department (pp. 70–71);

-
- investigations into the under-reporting of coal-fired power station emissions under the National Pollutant Inventory in New South Wales (pp. 72–74); and
 - the impacts of marine debris on vertebrate marine life (pp. 74–75).

Outcome 2: Reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the impacts of climate change, contribute to the effective global action on climate change, and support technological innovation in clean and renewable energy, through developing and implementing a national response to climate change

2.8 The committee called officers in relation to Program 2.1: Reducing Australia's Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Matters canvassed by the committee included:

- funding levels under the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) (pp. 77–80);
- responses to the 2017 Review of Climate Change Policies – Discussion Paper (pp. 80–81); and
- the Government's emissions reduction targets (pp. 82–85).

2.9 The committee called officers in relation to Program 2.2: Adapting to Climate Change. Matters discussed included funding for the National Climate Change Adaption Research Facility (NCCARF) (pp. 85–87, 91–92) and Government expenditure on climate change adaption programs (pp. 92–93).

2.10 The committee called officers in relation to Program 2.3: Renewable Energy Technology Development. Matters examined included:

- costs associated with large-scale battery storage technologies (pp. 88–89);
- the differences between pumped hydro and battery storage (pp. 89–91); and
- staffing levels of the department's Clean Energy Innovation team (p. 94).

Outcome 3: Advance Australia's strategic, scientific, environmental and economic interests in the Antarctic region by protecting, administering and researching the region

2.11 Officers from the department were called in relation to Program 3.1: Antarctica: Science, Policy and Presence. Matters discussed included:

- illegal Japanese whaling in the Southern Ocean (pp. 7–8);
- funding for the Antarctic Gateway Partnership and the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (pp. 9–11);
- review of the Australian Antarctic Science Strategic Plan 2011–12 to 2020–21 (pp. 11–12); and
- the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report on a replacement Antarctic icebreaking vessel (pp. 13–19).

Outcome 4: Support the reliable, sustainable and secure operations of energy markets through improving Australia's energy efficiency, performance and productivity for the community

2.12 The committee called officers of the department in relation to Program 4.1: Energy. Matters canvassed included:

- funding for the development of onshore gas (pp. 102–103, 105–109);
- the proposed expansion of the Snowy Hydro scheme (pp. 103–105);
- the rising cost of electricity (pp. 109–110); and
- the reliability of the electricity market (pp. 110–116).

Australian Renewable Energy Agency

2.13 The committee called officers from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and discussed the following matters:

- the proposed expansion of the Snowy Hydro scheme (pp. 19–21, 34–38);
- solar thermal projects in Australia (pp. 21–27);
- wind farm power generation (p. 28); and
- funding for the DeGrussa solar project (pp. 31–32).

Bureau of Meteorology

2.14 Officers were called from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and matters examined included:

- the decommissioning and automation of weather stations (pp. 45–46); and
- the performance of BOM forecasting and warning systems during Tropical Cyclone Debbie (pp. 46–50).

2.15 On behalf of the committee the Chair acknowledged and thanked Dr Andrew Johnson, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Meteorology, and his staff for their work during Cyclone Debbie. The Chair stated:

I think it is safe to say that I speak on behalf of the entire committee, Dr Johnson, when I formally acknowledge and thank your staff for the amazing work that they did. Quite often we think about emergency services and other organisations but not actually your staff, who are clearly critically important throughout the process. So I hope you do not mind passing on the committee's thanks.¹¹

11 Senator Linda Reynolds CSC, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2017, p. 47.

Clean Energy Finance Corporation

2.16 The committee called officers from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC). Matters discussed included:

- the relationship of the CEFC to the Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund (pp. 55–56);
- proposals for possible coal-fired power stations (pp. 52–53);
- funding under the Clean Energy Innovation Fund (CEIF) for start-up projects (pp. 57–61); and
- the proposed second power interconnector across the Bass Strait (pp. 61–63).

Clean Energy Regulator

2.17 Officers of the Clean Energy Regulator were called and matters examined included:

- the Government's progress towards achieving the renewable energy target (pp. 63, 65–66);
- funding for the ERF (pp. 66–67); and
- large-scale renewable power generation projects in Western Australia (pp. 67–68).

Climate Change Authority

2.18 The committee called officers from the Climate Change Authority (CCA) and canvassed the following matters:

- funding and staffing levels over the forward estimates (pp. 50–52 and 55);
- the release of the new issues paper, 'Action on the land: reducing emissions, conserving natural capital and improving farm profitability' (pp. 52–53);
- review of the Carbon Farming Initiative legislation and the ERF (pp. 53–54); and
- the scope of the CCA's joint report, 'Towards the next generation: delivering affordable, secure and lower emissions power' (pp. 55–58).

Director of National Parks

2.19 The committee called the Director of National Parks, Ms Sally Barnes, and the following matters were discussed:

- draft management plans for Australian Marine Parks (pp. 40–41);
- management of the Kakadu Buffalo Farm (pp. 41–43);
- the recovery plan for the Norfolk Island green parrot (pp. 43–44); and
- measures to control yellow crazy ants on Christmas Island (p. 44).

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

2.20 The committee called officers from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. In his opening statement, Dr Russell Reichelt, Chairman, outlined some of the challenges facing the Great Barrier Reef:

The Great Barrier Reef has been impacted on by two significant environmental incidents this year: an unprecedented second consecutive year of coral bleaching on a mass scale and Tropical Cyclone Debbie—the tenth severe category cyclone to cross the Reef since 2005. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is focused on understanding and responding to the impacts of these events.¹²

2.21 Other matters canvassed by the committee included:

- advice provided by the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel (pp. 23–25);
- the crown-of-thorns starfish management control program (pp. 25, 38–39);
- content of the Reef 2050 Plan (pp. 26–28);
- large-scale coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef (pp. 30–32);
- impacts of mining operations on the marine park (pp. 33–34);
- permits issued under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Parks Shark Control Program (pp. 36–38); and
- Australia's participation in the International Coral Reef Initiative (p. 39).

Office of the Supervising Scientist

2.22 The committee called the Office of the Supervising Scientist (OSS) and discussed:

- the tailings deposition strategy for the Ranger Mine site (pp. 94–98);
- monitoring of the Ranger Mine after its closure (pp. 98–100);
- the impact of the department's restructure on the OSS (p.100); and
- the design of the Australian Domestic Gas Security Mechanism (ADGSM) (pp. 100–101).

Snowy Hydro Limited

2.23 The committee called officers from Snowy Hydro Limited. In his opening statement, Mr Paul Broad, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Snowy Hydro, outlined the proposed Snowy Hydro expansion project. Other matters examined included:

12 Dr Russell Reichelt, Chairman, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2017, p. 21.

- the cost and timeline for the feasibility study on the Snowy Hydro expansion (pp. 40–41);
- potential electricity storage capacity and cost of the project (pp. 41–48); and
- environmental approvals required for the expansion project (pp. 50–51).

Communications and the Arts Portfolio

2.24 As noted in chapter one, the committee conducted its examination of the Communications and the Arts Portfolio over three days: 24 and 25 May 2017 and 15 June 2017.

Department of Communications and the Arts

2.25 The committee commenced its examination of the Communications and the Arts Portfolio on 24 May 2017 by calling officers from the Department of Communications and the Arts. The following general matters were discussed:

- delayed responses to questions on notice from the Additional Estimates hearings (pp. 4–6);
- anticipated release of the Productivity Commission's report into the future direction of a universal service obligation (USO) in the telecommunications market (pp. 6–13);
- the department's use of labour hire companies (pp. 13–15);
- funding under-represented sports on subscription television (pp. 13–17); and
- restrictions on gambling advertising during the broadcast of live sports events (pp. 17–21).

Outcome 1: Promote an innovative and competitive communications sector, through policy development, advice and program delivery, so all Australians can realise the full potential of digital technologies and communications services

2.26 Officers were called in relation to Program 1.1: Digital Technologies and Communications Services. Matters canvassed included:

- the final report of the review of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) (pp. 41–46);
- the audio transcription services working group (pp. 61–61, 72–73);
- the mobile black-spot program (pp. 63–72);
- broadband performance monitoring and reporting program (pp. 73–76); and
- the telecommunications competition framework (pp. 76–78).

2.27 Issues related to Program 1.1 were further examined by the committee at the hearing held on 15 June 2017. Matters discussed included:

- the department's procedures for processing questions on notice (p. 2);

- the timing of the provision of National Broadband Network (NBN) Electorate Briefs (pp. 3–9);
- support for users of non-monitored medical alarms as the NBN is rolled out (pp. 9–11); and
- coverage and specifications of the mobile black-spot program (pp. 11–15).

Outcome 2: Participation in, and access to, Australia's arts and culture through developing and supporting cultural expression

2.28 The committee called officers in relation to Program 2.1: Arts and Cultural Development and discussed the following matters:

- funding of Creative Partnerships Australia for 2017–18 (pp. 45–47);
- local employment opportunities in the domestic film industry (pp. 48–49);
- impact of the Government's changes to VET Student Loans on the National Institute of Dramatic Art and other elite arts training institutions (pp. 50–52);
- removal of arts occupations from the 457 visa program (p. 52)
- funding for the Indigenous Languages and Arts program (pp. 52–53); and
- funding cuts to the Australian Youth Orchestra (pp. 53–54).

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

2.29 The committee called officers of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). In her opening statement, Ms Michelle Guthrie, Managing Director, updated the committee on the recently announced changes to the ABC's corporate strategy and structure since the ABC's last appearance at estimates (pp. 109–110). The following matters were also discussed:

- the ABC's iview audio description trial (pp. 110–111);
- controversial comments made by ABC employees (pp. 111–112, 125–127);
- the ABC's policies on Indigenous employment (pp. 112–113, 117–118);
- the ABC's compliance with the Government's Competitive Neutrality Policy (pp. 115–116 and 133);
- redundancies resulting from the announced strategic restructure of the organisation (pp. 121–123); and
- the cessation of shortwave transmission services to the Northern Territory and international audiences (pp. 123–125 and 132).

Australian Communications and Media Authority

2.30 The committee called officers of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and discussed:

- recommendations from the ACMA Review (pp. 14, 16–19);

-
- the ACMA's preparation for the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) (pp. 14–15);
 - social media and gambling advertisements restrictions (pp. 19–22);
 - complaints to the Do Not Call Register (pp. 27–29); and
 - funding for the implementation of the recommendations of the Spectrum Review (pp. 30–33).

Australia Council for the Arts

2.31 The committee called officers from the Australia Council for the Arts and discussed:

- final round for *Catalyst* and additional funding (pp. 40–41);
- capacity building and engagement campaigns (pp. 42–43); and
- grant applications received from Western Australia (pp. 43–44).

Australian Postal Corporation

2.32 The committee called officers of Australia Post and invited Ms Christine Corbett, Group Chief Customer Officer, to make an opening statement. In her opening remarks, Ms Corbett updated the committee on Australia Post's recent commercial performance and progress towards a new staff enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) (pp. 98–99).

2.33 Other matters discussed by the committee included:

- EBA negotiations under the Government's workplace bargaining policy (pp. 99–104, 108–109);
- parcel delivery protocols (pp. 104–107); and
- Australia Post's administration of the Licensed Post Office Agreement (pp.107–108).

National Broadband Network Co Limited

2.34 On 25 May 2017, Mr Bill Morrow, Chief Executive Officer, made an opening statement and provided the committee with an update on the progress of the rollout of the NBN.

2.35 The committee also canvassed the following matters with NBN Co:

- late responses to questions on notice from Additional Estimates (pp. 57–58);
- deployment of the Sky Muster II satellite (pp. 59–62, 64–65);
- the company's compliance with the Government's Workplace Bargaining Policy (pp. 110–112);

- the Senate Privileges Committee report in relation to leaked NBN documents (pp. 112–118); and
- NBN Co policy on blocking social media comments (pp. 118–119).

2.36 Officers from NBN Co were called to appear before the committee at its hearing on 15 June 2017. The following matters were discussed:

- impact of non-existent premises on the NBN rollout (pp. 15–16 and 23);
- number of 'Service Class 0' addresses (pp. 16–20);
- cost of the NBN to the taxpayer (pp. 20–21);
- forecast take-up rates of the NBN in regional areas (pp. 20–22);
- options for enhancing NBN's future satellite capacity (p. 22);
- the USO and new development sites (p. 23); and
- the number of missed NBN installation appointments (pp. 24–25).

National Film and Sound Archive

2.37 The committee called officers from the National Film and Sound Archive (NSFA). Matters canvassed included the NSFA's budgetary position and the impact of the efficiency dividend on the NSFA's capacity to deliver a range of events and programs (pp. 39–41).

National Gallery of Australia

2.38 The committee called officers from the National Gallery of Australia (NGA). Matters discussed included:

- the impact of the Government's efficiency dividend (pp. 27–28);
- plans to increase private-sector funding for the NGA (p. 28);
- Stage 2 plans for the expansion of the NGA (pp. 28–29); and
- the lending of artworks to state and overseas galleries (pp. 29–30).

National Library of Australia

2.39 The committee welcomed Dr Marie-Louise Ayers, Director-General of the National Library of Australia. Matters raised included:

- the reduction of overseas serials in the collection (pp. 30–31);
- funding for Trove and other digital infrastructure (pp. 31–32); and
- activities to commemorate the anniversary of the 1967 referendum (p. 35).

National Museum of Australia

2.40 The committee called officers from the National Museum of Australia and discussed:

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- additional funding and staffing levels (pp. 24–25);
 - the new Cultural and Corporate Shared Services Centre (pp. 25–26); and
 - Australian touring exhibitions (pp. 26–27).

National Portrait Gallery

2.41 The committee called officers from the National Portrait Gallery. Matters canvassed included:

- staffing and funding levels (pp. 22–23);
- visitor numbers to the gallery (p. 23); and
- re-consideration of the Bald Archys collection material with reference to the gallery's Collection Development Policy (p. 23).

Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner

2.42 The committee called the Children's eSafety Commissioner. The Commissioner, Ms Julie Inman-Grant, provided the committee with an update on the recent activities of the office (p. 4). Other matters examined included:

- budget and staffing numbers (pp. 3–4);
- responsibility for cyberspace matters (pp. 6–8);
- the number of complaints to the cyberbullying hotline (pp. 8–12); and
- education and outreach programs for children (pp. 12–13).

Old Parliament House

2.43 The committee called officers from Old Parliament House and discussed the following matters:

- the impact of the efficiency dividend on the Museum of Australian Democracy (pp. 35–36);
- reduction in the total number of free entry days each year (p. 37); and
- engagement with school groups (pp. 37–38).

Screen Australia

2.44 The committee called officers from Screen Australia. In her opening statement, Ms Fiona Cameron, Chief Operating Officer, provided a brief overview of recent developments in film, television and online (pp. 35–36). Other matters canvassed included:

- the review into Australian and children's screen content (pp. 35–36);
- update on the Gender Matters initiative (pp. 36–37); and
- funding for the games and digital arts industry (pp. 37–40).

Special Broadcasting Service

2.45 The committee called Mr Michael Ebeid, Managing Director and CEO of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). In his opening statement, Mr Ebeid provided the committee with an update on the additional funding SBS received in the Federal Budget as well as its programming schedule (p. 79).

2.46 The following matters were also canvassed:

- the impacts of the Government's proposed gambling advertising restrictions on SBS's advertising revenue (pp. 80–81);
- access to SBS's on-demand service platform (pp. 83–85);
- SBS's policies and editorial independence (pp. 85–88); and
- public comments by the Managing Director in relation to same-sex marriage (pp. 90–94, 95–98).

Senator Jonathon Duniam
Chair

Appendix 1

Budget Estimates programs

The Senate BUSINESS OF COMMITTEES

This document is issued as a guide to Senators
Business listed is subject to change

It should be noted that times allocated for the consideration of outcomes, items and agencies within portfolios are indicative only.

Senators, staff and departments should liaise with secretariats on the progress of portfolios during the estimates process.

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Public Hearings: BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR 2017-18

**Monday, 22 May to Thursday, 25 May 2017
Committee Room 2S3
Parliament House
Canberra ACT**

*To be televised on Channel 111/Radio 91.1
http://www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament*

MONDAY, 22 May 2017

Time Environment and Energy Portfolio

9.00 am	General questions of the Department
	Morning Tea: 10.30 am to 10.45 am
10.45 am	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
12.15 pm	Director of National Parks
	Lunch: 12.45 pm to 1.45 pm
1.45 pm	Bureau of Meteorology
2.45 pm	Climate Change Authority
	Afternoon Tea: 4.00 pm to 4.20 pm
4.20 pm	Program 1.1: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment

5.20 pm	Program 1.2: Environmental Information and Research
	Dinner: 6.40 pm to 7.40 pm
7.40 pm	Program 1.4: Conservation of Australia's Heritage and Environment
	Tea Break 9.00 pm to 9.15 pm
9.15 pm	Program 1.5: Environmental Regulation
11.00 pm	Adjournment

TUESDAY, 23 May 2017

Time Environment and Energy Portfolio

9.00 am	Program 3.1: Antarctica: Science, Policy and Presence
9.45 am	Australian Renewable Energy Agency
	Morning Tea: 10.45 am to 11.00 am
11.00 am	Snowy Hydro Ltd
11.45 am	Clean Energy Finance Corporation
	Lunch: 12.45 pm to 1.45 pm
1.45 pm	Clean Energy Regulator
2.45 pm	Program 1.6: Management of Hazardous Wastes, Substances and Pollutants
	Afternoon Tea: 3.45 pm to 4.00 pm
4.00 pm	Program 2.1: Reducing Australia's Greenhouse Gas Emissions
5.00 pm	Program 2.2: Adapting to Climate Change
	Dinner 6.15 pm to 7.15 pm
7.15 pm	Program 2.3: Renewable Energy Technology Development
8.30 pm	Office of the Supervising Scientist
	Tea Break: 9.15 pm to 9.30 pm
9.30 pm	Program 4.1: Energy
11.00 pm	Adjournment

WEDNESDAY, 24 May 2017
Time Communications and the Arts Portfolio

9.00 am	General questions of the Department
	Break: 10.45 am to 11.00 am
11.00 am	National Portrait Gallery of Australia
11.15 am	National Museum of Australia
11.30 am	National Gallery of Australia
11.45 pm	National Library of Australia
12.00 noon	Old Parliament House
12.15 pm	National Film and Sound Archive of Australia
	Lunch: 12.30 pm to 1.30 pm
1.30 pm	Program 1.1: Digital Technologies and Communications
	Afternoon Tea: 4.00 pm to 4.15 pm
4.15 pm	Special Broadcasting Service
5.45 pm	Australia Post
	Dinner 6.45 pm to 7.45 pm
7.45 pm	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
	Tea Break: 9.15 pm to 9.30 pm
9.30 pm	Australian Broadcasting Corporation (<i>continued</i>)
11.00 pm	Adjournment

THURSDAY, 25 May 2017
Time Communications and the Arts Portfolio

9.00 am	Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner
10.00 am	Australian Communications and Media Authority
	Morning Tea: 10.30 am to 10.45 am
10.45 am	Australian Communications and Media Authority (<i>continued</i>)
12.00 noon	Screen Australia
	Lunch: 12.45 pm to 1.45 pm
1.45 pm	Australia Council

2.30 pm	Program 2.1: Arts and Cultural Development
	Afternoon Tea: 4.15 pm to 4.30 pm
4.30 pm	NBN Co
	Dinner 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm
7.30 pm	NBN Co (continued)
	Tea Break: 9.00 pm to 9.15 pm
9.15 pm	NBN Co (continued)
11.00 pm	Adjournment

The Senate

BUSINESS OF COMMITTEES

This document is issued as a guide to Senators

Business listed is subject to change

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Senators, staff and departments should liaise with secretariats on the progress of portfolios during the estimates process.

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Public Hearings: BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR 2017-18

**Thursday, 15 June 2017
Committee Room 2S3
Parliament House
Canberra ACT**

To be televised on Channel 109/Radio 91.1

http://www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament

Time Communications and the Arts Portfolio

6.00 pm	Program 1.1: Digital Technologies and Communications
	NBN Co Ltd
8.00 pm	Adjournment

Appendix 2

Tabled documents and additional information

Tabled documents

Monday, 22 May 2017

Dr Gordon de Brouwer, Secretary, Department of the Environment and Energy:

- Department of the Environment and Energy outcome structure.

Dr Russell Reichelt, Chairman, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority:

- Participant list for the Great Barrier Reef Summit—Managing for Resilience 24–25 May 2017.

Tuesday, 23 May 2017

Senator Chris Back:

- Summary and calculations related to the 2020 Large-scale Renewable Energy Target.
- Australian Securities & Investments Commission, Current & Historical Company Extract—Glen Innes Windpower Pty Ltd.
- Australian Securities & Investments Commission, Current & Historical Company Extract—Lincoln Gap Wind Farm Pty Ltd.

Wednesday, 24 May 2017

Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communications, Minister for the Arts:

- Correspondence from the Office of the Managing Director, Australian Broadcasting Corporation to Mr John O'Sullivan, Editor, *Quadrant* and Mr Roger Franklin, Editor, *Quadrant Online*, dated 24 May 2017.

Ms Michelle Guthrie, Managing Director, Australian Broadcasting Corporation:

- Opening statement.

Thursday, 25 May 2017

Mr Bill Morrow, Chief Executive Officer, NBN Co Ltd:

- Opening statement.

Thursday, 15 June 2017

Dr Heather Smith, Secretary, Department of Communications and the Arts:

- Correspondence from Dr Heather Smith, Secretary, Department of Communications and the Arts to Mr Bill Morrow, Chief Executive Officer, NBN Co Ltd, dated 9 June 2017.

Additional information

Mr Ivor Frischknecht, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Renewable Energy Agency:

- Letter correcting evidence given to the committee at Budget Estimates, dated 31 May 2017.

Dr Judy West, Acting Director of National Parks:

- Letter correcting evidence given to the committee at Budget Estimates by Ms Sally Barnes, Director of National Parks, dated 14 June 2017.

Dr Russell Reichelt, Chairman, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority:

- Letter correcting evidence given to the committee at Budget Estimates, dated 15 June 2017.

Mr Bruce Elliot, General Manager, Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority:

- Letter correcting evidence given to the committee at Budget Estimates, dated 16 June 2017.

Ms Jo Talbot, First Assistant Secretary, Corporate Division, Department of Communications and the Arts:

- Letter correcting evidence given to the committee at Budget Estimates, dated 15 June 2017.

Mr Steve Bass-Rees:

- Correspondence to the committee concerning evidence given by Australia Post on 24 May 2017, dated 10 June 2017; and answers to questions on notice provided by Australia Post, dated 11 August 2017.

Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communications, Minister for the Arts:

- Letter providing a statement from NBN Co Ltd concerning the specific harm to public or commercial interest that would result from the disclosure of information in response to questions on notice Nos 298 and 359, dated 11 October 2017.