

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 4 February 2016, 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 2016 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2015-16]; and
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2016 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2015-16].¹

1.2 The committee is required to examine the 2015-16 additional estimates contained in these two documents in relation to the Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio and the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio.² Following examination, the committee is required to table its report on the 2015-16 additional estimates on 1 March 2016.

Additional Estimates hearings

1.3 The committee examined witnesses from the Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio on 8 February 2016, and witnesses from the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio on 9 February 2016.

1.4 The committee heard evidence from the following senators:

- Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Minister for Tourism and International Education and Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment (representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development); and
- Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources (representing the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources).

1.5 Evidence was also provided by:

- Mr Mike Mrdak, Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development; and

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 78, 4 February 2016, pp 3720-3721.

2 Following machinery-of-government changes in September 2015, amendments to the Administrative Arrangements Orders gave responsibility for water policy and resources to the former Department of the Agriculture, creating the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

- Mr Daryl Quinlivan, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources; and
- officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

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

Questions on notice

1.7 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 1 April 2016.³

Record of proceedings

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

Note on references and additional information

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

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

3 Once received, answers to questions on notice will be published at the following website address:
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_Estimates/rtratctte/estimates/add1516/index