

## Labor Senators' additional comments

1.1 The committee notes that the agreed timetable for Thursday, 29 May 2014 was for the hearing to commence at 9 am and conclude at 11 pm.

1.2 The Chair, Senator Williams, interrupted proceedings at around 10.20 pm on Thursday, 29 May 2014 with the statement: 'We are four hours into this. We started half an hour early; we are finishing at 10.30.'<sup>1</sup>

1.3 Senator Conroy expressed concern at the Chair's decision: 'No, no. You actually do not get to overturn a Senate resolution just because you have decided to. The Senate has decided that estimates takes place this week. Let's be very clear: no-one has previously closed the committee down. You are closing it down. You are not allowed to close down Senate estimates.'<sup>2</sup>

1.4 The Chair, Senator Williams, responded: 'Order! I will make this point. We have had four hours stipulated for NBN.'<sup>3</sup>

1.5 Senators Urquhart, Conroy and Pratt highlighted during the hearing that Coalition Senators had requested four hours on Australia Post for the evening of Wednesday, 28 May 2014 and that the committee finished early because few Coalition Senators were in attendance to seek explanations of Australia Post.<sup>4</sup>

1.6 Labor Senators note that when formulating the program for the Communications Portfolio, Labor Senators recommended less time on Australia Post and scheduling ACMA and/or TUSMA on Wednesday, 28 May 2014. Labor Senators sought a minimum of 5¼ hours for Labor Senators to question NBN Co, which is reasonable considering the new strategy deployed by the Government regarding the NBN. The Chair, Senator Williams, used his majority on the committee to restrict the time on NBN Co for all Senators. Labor Senators note that the requested time could easily have been accommodated if the Coalition had not requested such an excessive amount of time with Australia Post and moved other agencies to the Wednesday evening.

1.7 The committee finally held a private meeting from 10.25 pm to 10.28 pm on Thursday, 29 May 2014 where Coalition Senators voted to suspend the estimates committee at 10.35 pm.

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1 Senator John Williams, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 29 May 2014, p. 126.

2 Senator Stephen Conroy, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 29 May 2014, p. 126.

3 Senator John Williams, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 29 May 2014, p. 126.

4 Senator Anne Urquhart, Senator Stephen Conroy, Senator Louise Pratt, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 29 May 2014, p. 128.

1.8 Labor Senators express their concern that the Coalition used their majority on the committee to suspend estimates 25 minutes before the time decreed by the Senate when Senators still had further explanations to seek of NBN Co.

**Senator Anne Urquhart**  
**Deputy Chair**  
**Senator for Tasmania**

**Senator Louise Pratt**  
**Senator for Western Australia**