

The Senate

Standing Committee on
Environment, Communications
and the Arts

Additional estimates 2008–09

March 2009

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ISBN 978-1-74229-047-8

Membership of the Committee

Members:

Senator Anne McEwen (ALP, SA) (Chair)
Senator Simon Birmingham (LP, SA) (Deputy Chair)
Senator the Hon Ron Boswell (NATS, QLD)
Senator Scott Ludlam (AG, WA)
Senator Kate Lundy (ALP, ACT)
Senator Louise Pratt (ALP, WA)
Senator the Hon Judith Troeth (LP, VIC)
Senator Dana Wortley (ALP, SA)

Substitute members:

Senator Catryna Bilyk for Senator Pratt on 23 February 2009
Senator Mark Arbib for Senator Pratt on 24 February 2009

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Contents

Membership of the Committee	iii
Report to the Senate	
Introduction	1
Hearings	1
Questions on notice – date for response	1
Portfolio specific issues	2
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy portfolio	2
Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio	4
Acknowledgements	8
Appendix 1 – Public hearings agenda	11
Appendix 2 – Documents tabled	13

Introduction

1.1 On 4 December 2008 the Senate referred the following documents to standing committees for examination and report:

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2009 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2008-2009],
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2009 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2008-2009], and
- Final Budget Outcome 2007-08 and the Advance to the Finance Minister as a final charge for the year ended 30 June 2008.¹

1.2 Standing committees were required to report to the Senate on 17 March 2009.²

Hearings

1.3 The committee conducted public hearings on the Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy portfolio on 23 February 2009 and on the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio on 23 and 24 February 2009.

1.4 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. The answers are also compiled as volumes of Additional Information.

1.5 Links to the transcripts of the public hearings and to answers and additional information are available on the Internet at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eca_ctte/estimates/add_0809/index.htm

Questions on notice – date for response

1.6 In accordance with Standing Order 26(9)(a), the committee agreed that the date for the submission of written answers or additional information in response to questions placed on notice be Thursday, 9 April 2009.

1.7 Once again, the committee expressed its concern about the time taken to receive answers to questions taken on notice. The committee reiterates its expectation that answers to questions on notice will be provided to the committee by the due date.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 52, 4 December 2008, p. 1446.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 43, 12 November 2008, p. 1159.

Portfolio specific issues

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy portfolio

1.8 On the first day of its examination of the 2008-2009 Additional Estimates, the committee called and examined officers from the Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy portfolio.

1.9 The committee welcomed Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

1.10 During its examination, the committee raised a range of matters which are noted below. The page references beside each matter refer to the proof transcript for Monday, 23 February 2009.

Outcome 1—Development of services and provisions of a regulatory environment which encourages an efficient and effective communications sector for the benefit of all Australians

Australia Post

Matters raised included:

- measures undertaken to assist people affected by the Victorian bushfires and the floods in Northern Queensland (pp 3–5)
- process for setting the remuneration of the managing director (p. 6)
- attendance of the managing director at Senate Estimates (pp 7–8, 19–20)
- expenses incurred and revenue raised at the Beijing Olympic Games (pp 8–9)
- closures of licensed and corporate post offices during 2008 (p. 9)
- procedures for dealing with dog attacks (pp 11–12)
- closure of Murrumbateman Post Office (pp 12–14)
- development and implementation of the Future Delivery Design (FFD) program (pp 15–17)
- contract with Mercedes for supply of vehicles (pp 17–19).

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

The Managing Director, Mr Mark Scott, reported to the committee on the ABC's response to the Victorian bushfires, and to the floods in Northern Queensland, noting that 'all arms of the ABC – news, television, radio, online – had done their bit to assist' in providing the means for passing on the latest news and official advice to communities during the crisis.

Other matters raised included:

- ongoing coverage of the Hopman Cup in Perth (pp 24–26)

-
- emergency services response process (pp 27, 39–40)
 - Boston Consulting Group's Project W investigating possible savings through closer integration with SBS (pp 27–33)
 - status of Mr Peter Lloyd (pp 33–35)
 - errata sheet relating to the program *Lords of the Forests* (pp 35–36)
 - process for inviting people to join the audience for the program *Q&A* (pp 36–38)
 - allocations of funding under the National Interest Initiatives program (p. 40)
 - changes to Radio National programming (pp 41–44)
 - appointments to the Board and reinstatement of the staff elected director position (pp 44–50)
 - commercial partnership between the ABC and HarperCollins for the publication of books (pp 50–52)
 - in-house production of documentary material (pp 52–53)
 - complaints made in relation to ABC reporting of the conflict in Gaza and to coverage of the recent Israeli elections (p. 57).

Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)

Matters raised included:

- provision by the government of a \$15 million capital injection (pp 58–60)
- Boston Consulting Group's Project W investigating possible savings through closer integration with SBS (pp 60–62)
- continuation of in-program advertising (pp 62–63)
- complaints received in relation to the conflict in Gaza and the recent Israeli elections (pp 63–64)
- revenue raised from advertising (p. 65).

Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)

Matters raised included:

- number of URLs on the list of black-listed sites (pp 65–68, 71, 74–76)
- process surrounding the ACMA report related to the *Lords of the Forest* program (pp 68–69)
- source of complaints or referrals about sites (p. 70)
- role of a consultative working group considering a broad range of cybersafety issues (pp 70–71)
- review of cybersafety research (pp 77, 79)
- internet safety awareness presentations (pp 77–79)

- black spot problems with analog TV reception in North Queensland (pp 81–85)
- breaches of the Do Not Call Register (pp 85–86)
- in-flight telephony (pp 86–89).

Output 1.1—Policy advice and program management which encourages competitively priced and reasonably accessible telecommunications and postal services

Matters raised included:

- analog TV black spots North Queensland and Victoria (pp 89–96)
- digital switchover process (pp 96–101)
- digital tracker reports concerning digital uptake and contract amounts (p. 101)
- National Broadband Network (pp 101–108, 112)
- Coordinated Communications Infrastructure Fund and the Kimberly Broadband Solutions Project (pp 108–109)
- Net filtering trials (pp 113–115).

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

1.11 At the conclusion of its examination of the Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy portfolio, the committee called and examined officers from the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio in relation to Outcome 4—arts/cultural sector.

1.12 The committee welcomed Senator the Hon Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts.

Outcome 4—Development of a rich and stimulating cultural sector for all Australians

Australia Council

Matters raised included:

- impact of the one-off efficiency dividend (pp 117–118)
- development of the draft Indigenous art code of conduct (pp 118–120)
- appointments to artform boards (p. 121)
- appointments to the Council board (p. 121).

Screen Australia

The committee welcomed Dr Harley, the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of Screen Australia.

Matters raised included:

- update on the development of the business model and strategic plan for the organisation (p. 122)
- number of productions supported in the current financial year (p. 124)
- effectiveness of the producer offset regime (p. 124)
- impact of current financial situation on production (pp 124–125).

Output 4.1—Policy advice, program management and agency support which promotes access to and excellence in Australia’s cultural activities and preservation and development of our cultural collections

Matters raised included:

- membership of the Creative Australia panel (p. 126)
- current and proposed arrangements for the National Academy of Music (pp 126–127)
- funding for the Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts program (p. 128)
- funding for the Australian Youth Orchestra (pp 128–129).

1.13 On the second day of hearing the committee continued its examination of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio, commencing with agencies and outputs under Outcome 1.

1.14 The page references beside each matter below refer to the proof transcript for Tuesday, 24 February 2009.

1.15 The committee welcomed Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Climate Change and Water, and representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, and officers.

1.16 General questions were asked of the department about the

- retirement of the departmental secretary, Mr David Borthwick, and the appointment of Ms Robyn Kruk to the position (pp 5, 39–40)
- staffing levels (p. 40)

Outcome 1—The environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance, is protected and conserved

Bureau of Meteorology (BoM)

Matters raised included:

- average surface sea temperatures (pp 3–4)
- appointment of a director (p. 4)
- staffing levels at Bureau offices in North Queensland (pp 6–10, 11)
- introduction of GFE technology (pp 10, 11)

- role of the Bureau before and during the Victorian bushfire situation (p. 12).

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)

Matters raised included:

- water quality monitoring and reporting program (pp 15–16)
- Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships Program (p. 16)
- impact of downturn in tourism due to financial situation on Reef HQ (p. 16).

Office of Supervising Scientist

Matters raised included:

- closing date for the Ranger operations (p. 18)
- possible expansion of Ranger operations (p. 19)
- monitoring the integrity of the environment about the tailings dam (pp 20–22).

Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

Matters raised included:

- status of MOU with the Department of Defence for cleaning up the HMAS *Platypus* site (pp 23–24)
- extension of Trusts' life to 2033 from nominally 2011 (p. 25).

Director of National Parks

Matters raised included:

- management plan and issues associated with Cocos Keeling islands (pp 25–31, 89)
- funding for the National Reserve System (NRS) and Indigenous protected areas (IPAs) (pp 31–32)
- status of court case relating to mining issue on Christmas Island (pp 32–33)
- management staffing levels on Christmas Island (p. 34)
- status of reports prepared on biodiversity on Christmas Island (pp 34–35)
- status of research on the pipistrelle bat (pp 35–36)
- introduction of admission fees to Kakadu (pp 36–37)
- management and infrastructure upkeep in Kakadu (pp 37–39).

Output 1.1—Response to climate change

Matters raised included:

- current status of the Green Loans program (pp 40–45)
- insulation program announced as part of the Government's stimulation package and the Low Emissions Plan for Renters (pp 47–51)

-
- National Solar Schools Program (pp 52–55)
 - greenhouse gas emissions from logging and land clearance in Australia (pp 55–56)
 - solar panels rebate scheme and renewable energy credits offsets (pp 56–58).

Output 1.2—Conservation of the land and inland waters

Matters raised included:

- transfer of Caring for our Country funds to assist in rehabilitation in Victoria as a result of the recent bushfires (p. 65)
- monitoring of the Caring for our Country program – MERI: monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement strategy (p. 66)
- funding arrangements for regional groups and other community stakeholders under the Caring for our Country program (pp 66–72)
- funding under the Great Barrier Reef water quality grants program (pp 84–88).

Output 1.3—Conservation of the coasts and oceans

Matters raised included:

- payments under the structural readjustment program (pp 13–15)
- Japanese whaling in the Southern Oceans and the AFP raid on the *Steve Irwin* (pp 73–78)
- monitoring of Japanese whaling activities (pp 78–79)
- appointment and role of the whaling envoy, Mr Hollway (pp 81–82)
- number of shark fisheries with export licences (pp 83–84)
- stakeholder engagement in the regional marine planning process (p. 89).

Output 1.4—Conservation of natural, indigenous and historic heritage

Matters raised included:

- heritage listing of the Richmond Bridge in Tasmania (p. 90)
- world heritage nomination of Port Arthur and community consultation (p. 91)
- proposed boundaries for the Ningaloo heritage site (pp 91–92)
- provision of funding for the National Trust in each state (p. 94).

Output 1.5—Response to the impacts of human settlements

Matters raised included:

- interaction on the environmental approvals process between federal and state processes (pp 95–98)
- status of the EPBC Act application for the Traveston Crossing Dam (p. 98)

- approval process for the Gunns pulp mill (pp 100–106)
- conditions for approval of the Sugarloaf pipeline (pp106–111)
- current status of the Kimberly assessment project (pp 111–113)
- status of referrals in relation to the Lower Lakes in South Australia (pp 113–117).

Outcome 2—Australia's interests in Antarctica are advanced

Australian Antarctic Division

The committee welcomed the new Director of the Australian Antarctic Division, Ms Lyn Maddock, and the new chief scientist, Mr John Gunn.

Matters raised included:

- research into the effects of climate change on the biota and living systems within the Antarctic (pp 59–60)
- use by the Japanese of the *Aurora Australia* (pp 60–61)
- support for the ANARE Club (pp 62–63)
- funding support for the Mawson's Huts Foundation (p. 63)
- issues surrounding Antarctic related tourism and protocols related to tourism (pp 64–65).

Outcome 3—More efficient and sustainable use of Australia's water resources

Murray-Darling Basin Authority

The committee noted that this was the first appearance of the Authority at estimates hearings.

Matters raised included:

- progress of appointment of board members (p. 118)
- development of the Basin Plan (p. 119)
- reporting of water flows in the Authority's *River Murray weekly report* of 20 February (pp 121–122)
- water sale by Tandou Limited (pp 122–124).

National Water Commission

Matters raised included:

- national review of water restriction in larger urban centres (pp 125–126).

Output 3.1—Sustainable management of water resources

Output 3.2—Achieving efficiencies in water use

Matters raised included:

- total value of water purchases (p. 127)
- potential impact of water purchases on Australia's food security (pp 127–128)
- water saving project at Menindee Lakes (pp 129–130).

Acknowledgements

1.17 The committee thanks Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy; and Senator the Hon Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing and Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Climate Change and Water, both representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Arts, The Hon Peter Garrett, MP, along with officers from both portfolio departments and agencies, for their assistance during this additional estimates process.

Senator Anne McEwen
Chair

Appendix 1

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 STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS

Public Hearings: **Additional Estimates 2008–2009**
Monday, 23 and Tuesday, 24 February 2009

Committee Room 2S3
Parliament House
Canberra ACT

To be televised on Channel 11 and broadcast on Radio 91.1
<http://webcast.aph.gov.au>

AGENDA

MONDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE)

**Outcome 1—Development of a vibrant, sustainable and internationally
competitive broadband and communications sector which promotes the
digital economy for the benefit of all Australians**

9.00 am **Australia Post**
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Special Broadcasting Service
Australian Communications and Media Authority
DBCDE Output 1.1 Policy advice and program management that delivers
competitively priced, accessible and high quality broadband and other communication
services and that supports the digital economy

9.15 pm **Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Portfolio**

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA)

Outcome 4—Development of a rich and stimulating cultural sector for all Australians

Australia Council

Screen Australia

DEWHA Output 4.1—Policy advice, program management and agency support which promotes excellence in, preservation and maintenance of, and access to Australia's cultural activities, national cultural collections and buildings, and indigenous language

11.00pm Adjournment

TUESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2009

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Portfolio

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA)

9.00 am *Outcome 1—The environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance, is protected and conserved*

Bureau of Meteorology

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Supervising Scientist

Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

Director of National Parks

DEWHA Output 1.1—Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Action

DEWHA Output 1.2—Conservation of the land and inland waters

DEWHA Output 1.3—Conservation of the coasts and oceans

DEWHA Output 1.4—Conservation of natural, indigenous and historic heritage

DEWHA Output 1.5—Response to the impacts of human settlements

Outcome 2—Australia's interests in Antarctica are advanced

DEWHA Output 2.1—Antarctic policy

DEWHA Output 2.2—Antarctic science

Outcome 3—More efficient and sustainable use of Australia's water resources

Murray-Darling Basin Authority

National Water Commission

DEWHA Output 3.1—Sustainable management of water resources

DEWHA Output 3.2—Achieving efficiencies in water us

11.00pm Adjournment

BREAKS	Morning tea	10.45am approx	
	Lunch	1.00pm	2.00pm
	Afternoon tea	3.45pm approx	
	Dinner	6.00pm	7.00pm
	Tea break	9.00pm approx	

Appendix 2

Documents tabled

24 February 2009

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Ms Petrachenko, FAS, Marine Division, EWHA, Copy of Minister Garrett's speech to the Lowy Institute for International Policy, 18 February 2009, "The Future of International Whale Conservation"

