

The Senate

Standing Committee on
Environment, Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts

Budget estimates 2007–08

June 2007

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Committee Secretariat

Dr Ian Holland, Secretary
Mr Peter Short, Principal Research Office
Ms Jacqui Hawkins, Research Officer

Committee Address

Standing Committee on the Environment, Communications, Information Technology
and the Arts
S1.57, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Tel: 02 6277 3526

Fax: 02 6277 5818

Email: ecita.sen@aph.gov.au

Internet: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/ecita_ctte/index.htm

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Introduction

1.1 On 9 May 2007 the Senate referred the following documents to standing committees for examination and report:

- particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2008;
- particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2008;
- particulars of certain proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2007; and
- particulars of proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2007.¹

1.2 The committee was required to report to the Senate by 19 June 2007.²

Hearings

1.3 The committee conducted public hearings on the Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio on 21, 23 and 24 May 2007 and on the Environment and Water Resources portfolio on 21 and 22 May 2007. The agenda is at Appendix 1.

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

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/ecita_ctte/estimates/bud_0708/index.htm

1.5 Written answers and information provided to the committee on notice arising from the hearings are tabled in the Senate and also compiled as volumes of Additional Information. The answers are also posted on the committee's web page.

Questions on notice – date for response

1.6 In accordance with Standing Order 26(9)(a), the committee has fixed Tuesday, 31 July 2007 as the date for the return of written answers or additional information in response to questions placed on notice.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 143, 9 May 2007, p. 3754.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 126, 7 December 2006, p. 3293.

Portfolio specific issues

Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio

1.7 On the first day of its examination of the 2007-2008 Budget Estimates, the committee examined the arts and sport area of the Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio.

1.8 The committee welcomed Senator the Hon George Brandis, Minister for the Arts and Sport.

1.9 During its examination, the committee raised a variety of issues which are noted below. The page numbers beside each issue refer to the proof transcript for Monday, 21 May 2007.

Outcome 1—Development of a rich and stimulating cultural sector for all Australians

Issues canvassed included:

Australia Council

- review of the major performing arts companies (p. 4)
- development and training of choreographers (pp 6-7)
- matching of performing arts grants (pp 7-8)
- representation at the Venice Biennale in 2007 (pp 9-11, 15)
- artist support under the Playing the World program (pp 12-13)

Australian Film Commission (AFC)

- replacement of the 10BA scheme with the new producer rebate scheme (pp 16-17)
- proposed merger of the Australian Film Commission, Film Finance Corporation and Film Australia (pp 17-19)
- relocation of the research and statistics fund from the AFC to the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (pp 19-21)

Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS)

- relocation of the research and statistics fund from the AFC to the AFTRS (pp 21-23)

Film Australia Limited (AFC), Film Finance Corporation (FFC)

- levels of consultation about proposed merger with the AFC and FFC (pp 23-24)
- new producer rebate scheme (pp 24-25)

Australian National Maritime Museum

- pontoon project (pp 26-29)

National Archives of Australia

- digitisation of records (pp 30-32)
- new agreement with staff (pp 32-33)

National Gallery of Australia

- proposed new entrance and extensions (pp 33-34)
- draft report of cluster cancer cases (pp 34-37)

National Portrait Gallery

- purpose of additional funding (pp 38-40)

National Library of Australia

- update on progress of the digitalisation program (p. 41)
- progress of repairs to the podium (pp 41-42)

National Museum of Australia

- role of the museum in the Return of Indigenous Cultural Property Program (pp 42-43)

DCITA Output 1.1—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 languages

- applications for grants under the Playing Australia program (pp 43-44)
- funding for Regional Arts Australia (pp 44-46).

Outcome 2—Development of a stronger and internationally competitive Australian sports sector and encouragement of greater participation in sport by all Australians

As in past estimates hearings, the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority, the Australian Sports Commission and officers of the department were called together. Areas of inquiry included:

Australian Sports Anti-Doping Agency (ASADA)

- testing of athletes under the age of 18 (pp 46-68)
- processes surrounding the testing of athletes (pp 68-75)

Australian Sports Commission (ASC)

- ASC role in promoting a drug-free sporting environment (pp 75-76)

- funding for the AFL (pp 76-77)
- testing for illicit drugs (pp 77-89)
- AFL's three-strikes policy (pp 78-84, 89)
- funding for the Active After-School Communities program (pp 89-93).

1.10 At the conclusion of Arts and Sport, the committee commenced its examination of the Environment and Water Resources portfolio and welcomed Senator the Hon Eric Abetz, Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, representing the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, and portfolio officers and then moved to specific items on the agenda.

Outcome 2—Australia's interests in Antarctica are advanced

Australian Government Antarctic Division

- funding spent on whale policy (p. 95)
- funding spent on climate change research (p. 95)
- implications of ocean acidification in the Southern Ocean (pp 96-97, 102)
- damage to Macquarie Island from feral species (pp 98-100)
- supply of energy to the bases in Antarctica (pp 100-101)
- under the ice sheet research project (p. 101)

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

Supervising Scientist Division

- funding in the portfolio budget statement for the Office of the Supervising Scientist (OSS) (pp 102-105)
- status of the Ranger rehabilitation trust (p. 107)
- rehabilitation at Nabarlek (pp 107-108)
- role of the OSS in any future uranium mining in the Northern Territory (pp 108-110)

Bureau of Meteorology

- status of the review of the Bureau (pp 110-113)
- refurbishment of the Willis Island station (pp 114-115)
- tsunami warning systems in the Indian Ocean and the Australian west coast (pp 116-118)
- funding for the development of a tsunami warning system (p. 117)
- warning systems in the Coral Sea (p. 119)
- funding for water resource usage reporting (pp 120-122, 128)

-
- climate change modelling (pp 122-124)
 - effectiveness of cloud-seeding (pp 124-125)
 - National Plan for Water Security (pp 126-128)

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

- staffing levels (p. 130)
- appointment of new Chair (pp 130-131, 132-133)
- acknowledgements of Ms Chadwick's role as Chair of the Authority (p. 131)

Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

- development of management plans on a precinct basis (p. 133)
- progress of works programs on Cockatoo Island and the Middle Head site (p. 134-135).

1.11 On Tuesday, the committee continued its examination of the Environment and Water Resources portfolio. The page numbers refer to the proof transcript for 22 May 2007.

Director of National Parks and Parks Australia Division

- status of reports on the impact of climate change (pp 3, 10-11)
- allocation of budget funding to Northern Territory parks (pp 3-4)
- breakdown of annual infrastructure and maintenance for Kakadu and Uluru (p. 4)
- amount paid to traditional owners over past two years (p. 5)
- Parks expenditure at Mutitjulu (p. 6)
- status of Koongarra mineral lease (p. 7)
- status of crazy ant project (p. 8)
- funding for new acquisitions for the National Reserve System (p. 9)
- funding for the Uluru viewing platform (p. 12)

Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator

- reliability of wind energy feeding in to the grid (pp 12-14)
- current status of MRET (pp 15-16)
- monitoring of investment in renewable energy (pp 16-17)
- proportion of energy generated by different types of technologies (p. 17)
- the Renewable Energy Commercialisation Program (p. 19)
- the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program (p. 20).

1.12 Having finished its examination of agencies in the Environment and Water Resources portfolio, the committee called officers from the Department. To facilitate questioning certain divisions were grouped together for examination after general cross-portfolio questioning about amounts spent on advertising across the portfolio for 2006-07 and projected for 2007-08 (pp 21-25, 52-59, 85, 92-95).

Approvals and Wildlife Division

- process for site approval for any national nuclear waste facility under the EPBC Act (pp 25-26)
- investigation of claims of breaches of conditions against Great Southern Plantation's Tiwi Islands forestry operation (pp 26-28)
- decision not to extend mine leases on Christmas Island (pp 28-31)
- pipistrelle bat habitat research (p. 32)
- funding for study of the Tasmanian devil facial ulcerating disease (pp 32-35)
- additional funding for improvements in assessment performance (pp 35-36)
- strategic assessment of proposed projects in the Kimberley region (pp 36-37)
- clearing of the Gwydir wetlands (pp 39-44)
- assessment process for the Anvil Hill coalmine (pp 44-50, 51)
- impact of the proposed Paradise Dam on the lungfish (pp 50-51)
- departmental involvement in the development of the government's nuclear energy strategy (pp 78-81)

Environment Quality Division

- funding breakdown of division activities (p. 61)

Heritage Division

- listing of Burrup on the National Heritage List (pp 59-60)
- consultation with pastoralists about Ningaloo (pp 60, 66-67)
- impact of feral species on Macquarie Island (pp 63-66)

Policy Coordination Division

- funding for environmental services for Indigenous communities (pp 61-62)

Industry, Communities and Energy Division and International, Land and Analysis Division

- Greenhouse Challenge Plus (pp 67-72)
- abatement through energy efficiencies (pp 72-77)
- department's involvement in clean coal technology (pp 81-82)
- use of hydroelectricity in Australia (pp 82, 84)

- staff working on the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate and the Global Initiative on Forests and Climate (p. 83)

National Resource Management Programmes Division

- funding for NHT3 (pp 85-88)
- funding for drainage projects (pp 90-91)

Marine and Biodiversity Division

- stewardship program targeting endangered species (pp 88-90)
- Japan's whaling plan for 2007-08 (p. 91)
- intercepting Japanese whaling vessels (pp 96-97)

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

National Water Commission, Water Resources Division and Water Assets and Natural Resources Division

- worst case scenario of runoff in the Murray-Darling Basin (p. 98)
- interception activities such as interception plantations (pp 99-100)
- staffing of the two water divisions (pp 102-103)
- clarification of funding in the budget papers (pp 103-106, 107-109)
- Channel 7 FOI application (pp 106, 117-118)
- water efficiency plan (pp 110, 118-120, 122-123)
- funding for securing Bendigo's water supply and for the Ballarat region (pp 111-112)
- Victorian government's participation in the Commonwealth government's Water Plan (pp 112-115)
- responsibilities of the Assistant Minister, Mr John Cobb (p. 121)
- Ramsar review (pp 124-125)
- funding through the NWC of water projects in South Australia (pp 126-128)
- National Plan for Water Security in Northern Australia and the role of the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce (pp 128-131).

1.13 On Wednesday, the committee resumed its examination of the Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio, dealing with the communications outcome. The page numbers refer to the proof transcript for 23 May 2007.

Outcome 3 – Development of services and provision of a regulatory environment which encourages a sustainable and effective communications sector for the benefit of all Australians and an internationally competitive information economy and Information and Communications Technology industry

Australia Post

- budget for and members of the Licensee Advisory Council (pp 3-5)
- use of alternative fuels (p. 5)
- trial of hybrid vehicle (p. 6)
- calculation of and advice about the wholesale price of fuel (pp 7-10)
- unaddressed mail delivery service (pp 10-12)
- reasons for termination of contracts by contractors (pp 12-14)
- security of post offices (p. 15)
- FOI requests and the number of requests refused (p. 17)
- processes for resolving unpaid bills in Queensland (pp 20-22, 24-33)
- status of the feasibility study of processing at the joint Post/AQIS/Customs facility in Adelaide (pp 23-24)
- contracting out of mail delivery services in new and expanding suburbs (pp 33-34)
- methods of personal identification for certain postal services (pp 34-38)

Special Broadcasting Service Corporation

- proposed broadcasting in MPEG4 (pp 38-39)
- ratings for SBS News since the introduction of in-program breaks (p. 40)
- level of revenue since the introduction of in-program breaks (p. 41)
- employment of Open Dialogue to promote ratings (p. 43)
- percentage of Indigenous programming in prime time (p. 44)
- breaches of guidelines (pp 46-47)
- management structure changes (pp 48-52)
- guidelines and protocols for program acquisition (pp 53-54)
- increased advertising revenue in radio and amount invested in radio content (pp 54-55)

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

- establishment of ABC Commercial (pp 62-63, 75-81)
- decision to cease production of ABC audio books (pp 63-66)
- staff seeking ALP preselection (pp 67-68)
- number of FOI requests (pp 70-71)
- use of terminology and breaches of guidelines (pp 71-72)
- sharing of ABC premises with Media Monitors Australia (pp 73-74)

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- access to equal air time (pp 81-85, 92-94)
 - journalist education and/or training provided to program producers (pp 86-87)
 - update on status of alleged fraud case (p. 89)
 - costs of producing drama (pp 90-91)
 - screening of women's sports programs (p. 94)
 - process for publishing retractions or corrections of material broadcast (pp 94-97)
 - proportions of fully ABC produced, co-produced or fully externally produced programs (pp 100-103)
 - increased transmission of BBC programming on News Radio and use of other non-Australian content (p. 103)
 - timetable for the roll out of New Radio across regional areas (pp 104-105)
 - planning process for ABC digital services (pp 106-107)
 - use of outside broadcasting vans (pp 111-112).

DCITA Output 3.1—Policy advice and program management that delivers competitively priced, accessible and high quality telecommunications, broadcasting and postal services and that supports development and application of a competitive capability in information and communications a technology

- National Filter Scheme (pp 114-118, 144-146)
- role of The Campaign Palace, Quantum Market Research and other consultants (pp 119-124)
- Protecting Australian Families Online program (pp 124-125)
- costs of advertising campaigns (pp 125-130)
- circumstances surrounding the closure of Nungar Radio (pp 137-139)
- update on the preparations for the auction of digital Channels A and B (pp 139-140)
- establishment of Digital Australia and appointment of staff (pp 140-141, 143-144).

1.14 The committee continued its examination of this portfolio outcome on its final day of hearings, calling the Australian Communications and Media Authority. The page numbers refer to the proof transcript for Thursday, 24 May 2007.

Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)

- audit of Telstra's 3G network coverage (pp 3-10, 12-14, 43)
- logging of instances of fortuitous coverage (p. 10)
- costs and process of establishing the Do Not Call Register (pp 14-20)

- timetable for the digital switch-over and auction documents for the sale of Channels A and B (pp 21-28)
- complaints about the strength of transmissions from Hamersley Tower, WA (pp 28-30, 43)
- use of C Band and possible reallocation of its use (pp 30-32)
- guidelines definition of Channel A and Channel B (pp 32-37)
- ACMA findings on complaints against 2GB and Mr Alan Jones (pp 39-41)
- concerns about hand-held computer games that connect with other local wireless networks (pp 42-43)

Officers from the Department were recalled and further questioned in relation to output 3.1:

- progress of the CDMA Next G working group (pp 44-45)
- numbers of non-Telstra customers in regional Australia and access to 3G network (pp 45-46)
- fortuitous coverage and whether it should fall into the 'equal or better coverage' definition (pp 46-48)
- switchover date from CDMA to 3G (p. 49)
- national filter scheme (pp 49-51)
- filter scheme available in Parliament House (pp 50-53, 72-73)
- costs of the Your Telecommunications Safeguards: Pointing You in the Right Direction and the Protecting Australian Families Online campaigns (pp 55-56, 85-87)
- review of Indigenous broadcasting (pp 56-57)
- ACMA's interim anti-siphoning list report (pp 57-59)
- television black spots solutions (p 55)
- broadband performance and international comparisons, provision of statistics, use of Market Clarity (pp 60-62, 64-70, 74-77, 78-79, 80-81)
- fibre to the node and the rollout of infrastructure for fibre to the node (pp 62-64, 70-72, 91-96, 105-107)
- Broadband Connect (pp 81-82)
- Broadband Guarantee (pp 82-83)
- Clever Networks program (pp 83-85)
- Awarding of a contract for consultancy services relating to new Generation Networks to Access Economics (pp 87-88)
- National E-Security Week (pp 96-97)

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- ANAO's report into the management of HiBIS and Broadband Connect stage 1 (pp 98-101)
 - Progress report on the tender process for the Broadband Connect Infrastructure Program (pp 101-105).

Matters arising during the inquiry

Late return of responses to questions on notice

1.15 The committee has repeatedly expressed its concern in previous reports about past failures to provide responses in a timely manner and its expectation that responses to questions on notice should be provided to it by the due date.

1.16 While acknowledging that there were no answers outstanding from previous estimates rounds at the commencement of these Budget Estimates hearings, the committee notes that answers were still being provided to the secretariat on the last working day before this round of hearings commenced – some six weeks after the date the committee had set for the return of answers.

1.17 In setting 31 July 2007 as the deadline for answers to questions on notice from the current round of hearings, the committee believes that it is allowing ample opportunity for answers to be carefully considered and submitted in a timely manner.

Comprehensiveness of Budget Estimates process

1.18 As the Chair has noted in previous estimates,³ the committee expects that all agencies will be available for the main round of Budget Estimates, unlike Supplementary Estimates where senators nominate agencies they wish to examine.

1.19 For this round the committee again continued its practice of listing all government companies in the program under the relevant departmental outcome, in the interests of comprehensiveness and transparency. It is left to the discretion of officials to determine whether company representatives need to attend the hearings in person or whether departmental officers are sufficiently knowledgeable to respond to the committee's inquiries on their behalf.

1.20 While not all government companies were the subject of questioning on this occasion, the committee believes that, by including all relevant government agencies in the hearing program, senators are made aware of the opportunity to be able to hold them to account for their activities at least once a year.⁴

3 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 25 May 2005, p. 55.

4 *Budget Estimates 2004-05*, Report of the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Legislation Committee, June 2004, p. 13.

Acknowledgements

1.21 The committee thanks Senators Brandis, Abetz and Coonan, and officers from portfolio departments and agencies, for their assistance during this Budget Estimates process.

Senator Alan Eggleston
Chairman

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 ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Public Hearings: Budget Estimates 2007–2008

Monday, 21 to Thursday, 24 May 2007

**Committee Room 2S3
Parliament House
Canberra ACT**

To be televised on Channel 11 and broadcast on Radio 91.1

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AMENDED AGENDA

MONDAY, 21 May 2007

	Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Portfolio
	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
9.00am	Outcome 1—Development of a rich and stimulating cultural sector for all Australians
	Australia Council
	Australian Film Commission
	Australian Film, Television and Radio School
	Australian National Maritime Museum
	National Archives of Australia
	National Gallery of Australia
	National Library of Australia
	National Museum of Australia
	DCITA Output 1.1—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 languages

	<i>(including matters related to Australia Business Arts Foundation Limited Bundanon Trust Film Australia Limited Film Finance Corporation Australia Limited)</i>
	Outcome 2—Development of a stronger and internationally competitive Australian sports sector and encouragement of greater participation in sport by all Australians
	Australian Sports Commission
	Australian Sports Anti-Doping Agency
	DCITA Output 2.1 —Policy advice, program management and agency support in relation to sports, anti-doping and industry development measures which support the Australian sports sector.
	Environment and Water Resources Portfolio
	Department of Environment and Water Resources
7.00pm	Outcome 2—Australia’s interests in Antarctica are advanced
	Australian Government Antarctic Division
	Outcome 1—The environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance, is protected and conserved
	Supervising Scientist Division
	Bureau of Meteorology
	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
	Sydney Harbour Federation Trust
	Director of National Parks and Parks Australia Division
	Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator
	Department of the Environment and Water Resources Approvals and Wildlife Division Corporate Strategies Division Environment Quality Division Heritage Division Industry, Communities and Energy Division International, Land and Analysis Division Marine and Biodiversity Division Natural Resource Management Programmes Division Policy Coordination Division
11.00pm	Adjournment
<u>TUESDAY, 22 MAY 2007</u>	
	Environment and Water Resources Portfolio
	Department of Environment and Water Resources
	<i>In continuation from previous night, as required</i>
9.00am	Outcome 1—The environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance, is protected and conserved

	Supervising Scientist Division
	Bureau of Meteorology
	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
	Sydney Harbour Federation Trust
	Director of National Parks <i>and</i> Parks Australia Division
	Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator
	Department of the Environment and Water Resources Approvals and Wildlife Division Corporate Strategies Division Environment Quality Division Heritage Division Industry, Communities and Energy Division International, Land and Analysis Division Marine and Biodiversity Division Natural Resource Management Programmes Division Policy Coordination Division
	Outcome 3—More efficient and sustainable use of Australia's water resources
	National Water Commission <i>and</i> Water Resources Division <i>and</i> Water Assets and Natural Resources Division
11.00pm	Adjournment
<u>WEDNESDAY, 23 MAY 2007</u>	
	Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Portfolio
	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
	Outcome 3—Development of services and provision of a regulatory environment which encourages a sustainable and effective communications sector for the benefit of all Australians and an internationally competitive information economy and Information and Communications Technology industry
9.00am	Australia Post
	Special Broadcasting Service
	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
	DCITA Output 3.1 Policy advice and program management that delivers competitively priced, accessible and high quality telecommunications, broadcasting and postal services and that supports development and application of a competitive capability in information and communications technology (<i>including matters related to NetAlert Limited</i>)
11.00pm	Adjournment
<u>THURSDAY, 24 MAY 2007</u>	
	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
	Outcome 3—Development of services and provision of a regulatory environment which encourages a sustainable and effective

	communications sector for the benefit of all Australians and an internationally competitive information economy and information and Communications Technology industry		
9.00am	<i>If required, in continuation from Wednesday</i>		
	Australian Communications and Media Authority		
	DCITA Output 3.1 Policy advice and program management that delivers competitively priced, accessible and high quality telecommunications, broadcasting and postal services and that supports development and application of a competitive capability in information and communications technology <i>(including matters related to NetAlert Limited)</i>		
11.00pm	Adjournment		
BREAKS	Morning tea	10.45am approx	
	Lunch	1.00pm	2.00pm
	Afternoon tea	3.45pm approx	
	Dinner	6.00pm	7.00pm

Appendix 2

Documents tabled

Monday, 21 May 2007

The Minister for the Arts and Sport copy of article, 'Luhmann hails budget boost for film "stunning"' from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 May 2007, p. 13.

The Minister for the Arts and Sport copy of correspondence from the Minister to CEO, ASADA, dated 5 April 2007, and copy of correspondence from CEO, ASADA to the Minister, dated 5 April 2007.

Tuesday, 22 May 2007

Secretary, DEWR *Statement of Reasons for Decision on Not Controlled Action* under the EPBC Act 1999 re the Anvil Hill Project, NSW.

Thursday, 23 May 2007

Ms Scott, Secretary, DCITA chart: *Public Information Campaigns – Estimate of GST*

Ms Scott copies of two letters from:
United States Department of State, Washington, DC, dated 24 April 2007, to the Secretary-General, OECD, Paris
Senator the Hon Helen Coonan, Minister, dated 22 May 2007, to the Secretary-General, OECD, Paris.

The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts copy of advice concerning content filtering policies in place in Parliament House and other sites (principally electorate offices)

