

AUSTRALIAN SENATE

**Employment, Workplace Relations and
Education Legislation Committee**

REPORT TO THE SENATE



Additional Estimates Report . March 2002

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Chair:	Senator John Tierney	(LP) NSW
Members:	Senator George Campbell (Deputy Chair)	(ALP) NSW
	Senator Kim Carr	(ALP) VIC
	Senator Jeannie Ferris	(LP) SA
	Senator Natasha Stott Despoja *	(AD) SA
	Senator George Brandis *	(LP) QLD

Substitute Members:

Senator Andrew Murray* (AD) WA to substitute for Senator Stott Despoja for workplace relations matters

Senator Lees* (AD) SA to substitute for Senator Stott Despoja for training matters

Senator Cherry (AD) QLD to substitute for Senator Stott Despoja for employment matters

Senator Allison (AD) VIC to substitute for Senator Stott Despoja for matters relating to schools

Senator Winston Crane* (LP) WA to substitute for Senator Brandis for employment and workplace relations matters

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Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee

REPORT TO THE SENATE

1.1 The Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee presents its report to the Senate.

INTRODUCTION

1.2 On 14 February 2002 the Senate referred to the Committee the particulars of proposed additional expenditure for 2001-2002 in relation to the Employment and Workplace Relations and the Education, Science and Training portfolios.

1.3 Senator the Hon Richard Alston was the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. The Committee heard evidence from Senator Alston, the department and related agencies on the proposed estimates for the Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio. The following agencies appeared before the Committee: Australian Industrial Registry; Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency; Comcare; and the Office of the Employment Advocate.

1.4 The Committee also heard evidence from Senator the Hon Richard Alston, as the Minister representing the Minister for Education, Science and Training. Additionally, it heard from officers of the department and related agencies on the proposed additional estimates for the Education, Science and Training portfolio including the Australian Research Council; the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation; and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.

1.5 The Committee took into account the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2001-2002 provided by the departments and also their Annual Reports for 2000-2001. Review of the proposed additional expenditure for the portfolio was carried out over two days.

1.6 Senators present at the hearing held on Wednesday 20 February 2002 were Senator Tierney (Chair), Senators Carr, Sherry, Ferris, G Campbell, Crossin, Cooney, Schacht, and Calvert.

1.7 Senators present at the hearing held on Thursday 21 February 2002 were Senator Tierney (Chair), Senators Bartlett, Calvert, G Campbell, Carr, Crossin, Ferris, Harradine and Schacht.

1.8 Written Questions on Notice were received from Senators Carr, Schacht, Lees and G Campbell.

1.9 The Committee tables for the information of the Senate copies of transcripts of evidence of Committee proceedings of Wednesday 20 February and Thursday 21 February 2002 and a table of contents to the transcripts. The answers taken on notice at the Committee's hearings will be tabled in the Senate under separate cover in numbered volumes

entitled *Additional information relating to the examination of additional estimates for 2001-2002*. Lengthy documents provided as part of answers and unsuitable for inclusion in the additional information volumes that are furnished as part of the answers will be listed in the additional information volumes. They will be tabled separately and available on request.

MATTERS RAISED AT HEARINGS

1.10 The following is an indicative, but not exhaustive, list of issues that received relatively lengthy consideration during the estimates' hearings. Full details are provided in the Hansard transcript of proceedings.

Employment and Workplace Relations Portfolio

Outcome 2 – Workplace Relations

- Interventions by DEWR since June 2001 in legal cases involving workplace relations
- Status of current living wage case
- AWAs in the APS
- Insolvency cases
- 170MX case involving the Australian Protective Service
- GEERS, SEESA and EESS
- Status of completed unfair dismissal cases since 1 July 2001
- Australian workplace industrial relations survey
- AIRC funding
- Production of Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry's terms of reference and selection of Commission staff
- Provision of material to Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry and related correspondence

Outcome 1 – Employment

- Identification of potential efficiency savings in DEWR
- Effects of transfer of the Small Business division to the Industry portfolio on efficiency savings
- Underspending on administrative expenses for Outcome 1
- Intensive Assistance program issues
- Regional assistance and indigenous employment programs

-
- Renewal of contracts based on performance
 - Forecasting of labour market variables
 - Surveys of programs and their outcomes
 - Outcomes of labour market assistance programs
 - Response by DEWR to the creation of phantom jobs by Leonie Green and Associates
 - Investigation into Career Solutions
 - Investigation of Job Network members
 - Recovery of overpayments made under Job Network
 - Strategy for risk management monitoring of providers under Job Network
 - Participation rates of targeted equity groups under Job Network
 - Status of evaluation report on management of Job Network
 - Breaches of 'Preparing for Work' agreements under Job Network
 - Job hoarding by job agencies
 - The training credits system
 - Job Network star ratings system
 - Work for the Dole: surveys, complaints and insurance issues
 - Telstra support for IT requirements of Job Network

Office of the Employment Advocate (OEA)

- OEA interaction with the Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry
- Provision of OEA material to Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry
- OEA compliance audit of the National Gallery of Victoria renovations
- OEA compliance audits of projects to which the Commonwealth contributes funding
- OEA actions in relation to Abigroup Contractors
- OEA involvement in AWA issues within Employment National
- Procedures for ascertaining genuine consent to AWA by participants
- Freedom of association investigations

- Examples of AWAs on OEA website

Australian Industrial Register(AIR)

- Charges of AIRC negligence by Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry
- Provision of AWAs by AIR to Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry
- Data on termination of employment proceedings

Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWWA)

- Reporting provided by EOWWA and provisions for waivers

Comcare

- OH&S issues at the National Gallery of Australia
- Pilot program in four organisations to improve OH&S case management, rehabilitation and preventative measures

Education, Training and Youth Affairs Portfolio

Cross Portfolio Questions

- New organisation of DEST and activities under each outcome
- Relationship between DEST and the Minister's office
- Procedures for releasing information publicly
- Future organisation and direction changes for DEST
- Relationship between DEST and independent statutory authorities
- Budgetary issues associated with transfer of Science Division to DEST
- Advertising by DEST
- Contract with J S McMillan Printing Group
- Over and underspending in previous budget period
- Media campaign for 'Backing Australia's Ability'
- Research project infrastructure development

Outcome 2 – Post School Education

- Funding of State ITABs

- Funding of University of Notre Dame
- Investigation into allocation of HECS-liable places in universities and associated funding issues
- Allegations of pressure at Melbourne University to enrol a student
- Unmet demand across VET and higher education sectors
- HECS-liable load projections
- Reduction in levels of offers by Australian universities
- Allocation of additional commencing places in regional universities
- Issue of differences between entry scores of students qualified for HECS-liable places in universities and those prepared to pay full fees
- Deakin University and MIBT
- Costs of attendance at university
- NBCOTP
- Nursing training vacancies and funding issues in tertiary education institutions
- Services for disabled and blind students in universities
- AUQA and quality audits of universities
- Financial situation of Australian universities
- Formula for indexation of operating grants
- University capital works programs
- Response to ‘Universities in Crisis’ report by DEST

Australian Research Council (ARC)

- Allocation of competitive grants funds
- Determination of priority areas for research
- ARC funding to ‘Backing Australia’s Ability’
- Collaboration with industry for funding research
- Photonics research and photonics CRC
- Changes in guidelines for applications for research grants funding

- Government direction and ARC funding priorities
- Access by CSIRO to ARC funding
- Human genome and stem cell research issues
- Ethical evaluation of research project applications

Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO)

- Current status of approval for construction of second nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights
- INVAP; risk assessment, ownership issues and involvement with Argentinian Government
- ANSTOs management of spent fuel rods and radioactive waste
- Location and method of storage of radioactive waste in Australia
- Investigation into missing Americium-241 source from Lucas Heights

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

- CSIRO strategic plan
- Initiatives to address perceived shortcomings in CSIRO performance
- CSIRO real estate reviews and disposal of property assets
- CSIRO relationship with Pacific Magnesium Corporation
- AMC contract and capacity to undertake work with other organisations on magnesium related issues
- Review of triennial funding
- CSIRO involvement in research priority setting process
- Effect of Government's four priority research areas for research on CSIRO's priorities
- Circumstances of the death of a CSIRO employee
- OH&S issues at CSIRO facilities

Outcome 3 –Australian institutions advance the knowledge base

- Contractual arrangements for grants to NCACE
- Provision of funding for building to house research into stem cells
- Involvement of Professor Trounson in stem cell research in Australia and origin of stem cells

- Issues of importation of stem cells for research
- Ethical evaluation of stem cell research in facilities funded by the Commonwealth
- Questions about Bresagen

Outcome 1 – School Systems

- Collection of information from non-government schools on private income
- SES and the effect on school fees
- Contract with the Australian Principal's Associations Professional Development in regard to indigenous education
- Teachers for the 21st Century initiative
- Retention rates in schools
- VET in schools
- Funding for Jabiru area school
- Commonwealth recurrent grants for schools
- National reading benchmark figures
- Establishment grants expenditures
- IESIP outcomes
- ATAS review
- Literacy benchmarks
- ECEF funding
- E-testing
- Fee paying schools conducted by Murdoch University

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE AND SUPPLEMENTARY HEARINGS

1.11 The Standing Orders require the Committee, after considering the proposed expenditure and agreeing on its report to the Senate, to fix a date for the submission of any written answers or additional information and for the commencement of supplementary hearings. The Committee has decided that written answers and additional information should be submitted by Friday 5 April 2002.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1.12 The Committee is grateful for the assistance given to it by Senator the Hon Richard Alston and officers of the departments and agencies concerned.

Senator John Tierney
Chair

March 2002

Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee

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FOR HEARINGS HELD ON
Wednesday 20 February 2002
Thursday 21 February 2002

Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee

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