



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

**Finance and Public Administration
Legislation Committee**

**Additional Estimates 2000-2001 Report
March 2001**

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Senator Brett Mason (*Chairman*)

Senator George Brandis

Senator Stephen Conroy

Senator Ross Lightfoot

Senator Andrew Murray (*Deputy Chairman*)

Senator Robert Ray

Substitute member:

Senator Lundy to substitute for Senator Ray on 23 February 2001

Other Senators who attended the public hearings:

Senator Nick Bolkus

Senator Paul Calvert

Senator Rosemary Crowley

Senator Chris Evans

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REPORT ON THE COMMITTEE'S EXAMINATION OF THE ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2000-2001

Introduction

1.1 On 30 November 2000, the Senate referred to the committee for examination the following documents:

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure for the service of the year ending on 30 June 2001 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2000-2001];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2001 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2000-2001];
- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2001. [Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2000-2001];
- Statement of savings expected in annual appropriations made by Act No. 81 of 2000 (Appropriation Act (No. 1) 2000-2001), Act No. 82 of 2000 (Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2000-2001), and Act No. 83 of 2000 (Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No. 1) 2000-2001); and
- Final budget outcome 1999-2000.

1.2 The Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee has responsibility for the Parliamentary departments and the following portfolios:

- Prime Minister and Cabinet;
- Finance and Administration; and
- Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait and Islander Affairs.

1.3 The committee received evidence from the President of the Senate, Senator Margaret Reid; Senator Robert Hill, Minister for the Environment and Heritage representing the Prime Minister and Senator Eric Abetz, Special Minister of State and also representing the Minister for Finance and Administration, together with officers of the departments and agencies concerned.

1.4 The committee held public hearings on 19, 20 and 23 February 2001. Copies of the *Hansard* transcripts of evidence are tabled for the information of the Senate. Further written explanations furnished by departments and agencies will be tabled, when received, in volumes entitled Additional Information.

1.5 In this report, the committee considers a number of the specific matters raised during its examination of the additional estimates of the portfolios it oversees, along with a few general issues on which it wishes to comment.

1.6 The committee is required to report to the Senate by 27 March 2001.

PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS

Department of the Senate

1.7 The committee opened its examination of the additional estimates with general questions. The President of the Senate provided an outline of arrangements for the Ceremonial Sitting of the Commonwealth Parliament in May 2001 to take place at Parliament House, Melbourne as part of the National Centenary of Federation Program. The committee was also advised that the Victorian parliament is enabling the event and that a small number of senate officers will be attending in support of the proceedings. In reply to the committee's expression of concern at the time taken to finalise the arrangements, the President advised that the 'the Senate is ready... and waiting for the House of Representatives.'¹

1.8 Another item of interest was how an investigation relating to the question of privilege of certain documents would be funded, given that it was not anticipated in the budget process. The cost of the inquiry is \$25000 but the President advised that 'a considerably larger amount is still likely to be incurred'.² The committee was informed that there should be no need to draw on the President's Advance.

Department of the Parliamentary Library

1.9 Under general questions the security of the 'greens', records of work requests made by senators and members, and the department's rules regarding confidentiality were canvassed. The committee was assured that the greens were locked up every night and that all staff are aware of the sensitivity of the documents. Another topic raised was the indexing backlog of two electronic databases, the newspaper clippings database and the journal articles database. The committee was informed that the department is looking at ways it can resource more effectively to permanently reduce the backlog.

Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff

1.10 The committee again raised the subject of outsourcing of *Hansard* services, questioning previous advice that the outsourcing would occur 'from time to time'.³ In reply, the department explained the 'very great divergence of workload'⁴ which occurs and the difficulties experienced in covering workload peaks and meeting other responsibilities especially those related to OH&S. This is particularly problematic during sitting periods when committees are also given permission to meet. Over the past six to twelve months increased outsourcing of *Hansard* services has occurred to meet demand. The committee then questioned the staffing plan, recent recruitment processes and progress towards the target of 64 staff.

1.11 The department explained that significant variations in workload peaks require it to examine workload management. If the department staffs up to its peaks, for example 204 hours, it would need another 70 editing staff and another \$5million a year in salaries. With

1 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, pp 3-4

2 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.4

3 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.6

4 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.6

85 per cent of weeks falling below 120 hours, the use of external services is seen as a more appropriate means of delivering these core services. The department agreed to provide the committee, on notice, with a copy of the criteria used when deciding to use external providers for transcribing purposes as well as the quarterly management report identifying comparative costs and performance.

Joint House Department

1.12 The hire fees and conditions relating to use of the Great Hall were canvassed and further information was sought about practices over the last three years regarding discounts or fee waivers. Other issues raised were the cost of landscaping of the southern courtyards, the diesel tanks queried at the last hearings and a report on the condition of five special suites in Parliament House. This led to further questioning about furnishings in the Prime Minister's suite and the department's plan to develop a program of ongoing maintenance for the suites.

PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET PORTFOLIO

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Questions on notice

1.13 The committee expressed disappointment in the apparent trend of unanswered questions on notice, making the point that answers received on the Friday before Monday's hearings are unlikely to be read before the estimates hearings commence. The department accepted that there were delays in providing answers and undertook to work on this. The issue arose again after a large number of questions for the department were tabled. Further details are included in General Issues.

Budget processes

1.14 The committee asked if 'the department in late 1999 requested advice from other departments whether they had a capacity to bring forward expenditure from financial year 2000-01 to the previous financial year'.⁵ Senator Hill's reply that this was a question on internal budget deliberations and as such was out of scope for the committee was not accepted. Senators contended that the absence of any advice to the contrary in the budget papers would mean a 'distortion of the additional estimates without explanation'⁶ and explained that one explanation for bringing forward expenditure in this matter is to vary the predicted deficit.

1.15 The committee is of the view that should such requests be pursued, acknowledgment should be made as part of the additional estimates process.

1.16 The committee considered the involvement of the Prime Minister's department to be outside the Administrative Arrangement order in which overall control of the budget lies with Treasury and the Department of Finance and Administration.

5 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.21

6 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.22

Involvement in ANAO report

1.17 The committee questioned officials about when and how the department first became aware of the Auditor General's report on Commonwealth Road Funding and whether the Prime Minister was briefed. Although a desk officer was informed on 31 January of the existence of the performance audit in the context of a proposed meeting (which was not attended by the department) it transpired that senior management only became aware of the report on 9 February 2001. Further questions on this were asked of the ANAO later in the day.

Secretaries

1.18 The matter of secretaries' performance pay was raised again with the department. The committee was told that secretaries are judged on their performance under government policy at the time. Senators questioned the approach of the Minister for Finance and Administration who commented publicly that recalcitrant secretaries should lose their bonuses because they were considered to be going too slowly in implementing the IT initiative. They went on to argue that such an approach to performance pay, if brought to its logical conclusion, would require follow up of the Humphry Review's subsequent recognition of deficiencies in the implementation process, including its timetable, to determine who *should have been* rewarded and penalised.

1.19 The conclusion drawn from this discussion by questioning senators was 'what a complete fiasco performance pay for secretaries is proving to be', to which the Minister replied '[he has] always thought performance bonuses for public servants is a difficult concept.'⁷

1.20 Other topics of interest relevant to secretaries included contracts and the gazettal of appointment instruments.

Ministerial guidelines

1.21 The committee thanked the department for the provision of the chief executive's guidelines on official hospitality for departmental officers, but pointed out that the request had been for guidelines for ministers. The committee's objective is to have common guidelines for every department and every minister, which would afford protection to a currently vulnerable area.

New portfolio and department

1.22 The committee sought details of the management structure, physical location and resource allocation for the new Department of Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (DORATSIA). The establishment and transition arrangements were followed up with the department later in the day.

Office of the Status of Women (OSW)

1.23 The committee sought information from the Office of the Status of Women on criteria for the receipt of OSW funding. An official's claim of commercial-in-confidence was retracted when the questioning senator challenged the application of this to a contract through which the government allocates public money to a non government organisation (NGO). Other matters canvassed included intellectual property rights arising from OSW-funded activities and possible conflicts between the OSW mission statement and changes being proposed to the *Sex Discrimination Act (1984)*.⁸

Australian National Audit Office (ANAO)

1.24 The committee sought information on the interaction between the ANAO and the Department of Transport and Regional Services regarding the process and preparation of the audit of the administration of Commonwealth road funding. The Auditor-General gave detailed information on what is 'just a standard procedure'.⁹

1.25 He advised that the ANAO endeavours to consult and make information accessible, providing the report to the relevant department two or three days ahead of actual tabling, so that the Minister can be briefed. He expressed concern to the committee about the application of parliamentary privilege and natural justice and personal and private versus public interest¹⁰, a concern reiterated in every letter sent to ministers.

Public Service and Merit Protection Commission (PSMPC)

1.26 Senators sought information about the evaluation of training across the APS. This arose from the Auditor-General's comments about the unclear outcomes of APS expenditure on training and a lack of formal ongoing evaluation of training programs against their original objectives and has been foreshadowed as the subject of a future ANAO audit. The Public Service Commissioner advised that their own programs are evaluated but in the devolved environment, little information is available on what occurs elsewhere in the APS.

1.27 The Committee congratulated the Commissioner and the PSMPC on the *State of the Service Report 1999-2000*.

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

1.28 The bulk of the committee's examination of the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman related to the additional funding of \$200,000 per annum provided to the Office by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). The committee learnt in the Budget round that the funds contribute to the cost of dealing with complaints relating to the new tax system and the position of Special Tax Adviser, and that the occupant had been recruited from the ATO.

8 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.79

9 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.83

10 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.84

1.29 The acting ombudsman agreed that funding of the ombudsman's office by direct appropriation rather than by agencies who may be investigated has 'always been a fairly fundamental principle ... for the perceived independence of the office'.¹¹

1.30 Senator Hill advised that if there were an ongoing demand (for funds) a decision for future funding would be addressed. He also stated 'there is certainly a view being expressed in this committee tonight that there is a danger, at least in perception, if the Ombudsman's office is being funded in relation to a taxation complaint by the Commissioner of Taxation. I will ensure that the government takes that view into account'.¹²

RECONCILIATION AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

Department of Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (DORATSIA)

1.31 Senators attending welcomed the new department within the new portfolio. Questions firstly concerned the transfer of resources to the new department from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the physical location of the new department, the in-kind support provided, the difficulty of the secretary being located elsewhere and transitional costs.

1.32 The consultancy established to assist the new department in the area of finance and human resource management was raised. The official corrected his initial advice that the \$38000 consultancy was a 'hand-picked tender', acknowledging that there was no tender process.

1.33 Further questioning established that the department's functions and outputs will have the same scope as those of the previous Office of Indigenous Policy and that no budgetary information is available for the new department at this stage.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION PORTFOLIO

Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)

1.34 The committee welcomed the new Minister to the table and opened its examination of the AEC on the evening of Monday 19 February. It completed its examination the following evening. Topics considered included the review of registration of political parties, the delay in appointing a Deputy Electoral Commissioner, accessibility of AEC divisional offices, developments in online voting and the results service for election night.

1.35 Another matter the committee took up with the Commission was perceived inconsistencies in its referrals to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). The Electoral Commissioner, Mr Becker, advised of plans for the AEC, AFP and the DPP to work out a protocol for this purpose. The committee concurs with the need for parameters which would reflect a bipartisan approach.

11 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.88

12 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.94

1.36 The committee raised the question of free air time and disclosure obligations of both parties, the donor and the political party. The Commission advised that the AEC has no power of audit of the disclosure returns lodged by donors and that in effect they 'take their declarations at face value until such time as there is something drawn to or that comes to our attention'.¹³ Further questioning revealed that Party returns are not investigated unless 'we believe there had been a breach'.¹⁴ The limitation on AEC's role was noted.

1.37 The committee expressed its concern about the impact of losing the ATSI electoral information service due to funding cuts. Senators sought hard evidence to support the AEC submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters about declining enrolments of indigenous people.

1.38 In conclusion, as follow up to questioning at the budget estimates hearings, the committee again asked the AEC about the nature of advice requested from the Australian Government Solicitor in relation to the GST mail-out last year.

Department of Finance and Administration (DOFA)

Budget issues

1.39 Questioning of the department began with the frequently canvassed question of Telstra and the exact year in which government expects the proceeds to occur. Following media reports indicating the Deputy Prime Minister had said Telstra would not be sold, there was an expectation among some senators that the forward estimates figures would be recast. Officials confirmed that there has been no change in respect to the aggregated figure for asset sales.

1.40 The committee then discussed the release of likely proceeds of the sale of Spectrum. Unlike Telstra, detail is available of the potential sale price of Spectrum. Senators learnt that the different approach taken with this sale was thought prudent due to the extent of media speculation.

1.41 The committee turned to the question of the impact of Telstra 1 sale on public debt interest (PDI) in the budget papers. The department advised that the government has not elected to break down the sale of any asset and debt management operations on PDI.

1.42 Other areas of general questioning included the contingency reserve and how it works, the superannuation entitlements of former state members of parliament who are appointed to Commonwealth positions and what followed the receipt by DOFA of the ANAO report on road funding.

Policy costing

1.43 When asked if the department had done any costings of opposition policies, Dr Boxall described the two groups of costings undertaken by the department - firstly, any costing may be requested by the minister; and secondly, costings during an election period are done in accordance with Charter of Budget Honesty rules. In reply to the specific question, the department was unaware of any opposition policy costings having been

13 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 20 February 2001, p.196

14 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 20 February 2001, p.197

undertaken, however the committee was advised later in the day that Work Force 2010 had been costed approximately one year ago.

Efficiently Functioning Parliament

1.44 Questioning on outcome 3, efficiently functioning Parliament, began with government staff establishment. The present situation with regard to increased staffing and its breakdown was explained to the committee. This led senators to the subject of two members of staff in the Prime Minister's office that have a personal salary above the maximum of the highest salary range. It was confirmed by the department that the two employees in question are principal advisers in the Prime Minister's office and that their remuneration was approved by the government staff committee. The committee learnt that the category of 'special adviser' was created following consultation with the same committee.

1.45 The government staff committee is an advisory committee to the Prime Minister; the Prime Minister sets the number and levels of ministerial staff and salary ranges and is the ultimate decision-maker. The committee regards the process of remunerating staff in excess of the maximum of the range notified publicly as the 'AWA salary range' and approval by an internal government committee with no apparent external review or reporting process, to be cause for concern.

Reith telecard

1.46 The Reith telecard issue was then re-opened by the committee following the release of documents under the FOI Act. Senators discussed with the department the chain of events surrounding the matter of the telecard, the issue of liability, departmental advice given to the minister and statements made by the Prime Minister on 20 and 23 October. The committee noted matters it would like to pursue with the relevant officers at a later date.

Competitive tendering and contracting (CTC)

1.47 The government policy regarding competitive tendering and contracting was discussed, particularly in relation to lessons learnt from the IT outsourcing initiative. The secretary advised that DOFA only provides advice or assistance on request, stating 'we do not have any centrally mandated function to direct or compel other agencies to engage in competitive tendering and contracting'.¹⁵

1.48 The subject of pricing reviews conducted by DOFA was raised by the committee and in particular the development of a new funding model for Centrelink. Discussion ensued on the question of fee for service and community service obligations (CSOs). In reply the department advised that 'separately identifying CSOs is good in terms of fiscal transparency' but 'the reality is that it is not always possible to do that'.¹⁶

15 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 20 February 2001, p.146.

16 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 20 February 2001, p.153

Humphry Review

1.49 The committee sought information from DOFA officers about the appointment of Mr Richard Humphry by the Minister for Finance and Administration to do a review of the implementation of the IT initiative. The committee was interested in the authority under which he was appointed and the authority for the department to pay him. One of the reasons for this interest was to establish why documents from this publicly funded inquiry would not be Commonwealth records and therefore subject to the *Archives Act 1983*, a claim made by the department and, separately, by Mr Humphry to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee.

1.50 None of the officers was able to advise the committee of the power of appointment; nor has the department seen or received a copy of the letter of appointment or the terms of Mr Humphry's contract. In spite of this, DOFA has paid \$42 617 for remuneration, travel, printing expenses, a sub-contracted consultancy and other 'incidentals' incurred over a six week period, excluding secretariat support.

Office of Asset Sales and Information Technology Outsourcing (OASITO)

1.51 The committee requested an explanation for an increase in funding through the additional estimates of \$4.6m for the extension of Information Technology Initiative. The acceptance by government of the recently released Humphry review ensures that a major role of the agency is to wind up. The reply that the agency is funded to 31 December and this appropriation is for the second half of the financial year caused some confusion as no record could be found of where this is notified in the 2000-2001 PBS or the PAES. The question had to be taken on notice. When OASITO returned three days later on Friday, officers were still not able to provide an answer.

1.52 An officer of OASITO gave a statement of correction to evidence given at the supplementary budget estimates hearings on 28 November 2000. The manner in which such corrections should be made was spelled out to officers at the table, one of whom had provided written advice of another error in his evidence provided at the same hearings. This is covered in more detail under General Issues.

1.53 In reply to questions about whether OASITO officers have attended training as required by Senate procedural order 34, details were provided about the content of a course conducted by the Clerk of the Senate and attended by OASITO senior staff. The Clerk has written to the committee to correct this information.

1.54 Senators pursued a wide range of questions about the role of OASITO during the life of the IT outsourcing initiative and plans for withdrawing over the remaining months of 2000-2001. These included industry development, its role in evaluations, the use of a panel of business people and the involvement of the Minister's office, the reaction of officers to the ANAO report on the IT initiative, intellectual property issues and privacy issues.

1.55 Senators asked general questions about the market testing program and whether changes would be made to deal with implementation risks in the light of the ANAO and Humphry reports.

GENERAL ISSUES

Response to Questions on Notice

Timeliness

1.56 Increasingly the committee notes the apparent 'laissez-faire' attitude to the timeliness and quality of responses to questions placed on notice. This matter was previously raised in the committee's *Additional Estimates 1999-2000 Report, March 2000*.¹⁷

1.57 The committee broached this subject at the commencement of questioning of the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio. In doing so, it expressed disappointment about the large number of outstanding answers still to be received from previous estimates hearings, going back as far as May 2000 and noted that this appears to be 'an unfortunate and growing trend'.¹⁸

1.58 The Department of Finance and Administration was recognised in this round of hearings for improvements to their timeliness in providing answers.

1.59 It was noted by senators that although a significant number of responses to questions placed on notice were received by the secretariat on the Friday afternoon preceding additional estimates, 16 February 2001, this is not of great assistance to committee members. It is likely that members are unable to read responses received on the Friday prior to the hearings. In any case answers to questions asked during the supplementary budget estimates hearings on 22, 24 and 28 November 2000 were requested by 19 January 2001.

1.60 The committee's mood on this topic was not enhanced by news that the media published on Sunday, February 18, 2001 information sought by the committee in a question placed on notice in budget supplementary hearings in November and not yet answered.¹⁹

1.61 Departmental officials from PM&C observed the substantial workload associated with answering questions placed on notice and this has been the topic of representations at previous estimates hearings.²⁰ The committee notes these comments and difficulties caused by placing large numbers of questions on notice, but once again points out that any reduction in questions placed directly on notice may lead the committee to opt to pursue more issues at the hearings.

1.62 The parliamentary departments are reliably timely with their responses. The committee attributes their consistency in this regard to their understanding and acceptance of their public accountability role and the priority allocated to this by agency heads and their ministerial equivalent, the President of the Senate.

17 Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee Additional Estimates Report, March 2000, p.13

18 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.18

19 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.40

20 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.81

Quality

1.63 The quality of responses to questions on notice was discussed with PM&C. One member of the committee quoted an answer received by the department and questioned whether it was 'a smart-alec put off'.²¹ The committee has an expectation that information provided will be of high quality and that departments and agencies will proactively and cooperatively assist the committee in its endeavours.

1.64 Another notable example came in written answers from OASITO - 'This request should be directed to the Department of Finance and Administration'. The question was asked on 28 November 2000 and this answer, provided on 22 January 2001, was forwarded to the committee under cover of a letter from the Department of Finance and Administration.²²

Correction of Evidence

1.65 For the second time in this budget cycle, the committee was faced with senior public servants who have not known the procedure for advising the committee that their evidence was incorrect.

1.66 During the budget estimates hearings an SES level officer of DOFA read a statement correcting evidence she had given previously to the committee in relation to Employment National. This was reported in the committee's report *Budget Estimates 2000-2001 Report, June 2000* along with advice about what should be done.

1.67 During the additional estimates hearings, an officer from OASITO made an opening statement which included a correction to evidence given previously. It transpired that the error in evidence was apparent about two weeks prior to the hearing. When questioned by the committee, the officer stated he was not aware of the requirement to inform the committee of an error immediately it is discovered.

1.68 Subsequently, the Chief Executive Officer of OASITO apologised to the committee saying he too was not aware there was a time issue in relation to the correction of evidence. The error in this particular case was discovered shortly after the budget supplementary hearings on 28 November 2000, but only corrected to the committee in a letter dated 8 February and not received until 13 February 2001. One senator commented that the 'sensitivity of the correction had a far lesser degree of relevance post the tabling and response to the Humphry review than it would have had if we had known that information at the time of that original committee hearing when you made the error'.²³

1.69 The committee is dismayed to learn that senior officers are unaware of the responsibility to immediately formally advise the committee of corrections or clarification to evidence given at hearings, and the serious implications if this obligation is not strictly adhered to.

21 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 19 February 2001, p.20

22 Finance and Public Administration Committee, Answer to Question on Notice, Budget Supplementary Estimates, 28 November 2000, *Hansard* p.197

23 Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, *Hansard* 20 February 2001, p.204

Acknowledgment

1.70 The committee expresses its appreciation of the service provided by the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff in recording the committee's hearings and transcribing them so promptly. It would particularly like to thank officers for their prompt response to a power failure in the final half hour of the final day of hearings and the provision of a manual transcriber.

1.71 The committee also wishes to thank all ministers and departmental and agency officers for their assistance.

Questions on notice and supplementary hearings

1.72 Friday, 23 March 2001 was set as the date by which responses to questions on notice should be received.

1.73 At the close of business on that Friday, no response had been received from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; the Finance and Administration portfolio had provided a letter detailing the reasons for non-provision by the due date; the Parliamentary departments had submitted their responses, (DPRS' electronic version was provided the following Monday); and the Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs portfolio had notified the Committee that their answers should be with the Committee on the following Monday afternoon.

1.74 The committee wishes to advise that on 6 February 2001 the Senate adopted changes to arrangements for estimates hearings which included the abolition of supplementary hearings on additional estimates.

Senator Brett Mason

Chair