

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

3.1 The Committee took evidence from the department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General on Monday, 12 February 2007. The Committee chose not to examine a number of agencies due to time constraints.

Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor General

3.2 The Committee examined various aspects of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General, with a particular focus on how negative press coverage of the Governor General is dealt with, and the administrative processes surrounding the consideration of nominations by the Council for the Order of Australia.

3.3 Other issues raised by the Committee and other senators included:

- The Governor-General's relationship with *Future Directions International*; and
- Water usage at, and an energy audit of, Government House and Admiralty House

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

3.4 The Committee and other senators devoted a significant amount of time to scrutinising the decision making process behind the Prime Minister's recent announcement of a proposed \$10 billion water plan for the Murray Darling Basin. Senators also explored at length the government's decision to contribute \$250 000 towards the construction of the State Coach Britannia as a gift for the Queen. It emerged that the Murray Darling Basin plan had not gone through Cabinet, whereas the Cabinet had deliberated upon funding of the state coach.

3.5 Other issues examined by the Committee and other senators included:

- Costs associated with the department's new building and fit out;
- Late answers to questions on notice;
- The new tier of 'assistant minister';
- The re-allocation of the Office of Water Resources and the National Water Commission to the newly established Department of Environment and Water Resources;
- David Hicks' incarceration at Guantanamo Bay and his impending trial; and
- Travel costs for APEC and the national dress planned for leaders' week.

