

PREFACE

On 9 May 2006, the Senate referred to the committee the examination of estimates of proposed expenditure for the financial year 2005-2006. The Committee is responsible for the examination of the Attorney-General's portfolio and the Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs portfolio. The portfolio budget statements were tabled in the Senate on 9 May 2006.

The committee was required to report on its consideration of the budget estimates on or before 20 June 2006.

Estimates hearings

The committee met in public session from 22 May to 25 May 2006 for a total of 41 hours 51 minutes.

Recording of proceedings

The Hansard of the proceedings records the examination of estimates and may be accessed through the internet at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard>

An index of the Hansard for each portfolio appears at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Ministers

The committee heard evidence from Senator the Hon Chris Ellison, Minister for Justice and Customs who represented the Attorney-General and from Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

Officers from both departments and associated agencies also appeared. The committee thanks Ministers and officers for their assistance.

Questions on Notice

The committee notes that the Standing Orders require the committee to set dates for the lodgement of any written answers or additional information and for supplementary hearings. The committee resolved that the deadline for the submission of written answers and additional information by both portfolios would be close of business on Friday, 14 July 2006.

Report

In this report, the committee draws the attention of the Senate to issues and concerns raised in the four days of hearings. These included:

- The committee questioned officers from DIMA extensively on a number of issues relating to the subclass 457 visa, including the number of visas issued; alleged breaches of these visas and investigations into complaints received by the Department.
- Officers of the Attorney-General Department were questioned on a number of issues including the establishment of a judicial commission, the opening and operation of the family relationship centres and the costs associated with public awareness campaigns for these centres. The committee also sought information on petrol sniffing, the national identity security strategy and the possible new extradition system.
- Both the AFP and ASIO were questioned on their role in the current development of the ASIC system (Aviation Security Identification Card).
- Officers of the ACC were asked by the committee questions relating to a range of new initiatives that were included in the budget.