

The Senate

Rural and Regional Affairs and
Transport Legislation Committee

Budget estimates 2006–07

June 2006

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ISBN 0 642 71668 4

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| ACC | Area Consultative Committee |
| AMSA | Australian Maritime Safety Authority |
| ANAO | Australian National Audit Office |
| APEC | Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation |
| AQIS | Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service |
| ASIC | Aviation Security Identity Card |
| AWB | Australian Wheat Board |
| AWB(I) | Australian Wheat Board International |
| AWI | Australian Wool Innovation |
| BESIU | Business Ethics Security and Investigations Unit |
| BTRE | Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics |
| CASA | Civil Aviation Safety Authority |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| COAG | Council of Australian Governments |
| CDDA | Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration |
| GCA | Grains Council of Australia |
| GRDC | Grains Research and Development Corporation |
| IRA | Import Risk Analysis |
| IOTS | Inspector of Transport Security |
| NCA | National Capital Authority |
| NLIS | National Livestock Identification Scheme |
| NTC | National Transport Commission |
| PBR | Plant Breeder's Right |
| PBS | Portfolio Budget Statements |
| PMR | Performance Measurement and Review |
| RPT | Regular Public Transport |
| SVGA | Single Vision Grains Australia |
| UN ECE | United Nations Economic Commission for Europe |
| WEA | Wheat Export Authority |

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 9 May 2006, the Senate referred to the committee the following documents for examination and report in relation to the Transport and Regional Services portfolio and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio:

- Particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2007;
- Particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2007;
- Particulars of certain proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2006; and
- Particulars of proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2006.¹

1.2 The committee was required to report to the Senate on 20 June 2006.²

1.3 The committee considered the Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) 2006-2007 for the two portfolios at hearings on 22, 23, 24 and 25 May 2006. The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda as follows:

- Monday 22 May – Transport and Regional Services portfolio;
- Tuesday 23 May – Transport and Regional Services portfolio;
- Wednesday 24 May – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio;
- Thursday 25 May – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio.

1.4 The committee heard evidence from Senator the Hon Ian Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, representing the Minister for Transport and Regional Services and the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads and from Senator the Hon Eric Abetz, Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation representing the Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry. Evidence was also provided by Mr Mike Mrdak, Acting Secretary of the Department of Transport and Regional Services, Ms Joanna Hewitt, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture,

1 Senate Journal No. 80, 'Particulars of Proposed Expenditure for 2006-07 and Particulars of Proposed Supplementary Expenditure for 2005-06 – Documents – Reference of Estimates to Legislation Committees', 9 May 2006, p. 2133

2 Senate Journal No. 80, 'Particulars of Proposed Expenditure for 2006-07 and Particulars of Proposed Supplementary Expenditure for 2005-06 – Documents – Reference of Estimates to Legislation Committees', 9 May 2006, p. 2133

Fisheries and Forestry, and officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

1.5 The committee thanks the ministers, departmental secretaries and officers for their assistance and cooperation during the hearings.

Questions on Notice

1.6 In accordance with Standing Order 26, the committee is required to set a date for the lodgement of written answers and additional information. The committee requested that written answers and additional information be submitted by Thursday 13 July 2006.

Administration of written answers and additional information

1.7 Answers to questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearings will be tabled in the Senate in separate volumes entitled 'Additional information provided during the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee's examination of budget estimates 2006-2007'. Documents not suitable for inclusion in the additional information volumes will be available on request from the committee secretariat.

1.8 Answers to questions on notice received from the departments will also be posted onto the committee's website at a later date.

Chapter 2

Transport and Regional Services Portfolio

Department of Transport and Regional Services

2.1 The committee heard evidence from the department on Monday 22 May and Tuesday 23 May 2006. The hearing was conducted in the following order:

- Corporate Services
- Portfolio Strategic Policy and Projects
- AusLink
- Maritime and Land Transport
- Australian Transport Safety Bureau
- Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- Aviation and Airports
- Civil Aviation Safety Authority
- Inspector of Transport Security
- Office of Transport Security
- Airservices Australia
- Regional Services
- Territories and Local Government
- National Capital Authority

Secretary's overview

2.2 Proceedings began with a brief opening statement from the Acting Secretary of the department, Mr Mike Mrdak. He conveyed the apologies of the Secretary, Mr Michael Taylor, who was attending a meeting of the Transportation Working Group of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in Vietnam. Mr Mrdak went on to outline various staff changes which had taken place within the department.

2.3 The committee was also told that a temporary branch had been created within AusLink to manage the implementation of the Roads to Recovery strategic program. The branch will operate until the end of 2006, in order to assess the numerous applications received for the program.

Corporate Services

2.4 The committee again raised the issue of answers to questions on notice from the February additional estimates, as 56 answers remained outstanding at the due date

of 6 April 2006. The Acting Secretary explained that measures had been instituted within the department to address this issue, and noted that their performance in this regard had improved since the previous round of estimates. The committee spent some time trying to establish whether the delay occurred in the department or in the minister's office, and the evidence given by the department was that a substantial number of questions required redrafting after they had been sent to the minister's office, causing some delay.¹

2.5 The committee queried whether the government's new workplace legislation had any impact on the department's dealings with new and existing staff. The department explained that their collective agreement was being modified to ensure that it complies with the new legislation and assured the committee that the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is being consulted throughout the process.

2.6 The committee sought an update on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) East Kimberly Indigenous trial. They asked whether the Secretary visited the trial site as he indicated he would at the previous round of estimates. The department stated that Mr Taylor had visited the trial site on 9 and 10 March this year, where he participated in a meeting of the COAG trial regional reference group, along with representatives of each of the communities.

2.7 The committee asked which key performance indicators were being used to measure the outcomes of the East Kimberly trial. The department explained that the trial is being measured against the objectives of the COAG Indigenous trials in total.²

2.8 The committee also asked about expenditure on the trial, particularly the expected increase in expenditure on projects. The department gave a breakdown of expenditure to date on three different projects, and undertook to provide information on the expenditure of the additional funds on notice.³

2.9 The committee queried the appropriation of \$6 million for an unspecified purpose in the current budget. The department, supported by the minister (Senator the Hon Ian Campbell) explained that these funds are a contingency for decisions the government has taken, but has yet to announce.⁴

2.10 Other matters raised by the committee included:

- The Secretary's remuneration arrangements, particularly with respect to his accommodation, hospitality and travel allowances (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 5–6).

1 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 6–7 and 32

2 See *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, p. 10, for a list of these objectives

3 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 10–11

4 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 19–21 and 24–26

-
- Departmental staffing and entitlements, particularly of Indigenous staff and the support provided to them (pp. 6–7 and 11–12).
 - The work and operation of the department's governance centre (pp. 8–9).
 - The Secretary's participation in the Australian Government Secretaries Group, and his attendance at meetings (p. 11).
 - Additional funding provided to assist the implementation of actions agreed on at the 10 February COAG meeting (p. 12).
 - Necessity of funding for 'National security—strengthening air cargo security arrangements' (p. 13).
 - The Office of Transport Security's involvement with the Australian Government Transport Security Policy Committee and membership of the committee (p. 13).
 - Increase in staffing of the Office of Transport Security division and its internal budget (pp. 13–14).
 - Departmental travel: travel contract with American Express and best fare of the day policy (pp. 15–17).
 - The budget and schedule for the refurbishment of the national office (p. 17).
 - Fleet procurement and car use policy of the department (pp. 26-29).
 - The department's actions with regard to media leaks (pp. 29-31).
 - Absence of the minister at the memorial service for the victims of the Lockhart River air disaster (p. 31).
 - Media monitoring arrangements of the department (p. 31).

Portfolio Strategic Policy and Projects

2.11 The committee raised the issue of national highways and the difficulties that arise in projects because of the incongruity between state ownership of the roads and the Commonwealth's funding responsibility for them. It was asked whether the department is looking into better ways of managing the national highways to overcome these problems. The Acting Secretary responded that these issues were the driving force behind the creation of AusLink, which allows the department more involvement with project selection. He also stated that AusLink is seeking a contribution from states to the maintenance of the national highways. Consequently, under bilateral agreements the Commonwealth will provide \$300 million annually for maintenance of the networks, while the states have accepted that they are required to maintain the networks "to a fit-for-purpose standard".⁵

2.12 The committee requested an update on various projects undertaken by the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (BTRE), including:

- *Freight measurement and modelling in Australia*. The Executive Director of BTRE announced that the report had recently been released, and provided a copy to the committee (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, p. 40).
- Analysis of Tasmania's economic turnaround (p. 40).
- Research on the cost of road crashes (p. 40).

2.13 The committee also discussed matters relating to:

- Mr Roger Fisher's work with Telstra (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 36–37).
- National regulatory approaches to rail safety and operations, including the development of a single national piece of legislation and a single national regulator (pp. 37–38).
- The budget and staffing of the division, including an increase in funding for BTRE to accommodate the Strategic Transport Policy Development Unit, which was transferred from the Maritime and Land Transport division (pp. 38–39).
- Work undertaken by BTRE that is not publicly available (pp.39–40).
- BTRE's program of projects for the coming financial year (p.41).

AusLink

2.14 The committee asked about funding provided for a number of specific roads and the allocation of that funding to related projects, namely:

- The Bruce Highway and the Tully to Murray flood immunity project (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 42–44 and 55–56).
- The Ipswich Motorway and the Toowoomba Bypass (pp. 42–44).
- The Gold Coast Highway and the Tugun Bypass (pp. 42–44).
- The Hume Highway and the Bypasses at Tarcutta, Holbrook and Woomargama (pp. 50–52).
- The Pacific Highway and its duplication (pp. 51–52).
- The Sturt Highway and the upgrade between Gawler and Nuriootpa (pp.53–54).
- The East Tamar Highway and the upgrade between Launceston and Bell Bay (pp. 54-55).
- The Ipswich-Logan Motorway, the Interchange and the Wacol to Darra section upgrade (pp. 71–72).

2.15 The department provided the committee with an overview of how the AusLink program is managed. They explained that states advise the department how much they believe they can expend on approved projects within the AusLink program. AusLink then negotiate an agreement on how the funds will be programmed with each state road authority, based on what they believe the government would be willing to make available in the budget. This results in a realistic estimate of what can be spent on each project during the year. The department further explained that payments are made to each state on a monthly basis, founded on their actual progress on projects, and what they expect to spend in the coming months.

2.16 The committee asked if work on the four pilot corridor strategies had been completed. The department responded that the studies were "in good final draft" and were awaiting endorsement by the Australian Transport Council.⁶ Following this they will be presented to COAG. The department informed the committee that work is continuing on another 12 corridor strategies, and the remaining studies will be started by the end of 2006.⁷

2.17 The committee sought updates on the following AusLink road projects:

- Bateman's Bay Bypass (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, p. 77)
- The TransApex tunnel prefeasibility study (p. 74).
- The extension of the night-time toll-free trial for trucks using the Logan Gateway Motorway (pp. 74–75).
- Funding for the Perth to Bunbury Highway (aka the Peel deviation extension of the Kwinana Highway) (pp. 75-76).

2.18 The committee also heard evidence about:

- Various reclassifications between appropriations made to ensure that the department could make payments properly (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 49–50).
- Memoranda of understanding being discussed with each state government. Funding for the states' respective highways is conditional upon signing these memoranda (pp. 50–56, see also paragraph 2.11).
- Preliminary investigations by the department into financing options for roads, including tolling (pp. 52–53).
- The decision-making process which led to the selection of the particular roads funded in this year's budget (pp. 56–58 and 72–74).
- Guidelines used to determine the eligibility of projects under the Roads to Recovery program (pp.62–63).

6 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, p. 70

7 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, p. 70

- Inspection and auditing processes of the department, and the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) performance audit of the Roads to Recovery program (pp. 64–66).
- Staffing of the Roads to Recovery program (pp. 66–67).
- The Strathbogie Shire bridge program, which was criticised in the ANAO performance audit report (pp. 67–69).
- Funding for resleeper projects to improve the national rail track between Melbourne and Queensland (pp. 69–70).
- The rescue package for Tasmanian freight rail services (pp. 79–80).
- Allocation of Black Spot Program funding (pp. 81–82).

Maritime and Land Transport

2.19 The committee asked about compensation claims made to the Commonwealth by Albany Port. The department stated that this is not an issue they have been dealing with, and further noted that it is a matter of legal dispute between the Department of Defence and the Port of Albany. On this basis the department considered it inappropriate to comment.⁸

2.20 The committee showed considerable interest in the Australian Design Rules for vehicles, particularly those governing speedometers. The committee questioned why speedometers display speeds 170 kilometres an hour faster than the legal speed limit. The department replied that they are attempting to ensure that all Australian vehicles are in line with the international United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) regulations. They further indicated that changing the speedometer may have implications for how Australian vehicles are received in international markets, and may affect manufacturers' decisions to import vehicles into the Australian marketplace. It was also pointed out that there is no evidence that changing the calibration of a speedometer would benefit Australian society or the economy.⁹

2.21 The committee asked further whether any consideration had been given to making seatbelts mandatory in all new buses. The Acting Secretary advised that while consideration has been given to the issue, jurisdictions have taken an approach which is risk specific to certain routes, due to the "higher risk profile" of those routes.¹⁰ The department informed the committee that a requirement for seatbelts in buses would involve not only additional costs, but a significant increase in the number of buses to ensure that all passengers are belted.¹¹

8 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 82–83

9 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 88–90

10 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, p. 91

11 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 90–92

2.22 The committee also inquired whether the department had carried out any research into the effectiveness of day running lights. The department responded that although they had not undertaken such research, similar studies have been completed both overseas and by the Australian Road Research Board for the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. The department is awaiting the outcome of international consideration on the issue in terms of the UN ECE regulations. Should this be adopted as an ECE regulation, the department would begin to consider implementing it as an Australian Design Rule.¹²

2.23 The committee also discussed:

- Work by the National Transport Commission (NTC) on heavy vehicle fatigue and the department's response (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 83–84).
- Reasons for the rejection of the NTC's proposed third heavy vehicle charges determination (pp. 84–85).
- The Productivity Commission's review of road and rail pricing (pp. 85).
- Federal Interstate Registration Scheme registration fees (pp. 85–86).
- The national skills crisis in the transport industry, particularly the work of the Transport and Logistics Centre and programs run through the Department of Education, Science and Training (pp. 87–89).
- Standards and approvals for motorised scooters and motorised wheelchairs (pp. 94–95).

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

2.24 The committee asked why the post-licence driver education program had not progressed past the developmental stage. The department explained that delays had occurred for a variety of reasons, including concerns about the sufficiency of funding due to a series of unknown variables associated with such a large scale trial. The main hold-up however, had been the length of time taken by Victoria to consent to the legal agreements. The department was pleased to inform the committee that this consent had recently been obtained, and the program has resumed its progress forward.¹³

2.25 Other matters raised included:

- Reasons for the Commonwealth's limited involvement with the Australian New Car Assessment Program (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 95–98).
- Progress of the National Road Safety Strategy and initiatives in the budget to help reduce the national road toll (pp. 98–102).

12 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 92–94

13 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 102–105

- Shipping accidents involving flag of convenience vessels, including those of the *Probo Bear* and the *Aristagoras* (pp. 105–108).
- Progress on the final report into the Lockhart River air tragedy (p. 108).

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

2.26 The committee inquired about Australian Maritime Safety Authority's (AMSA) inspection of the following vessels:

- The *Alexandros T*, which subsequently sank with a loss of 26 lives (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 108–109).
- The *Immacolata* (pp.109–110).
- The *Jian Seng*, an abandoned vessel (pp. 112–115 and 120–121).

2.27 The committee thanked the department for the detailed information they provided on notice relating to the *Thor Hawk*. They queried why AMSA did not discover that the cranes being operated by the *Thor Hawk* were not certified. The department explained to the committee that the responsibility for checking gear and ensuring it is operational lies with the person in charge of cargo handling, usually the stevedore. The department has since undertaken to reinforce specific responsibilities with port stevedores.¹⁴

2.28 The committee also discussed matters relating to:

- Progress of work on emergency towage arrangements (*Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 110–111).
- The sinking of the *Malu Sara*, particularly the letter of survey issued to the vessel by AMSA (pp. 115–120).

Aviation and Airports

2.29 The committee followed up on the Perth airport lease agreement with Westralia Airports Corporation, particularly in relation to rate equivalent payments. It was established that prospective lessees were informed about their obligation to make rate equivalent payments. The department advised the committee that it would be meeting with the City of Belmont for discussions once the minister has considered the advice he has been given.¹⁵

2.30 Other issues raised by the committee included:

- Adelaide and Sydney airport noise amelioration programs (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 3–4).

14 *Estimates Hansard*, 22 May 2006, pp. 111–112

15 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 4–11

- Development of a new airtservices agreement with United Arab Emirates (p. 4).
- Canberra airport planning regime and runway strengthening project (pp. 11–17).
- Proposal to build a brickworks on the Perth airport site (pp. 18–20).

Civil Aviation Safety Authority

2.31 The committee raised further concerns about the failure of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority's (CASA) audit of TransAir prior to the Lockhart River air tragedy. The committee questioned why CASA did not establish that load sheets were often not left at Bamaga. The department explained that audits are a sampling exercise, so only certain sectors and certain aspects of the operation were looked at, as is general practice. Mr Byron went on to assure the committee that

...if there had been any examples during those flights that were observed of people not leaving a load sheet then it would have been identified immediately.¹⁶

2.32 The committee was also concerned that despite the fact that human factors training was mandated in the company's operations manual, it was not included in the audit of TransAir pilots. The department stated that although companies are supposed to abide by their operations manuals, CASA does not enforce compliance. This is due to their concern that prosecuting operators for breaching the manual would be counterproductive, and may risk operators removing certain safety enhancements that are above the minimum safety requirements from their manuals.¹⁷ The committee expressed significant concern that safety elements in operations manuals are not enforced, and asked the department to provide a list of un-enforced safety enhancements. The department undertook to provide this information on notice.¹⁸

2.33 The committee sought information on alcohol and drug testing for airline pilots. The department informed the committee that, at the request of the minister, they are developing a set of draft regulations to ensure that selective testing for pilots and other "safety sensitive people" is mandatory.¹⁹ It is expected that these will be implemented by the end of 2007.²⁰

2.34 The committee also discussed the following matters:

16 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, p. 33

17 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 33–35 and 36–39

18 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 37–38

19 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, p. 35

20 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 35–36 and 48–49

- CASA's independence as a statutory authority and its relationship with the minister and the government, particularly in relation to the National Airspace System (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 20–25).
- CASA's restructure, the subsequent redeployment of staff and the effect of the government's new industrial relations legislation on this process (pp. 25–28).
- The effect of the 'acceptable means of compliance' principle on CASA procedures (p. 28).
- Implementation of extra checks on regular public transport (RPT) operators (p. 29).
- Appointment of Mr Arthur White as the Industry Complaints Commissioner (pp. 29–30).
- Progress on the development of an operator risk model (pp.30–31).
- Issue of Aviation Security Identity Cards (ASIC) (pp. 31–33).
- The employment of, and work undertaken by, Mr Ian Harvey QC (p. 39).
- CASA's surveillance of the operator involved in the Mount Hotham crash (pp.40–41).
- CASA's relationship with Polar Aviation and the findings of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (pp. 41–44).
- Safety of carry-on baggage (pp. 45–46).
- Air safety and cabin air quality reference group (pp. 46–47).
- Mr Byron's overseas trip in 2005 (pp. 47–48).

Inspector of Transport Security

2.35 The committee had a brief discussion with officers from the Office of the Inspector of Transport Security (IOTS) on the following:

- Mr Palmer's contract (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 49-50).
- IOTS's internal budget (pp. 50–51).
- Mr Palmer's overseas travel, and the nature of his work on these trips (pp. 50–52).
- Progress on the drafting of legislation for the division (p. 52).

Office of Transport Security

2.36 The committee discussed various issues with officers from the Office of Transport Security, including:

- Administration of single and continuing voyage permits (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 52–53).

- Identification of vessels operating under flags of convenience (pp. 53-54).
- The department's actions in relation to permit-breaches by various vessels (p. 54).
- The ministerial guidelines for granting licences and permits to vessels (pp. 54–56).
- Regulations governing unattended baggage at airports (pp. 58–59).
- Concerns that the new trend towards quick check-in facilities at airports allows passengers to board domestic flights without having to show photo identification (p. 60).
- Application processes for ASICs, and the rejection of applications (pp. 60–63).
- Issues surrounding the implementation of the Maritime Security Identity Card (pp. 63–69).

Airservices Australia

2.37 The committee sought an update on Airservices Australia's international activities. The department pointed out that Australia has an international reputation as a good air navigation service provider. Airservices is making an effort to ensure that civil aviation in countries in our region is safe. They are currently working with Indonesia to improve training standards for air traffic controllers, and are also helping Papua New Guinea rebuild their civil aviation capacity.²¹

2.38 Other matters raised by the committee included:

- The restructure of the organisation (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 69–71).
- The rescue and fire service at Avalon (pp. 71-72).
- Project Genesis (pp. 73–75).
- The new terminal at Adelaide airport, and replacement of the control tower (pp. 75–76).

Regional Services

2.39 The committee showed interest in the review of Area Consultative Committees (ACC) boundaries, and asked the department for information on the review. The department outlined that the review was looking at whether the current boundaries were appropriate, as there have been issues in the past with some of the metropolitan ACC's absorbing more funding overall, resulting in a lesser number of

21 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, p. 72

Regional Projects. The minister is currently consulting with ACCs, and once this is completed, the government will make a decision regarding the review.²²

2.40 The committee requested an update on the progress of the government response to the Senate committee inquiry into Regional Partnerships. The department claimed that this was a matter for government and that they could not comment on when the response might be tabled.²³

2.41 The department informed the committee that only two out of the 37 Regional Partnerships projects promised in the last federal election were waiting to have funding agreements signed. The committee showed interest in the number of jobs created by the Regional Partnerships program to date, and the department undertook to provide this figure on notice.²⁴

2.42 The committee asked about the progress of a number of projects, including:

- Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, p. 85 and 88)
- Bank@Post (p. 85).
- RM Williams centre (pp. 86–87).
- Mackay Science and Technology precinct (p. 87).
- Buchanan Park Rodeo (p. 87).
- Dalby showgrounds (pp. 87–88).
- Tamworth Equine Centre (p. 88).
- Bert Hinkler Hall of Aviation (pp. 88–89).
- Jimbour amphitheatre (p. 89).
- Primary energy grant (pp. 89–90).
- Newman town centre (p. 90).
- Collocation facilities in Hopetoun, Western Australia

2.43 The committee also discussed the following issues:

- Regional Service's internal budget (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 76–78).
- Funding for ACCs (pp. 78–82).

22 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, p. 80

23 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 82

24 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, p. 85

- Progress of the single assessment process for Regional Partnership applications, and the development of new guidelines for project approval (pp. 82–83)
- The Sustainable Regions Program (pp. 83–84).
- The failure of the Coonawarra Gold Facilities project (pp. 90–91).

Territories and Local Government

Norfolk Island

2.44 The department outlined details of the High Court challenge to the validity of the Norfolk Island Amendment Act 2004. The committee asked whether there had been any expense to the Commonwealth due to these proceedings, and the department assured senators that there had not. The committee further asked if the Norfolk Islands government had been indemnified by a private citizen in this case. The department undertook to provide this information on notice.²⁵

2.45 The committee showed considerable interest in the financial management of Norfolk Island. A series of questions about the Norfolk Sustainability Levy, a one per cent levy on goods and services recently passed by the Norfolk Island government. The department abstained from answering a number of questions about the governance and financial accountability of Norfolk Island on the grounds that they were matters for the Norfolk Island government.²⁶

2.46 Other issues raised by the committee in relation to Norfolk Island included:

- The work of the Commonwealth Grants Commission and the Australian Bureau of Statistics on the island (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 92–95).
- Challenges to the accuracy of the Acumen report (pp. 95–96).
- Norfolk Island public servants and their employment conditions (pp. 98–101).
- Commonwealth public servants on secondment with the Norfolk Island Government (pp. 98–99).
- Procedures for, and participation in, Australian federal elections (pp. 102–103).

Christmas Island

2.47 The committee again raised the issue of the broken tower crane on Christmas Island. The department stated that the crane is expected to be fully operational during

25 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 91–92

26 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 96–97

July this year, after being out of service for six months.²⁷ The committee asked a series of questions about the maintenance regime and schedule of the crane, as well as the maintenance reports and other reports relating to the crane's failure. The department undertook to supply the requested information on notice.²⁸

2.48 The committee also attempted to ascertain where responsibility lay for the contract relating to the crane. The department took those questions on notice.²⁹

2.49 The committee pursued the following additional matters in relation to the Christmas Island crane:

- Legal advice sought by the department (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 107–108).
- The timeliness of the department's action schedule (pp. 108–109).
- The impact of the crane's failure on the community and actions taken by the department to ease this (pp. 109–110).

2.50 Other issues the committee raised regarding Christmas Island included:

- The failure of the funding agreement for the space base (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 110–111).
- Funding for the island's infrastructure (pp. 111–112).
- The condition of the Christmas Island Resort and the lease of the resort (pp. 112–113).
- The lease of land for the Linkwater Road upgrade and for the related water infrastructure (p. 113).

National Capital Authority

2.51 The committee raised the following matters with officers from the National Capital Authority (NCA):

- The funding for, and envisaged stages of, *The Griffin Legacy*, a project for the development of the central capital area of Canberra (*Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 113–115).
- Plans for Constitution Avenue, and implications for parking (pp. 115–116).
- Proposed redevelopment around the National Library, and the development process, including consultation. The related issues of consequential tree removal and car access to the foreshore area were also discussed (pp. 117–122).

27 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, p. 103

28 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 103–105

29 *Estimates Hansard*, 23 May 2006, pp. 106–107

- Removal of the land of the Canberra International Airport from the requirements of the National Capital Plan (pp. 122–123, see also paragraph 2.30).
- Progress on plans for State Circle (p. 123).
- The Pierces Creek redevelopment (pp. 123–125).
- Funding, consultancies and tenders for activities to promote the National Capital (pp. 125–126).
- Parliament House child-care centre (pp. 126–127).
- Feasibility study for a 2,000-metre rowing course (p. 127).
- Impact of the Uhrig review on the NCA (pp. 127–128).
- Changes to the board of the NCA (pp. 128–129).

Chapter 3

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

3.1 The committee heard evidence from the department on Wednesday 24 May and Thursday 25 May 2006. The hearing was conducted in the following order:

- Management Services
- Corporate Policy
- Food and Agriculture
 - Wheat Export Authority
 - Grains Research and Development Corporation
- Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics
- Bureau of Rural Sciences
- Biosecurity Australia
- International
- Product Integrity, Animal (including aquatic animal) and Plant Health
- Australian Quarantine Inspection Service
- Rural Policy and Innovation
- Fisheries and Forestry
- Natural Resource Management

Management Services

3.2 The session began with a member of the committee requesting the appearance of Ms Amelia Duck, Project Assistant, Performance Monitoring for the Wheat Export Authority (WEA). The minister responded by repeating a statement he had made at additional estimates in February, that public servants would not answer questions in relation to the Australian Wheat Board (AWB) or the Cole inquiry.

3.3 Ms Duck was contacted and asked to appear, however, the minister later informed the committee that Ms Duck no longer worked for the WEA but was employed by Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics as a public servant, and would not be answering questions about AWB and the Iraq wheat payments.

3.4 The committee noted that at the previous estimates hearing, the management of the department had made a commitment to make every effort to meet the deadline for lodgement of written answers. The Secretary responded by indicating that the

department had put in a major effort to meet the deadline, and that a very large share of the answers were lodged with the secretariat by 28 April 2006. The Secretary told the committee that there were a number of questions which related to the Cole inquiry, which were more complex and took additional time for the department to work through. The Secretary also indicated that the department would continue to make an effort to adhere to deadlines as much as possible.

3.5 The committee further tried to ascertain whether the delay occurred in the department or in the minister's office, and the department undertook to provide this information on notice.¹

3.6 The committee sought information about a specific appropriation for an amount of \$10 million. The item was described under the heading 'other decisions yet to be announced' in the department's PBS. Departmental officers argued that these were 'contingency' funds and the minister (Senator the Hon Eric Abetz) put forward the view that it was appropriate for the purpose not to be spelt out in advance.² Following further questioning, the minister agreed to seek an answer as soon as possible from the relevant minister.³

3.7 The committee also heard evidence on the funding and plans for the department's relocation to new premises.⁴

Corporate Policy

3.8 The committee asked questions about the Commonwealth Ombudsman's inquiry into the Business Ethics Security and Investigations Unit's (BESIU) handling of the Hewett compensation claim process and the report's recommendations. The committee put forward the view that there was a link between the department's response to the Ombudsman's report and the way in which the Marnic claim is being handled.⁵

3.9 The committee was told that the department had accepted the recommendations of the Ombudsman in respect of the BESIU investigation into the Hewett case. However, departmental officers also indicated that the circumstances surrounding the BESIU investigation of the Hewett case and those of Marnic were quite different. The committee was told that the implementation of Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration (CDDA) guidelines in 2001, means that the department operates under a different process and the BESIU are no longer used to investigate claims under the CDDA. Departmental officers subsequently

1 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, p. 4

2 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 4–8

3 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, p. 8

4 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 9–11

5 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, p. 11

provided the committee with an update regarding the progress being made in the Marnic case.⁶

Food and Agriculture

3.10 The committee noted that there had been no funding from the Wheat Export Levy identified in the PBS for the coming financial year. The committee also noted that the current levy is struck on exported wheat at a rate of 22c per tonne, and that there had been an agreement reached last year between the Grains Council of Australia and the WEA to cut the rate to 19c. Following further discussion, departmental officers indicated that whilst the minister had initially agreed with the recommendation to cut the levy to 19c, this decision had since been reversed – as a consequence of the Cole inquiry.⁷

3.11 Other issues raised by the committee included:

- Funding for the HomeGrown campaign (*Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 22–23).
- Progress in relation to the sugar levy and the sugar industry restructuring package (pp. 24–31).
- Country of origin labelling requirements for packaged products (pp. 31–33).
- Progress in relation to the horticulture code of practice (pp. 33–34).
- Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation Act – funding for research and marketing (p. 34).
- Wool levy and export charge (p. 35).
- Australian Wool Innovation (AWI)– funding (p. 35).
- Australian Wool Research and Promotion Organisation – pension liability (pp. 35–36).
- Importation of bottled water from China and rules governing labelling of food and drink imports (pp. 36–37).
- Statutory funding agreement for AWI (pp. 37–38).
- Summit meeting to address the wine grape glut (pp. 38–39).
- Proposal to institute a research and development levy for Australian turf production, and the legitimacy of the consequent ballot (pp. 39–40 and 109–112).
- Work undertaken to analyse current wheat export marketing arrangements (p. 109).

6 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 13–21

7 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, p. 23

- Progress of tender processes for Q fever vaccine suppliers (p. 112).

Wheat Export Authority

3.12 The committee began by asking a number of questions about the remuneration package provided for the WEA's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Officers from the WEA did not answer the questions to the complete satisfaction of the committee because several elements that are normally included in remuneration packages (such as FBT, employer contributions to superannuation etc) appeared to be outside the quoted figure of \$260,000. Initially, Mr Besley offered to table the CEO's performance review to clarify for the committee how the bonuses were arrived at. However, Mr Besley later indicated that because of privacy considerations he would not be tabling that document.

3.13 The committee questioned WEA extensively on the organisation's understanding of what its monitoring role entails. There were several reminders issued by the Chair and the minister during questioning that officers were not to answer questions that impinged on the issues before the Cole Commission. The outcome of the questioning was an admission on the part of WEA officers that the agency would not continue in its present form after the Cole Commission had published its findings.

3.14 The committee also questioned officers from the WEA about the following:

- The process by which AWB determine that profits will accumulate to the shareholders and not to the pool on a third party sale (*Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 44–45).
- The process by which AWB operate the pool, distribute profits from freight arrangements and determine that any demurrage is charged to the pool (pp. 45–46).
- The legislative delegation (and the role) of the WEA (pp. 46-47 and 56-61).
- Consultation with the Grains Council of Australia regarding the setting of the industry levy (p. 51).
- Whether the CEO of the WEA had knowledge of how contracts between AWB and the Iraqi Grains Board were constructed (pp. 51–53).
- The date WEA became aware of 'kickbacks' being provided as part of wheat contracts with Iraq (pp. 53–56 and 70).
- An internal report prepared by AWB regarding the wheat industry benchmark (provided on a confidential basis to WEA) (p. 61).
- The construction of previous reports the WEA has prepared in relation to its assessment of the wheat industry benchmark (pp. 61–62).
- Performance Measurement and Review (PMR) reports provided to the minister by WEA (pp. 62–63).
- Discussions between WEA and AWB (International) (p. 63).

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- AWB's and AWB(I)'s provision of information and documentation to WEA (pp. 65–67, 69–70 and 76–77).
 - Details of a file note attached to the PMR report provided to the minister's office on 15 October 2004 (pp. 67–68).
 - Changes to WEA's procedures to ensure that information provided by AWB(I) (and passed on to growers) is accurate (pp. 70–71).
 - WEA's response to criticisms, advice and observations made by shareholders (p.71).
 - WEA's knowledge of, and access to, a United States Defence Contract Audit Agency report (pp. 71–73).
 - Whether there was a specific brief or report made available to the WEA board on the outcomes of a review of the AWB(I) contracts (the review took place at a meeting in Melbourne) (pp. 73–74).
 - Whether the Chair and the CEO of the WEA have recently read, and are familiar with, the contents of the minutes of WEA board meetings for 2004 (pp. 74–76).
 - Status and independence of AWB Limited and AWB(I) meetings (p. 76).
 - Details of travel undertaken by WEA officers (p. 77).
 - Details of staff turnover – WEA (p. 78).

Grains Research and Development Corporation

3.15 The committee called the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) for the first time, and asked about the source and expenditure of GRDC's funding. GRDC explained that it takes a levy from grain growers, which is matched by the government. GRDC's funds are spent on researching farming practices, new products, capacity building and communication. The majority (60 per cent) of their funds are invested in research on new varieties, basically, pre-breeding, breeding and variety testing.⁸

3.16 Senators expressed some concern that as wheat programs are slowly changing from public to private enterprises, the grower levy charged by GRDC is funding private enterprise research for the development of seed that growers then have to purchase. GRDC's CEO conceded that 'double-dipping' is a significant concern for many growers, who are upset that they are paying a levy for research and development, and then paying royalties for the resultant seed variety. However, he pointed out that although wheat breeding programs are becoming privatised, GRDC cannot at this stage stop charging the levy as its funds for breeding would dry up. He further explained that GRDC is gradually trying to move out of breeding and into pre-

8 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, p. 79

breeding, where the corporation believe there is potential for genetic gain. It is expecting the transition to be complete in the next three years.⁹

3.17 The committee showed considerable interest in Single Vision Grains Australia (SVGA), and its relationship with GRDC. GRDC told the committee that SVGA is a two-year interim arrangement, with the aim of implementing changes in industry consistent with the Single Vision document. At the end of this two year period, SVGA must consult with industry to determine if any work remains to be done, and if so, the structure of and funding for, any organisation that is to be put in place. Consequently, SVGA does not have a corporate structure; it has instead an interim board, whose members have individual contracts with GRDC.¹⁰

3.18 The committee asked about the funding arrangements for SVGA, and were informed that GRDC has committed to pay up to \$1 million per year for the two years, under strict reporting arrangements, which effectively means that GRDC pays SVGA's bills.¹¹

3.19 The committee noted that an incorporated entity, by the name of Single Vision Grains Australia Ltd exists in parallel to the unincorporated SVGA, and that in fact the two entities have the same Executive Director. The committee was told that upon the creation of the interim unincorporated body by GRDC, the interim board had come to an arrangement with the Grains Council of Australia (GCA) to use the name of their registered company, Single Vision Grains Australia Ltd. However, the Chair of GRDC assured the committee that GRDC is not funding an incorporated entity by the name of Single Vision Grains Australia Ltd.¹²

3.20 The committee later established that the GCA sold the incorporated body Single Vision Grains Australia Ltd in January 2006 for \$14,000. Senators expressed concern that this \$14,000 for the purchase of an incorporated entity may have been billed to the GRDC, under its funding arrangements with SVGA. GRDC undertook to provide the committee with further information regarding this issue on notice. The committee voiced significant unease about the arrangements that were in place.¹³

3.21 The committee also expressed concern about a study undertaken by SVGA into wheat export marketing arrangements and alternatives to the Wheat Export Authority, questioning the appropriateness of one statutory authority funding an inquiry into the adequacy of another statutory authority. The department responded that SVGA is independent, and consequently their decision to analyse marketing

9 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, p. 80

10 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, p. 85–86

11 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, p. 86, see also pp. 91–92 and 100–103

12 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 87–88 and 90

13 *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 101 and 104–105

arrangements was their own, and that the GRDC has simply provided the funding for a project, nothing more.¹⁴

3.22 The committee also pursued the following matters:

- Wheat breeding programs (*Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, p. 79).
- The impact of plant breeder's right (PBR) on grain grower's viability (p. 80–81).
- GRDC's staffing levels (p. 82).
- Expenditure on travel and travel guidelines (p. 83).
- Expenditure on corporate hospitality (pp. 83–84).
- Contracting of the GCA (pp. 84–85).
- The board of SVGA (pp. 87, 90–91 and 102).
- Possible economic analysis of the fertiliser market (pp. 88–89).
- The impact of issues of oil supply and increasing oil prices on agriculture and grain production. Particularly the potential use of biofuels as an alternative (pp. 107–109).

Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics

3.23 The committee pursued the following issues with officers from the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics:

- Coal-to-liquid technology and possibilities for modelling the impact of the technology on prices across various sectors and on agriculture in general (*Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 92–94).
- The outlook for a series of commodity groups, including minerals (pp. 94–96).
- Alternatives in nuclear energy, particularly thorium and uranium (pp. 96–97).
- Possibilities for, and implications of, manufacturing biofuels (pp. 97–98).
- Prices for plastic bags (pp. 98–99).
- Research undertaken on renewable energies (pp. 99–100).

Bureau of Rural Sciences

3.24 The committee held a brief discussion with officers of the Bureau of Rural Sciences on the following matters:

- Research on biofuels (*Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 113–114).

¹⁴ *Estimates Hansard*, 24 May 2006, pp. 105–106

- Funding for, and progress of, the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis and Research (pp. 114–115).
- Progress on the national agricultural monitoring system (pp. 115–116).
- Progress on the Water 2010 project (pp. 116–117).
- Work underway in fisheries and forestry (p. 118).

Biosecurity Australia

3.25 The committee sought updates on the progress of Import Risk Analyses (IRA) for the following products:

- Uncooked chicken meat (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 5–7).
- Bananas (pp. 7–8).
- Apples (pp. 8–10).
- Prawns (p. 15).

3.26 The committee also asked about the progress of policy reviews on the importation of:

- Mangoes (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 10–11).
- Brazilian beef (pp. 11–12).
- Taro (p. 12).

3.27 The committee asked about the impact on Australian growers, of Taiwan's decision to only accept fruit from the fruit fly free regions of Tasmania and the Riverland in South Australia. Senators also requested an update on the progress of attempts to put a new export protocol in place between the two countries. The department informed the committee that two draft protocols had been sent to Taiwan, and these were closely followed by a delegation to the country earlier this year. As a result of the visit, Biosecurity have determined Taiwan's requirements, and have subsequently undertaken research in order to provide Taiwan with the information they have requested.¹⁵

3.28 Other issues raised by the committee included:

- Biosecurity's internal budget and staffing levels (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp.3–5).
- Whether regional freedom issues are adequately covered by existing consultation processes with states (pp. 15–16).

15 *Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 12–15

International

3.29 The committee had a brief discussion with officers from the International division about the following:

- Possible implications of a Free Trade Agreement with China for the agriculture industry (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, p. 16).
- The consultative process with industry regarding the Free Trade Agreement (pp. 16–19).
- Funding for the technical agricultural cooperation program with China (pp. 19–20).

Product Integrity, Animal (including aquatic animal) and Plant Health

3.30 The committee pursued information arising out of the *Exercise Eleusis '05 evaluation report key findings* and whether various recommendations have been implemented.¹⁶

3.31 The department briefed the committee on the monitoring of avian influenza and surveillance work undertaken by the division. The division is working closely with both Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, assisting them to build their capacity to identify, communicate and manage risks, and to effectively manage and deploy their resources.¹⁷

3.32 The department is also undertaking significant public awareness programs and is cooperating with Indigenous communities in northern Australia's coastal areas to help ensure early identification of any changes in bird health.¹⁸

3.33 The committee also sought an update on the progress of the national livestock identification scheme (NLIS).¹⁹

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

3.34 The committee pursued the issue of import permit applications. The following matters were raised:

- The review of processes for assessing applications. This has led to a documentation of the processes that need to be followed when assessing an application (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 29–30).
- The consultation process between the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and Biosecurity Australia (pp. 30–31).

16 *Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 21–22 and 25–28

17 *Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 22–23

18 *Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 23–25 and 27

19 *Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, p. 21

- The review of permits issued before April 2004, which were "out of the ordinary" and did not have existing IRA's or fixed conditions (pp. 31–36).
- The Marnic Worldwide case and the review process (pp. 29–36).
- Legal advice sought by AQIS in relation to the administration of permit applications (p. 37).

3.35 The committee also asked about the inspection regime for shipments of taro.²⁰

Rural Policy and Innovation

3.36 The committee held a brief discussion with the officers of Rural Policy and Innovation about:

- Restructuring packages for the egg industry (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, p. 40).
- Funding for the Farm Help program (pp. 40–42).
- The minister's assessment of Dairy Australia' compliance, and tabling of the annual report and compliance report (pp. 42–44).
- Exceptional circumstances applications and declarations (p. 44).

Fisheries and Forestry

3.37 The committee showed considerable interest in measures being taken to manage illegal fishing in Australian waters. Senators sought information on:

- The numbers of illegal fishing vessels apprehended, detained or subject to confiscation and associated costs (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 52–53 and 61–62).
- The proposed use of helicopters to aid rapid apprehension of illegal fishers (pp. 53–54).
- Provision of transitional accommodation for illegal fishers on Horn Island (pp. 55–56).
- Use of the existing AQIS program of Indigenous engagement to also help monitor any illegal fishing activity (p. 57–58).
- Status of the joint Western Australia-Northern Territory strategy on illegal fishing (pp. 59–60).
- Funding for Southern Ocean armed patrols, including the *Oceanic Viking* (pp. 62–63).
- Trade certification processes which require documentation for products (p. 69).

20 *Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 38–39

3.38 The committee requested an update on the fisheries structural adjustment package, and raised the following issues:

- Proposed expenditure for this financial year and the tender process to allocate funds (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, p. 63).
- Exit grants for fishers affected by the announcement of marine protected areas (pp. 64–65).
- Various other grants associated with the package (pp. 64–65).

3.39 The committee asked a series of questions on the regulation of deep sea trawling. The department indicated that Australia believes a focus on improving governance of the world's oceans will be much more effective than a moratorium on deep sea trawling, which will only serve to penalise responsible nations.²¹ The department also outlined Australia's work with a number of other countries to develop a regional fisheries management arrangement for the south-west Pacific Ocean.²²

3.40 The committee also heard evidence about:

- The internal budget of the division, especially funding for vessel destruction (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 45–49).
- Funding for the Recreational Fishing Community Grants program and progress on the assessment of applications (pp. 50).
- Funding for, and management of, the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna's research program (p. 51).
- The impact of illegal fishing on the sustainability of various Australian fisheries, and the consequences of this for Australian fishers (pp. 60–61).
- Progress on a bilateral fisheries forum with Indonesia and on a joint study into illegal fishing in our region (p. 66).
- Progress on the evaluation of the Eden adjustment package (p. 66).
- Studies of species threatened by illegal fishing (pp. 68–69).
- Sharing of striped marlin, tuna and billfish stocks (pp. 73–74).
- The difficulties in monitoring fish stocks (p. 75).

Natural Resource Management

3.41 The committee sought an update on the Living Murray initiative, and heard evidence on the following matters:

- Funding for the initiative (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 76–77).
- The four Living Murray projects (p. 77).

21 *Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 70–72

22 *Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 72–73

- An assessment of the first three years of the initiative (pp. 78–79).

3.42 The committee also requested an update on the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. Funding for the program was discussed, and senators showed a particular interest in evaluations conducted on the 21 priority regions.²³

3.43 Other matters pursued by the committee included:

- Natural Resource Management's internal budget (*Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 75–76).
- Funding for the Murray–Darling Basin Commission (pp. 77–78) *and*
- Strategic reserve funding (p. 84).

23 *Estimates Hansard*, 25 May 2006, pp. 79–84

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