

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1.1 On 9 May 2007, the Senate referred the following documents to the Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport (the committee) 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 2008;
- Particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2008;
- Particulars of certain proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2007; and
- Particulars of proposed supplementary expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2007.<sup>1</sup>

1.2 The committee was required to report to the Senate on its consideration of 2007-2008 Budget estimates on 19 June 2007.<sup>2</sup>

1.3 The committee considered the Portfolio Budget Statements 2007-2008 for both portfolios at hearings on 21, 22, 23 and 24 May 2007. The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda as follows:

- Monday 21 May 2007 – Transport and Regional Services portfolio;
- Tuesday 22 May 2007 – Transport and Regional Services portfolio;
- Wednesday 23 May 2007 – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio; and
- Thursday 24 May 2007 – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio.

1.4 The committee heard evidence from Senator the Hon David Johnston, Minister for Justice and Customs, 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

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1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 126, 'Days of Meeting–Committees–Estimates Hearings', entry no. 19, 7 December 2007, pp 3292-3293.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 143, 'Particulars of Proposed Expenditure for 2007-08 and Particulars of Proposed Supplementary Expenditure for 2006-07–Documents–Reference of Estimates to Committees', entry no. 5, 9 May 2007, p. 3753.

provided by Mr Mike Taylor, Secretary of the Department of Transport and Regional Services, Dr Conall O'Connell, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, 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, 26 July 2007.

### **Additional information**

1.7 Answers to questions taken on notice at the committee's budget estimates hearings will be tabled in the Senate in separate volumes entitled 'Additional information relating to the examination of budget estimates 2007-2008 – May 2007 – Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport'. 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 departments will also be posted in the committee's website at a later date.

### **Note on References**

1.9 References to the Hansard transcript are to the proof Hansard: page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcript.