

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 12 May 2009, the Senate referred the following documents to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee (the committee) for examination and report in relation to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio and the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government portfolio:

- Particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2010;
- Particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2010; and
- Particulars of proposed expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2010.¹

1.2 The committee was required to report to the Senate on its consideration of 2009-2010 budget estimates on 23 June 2009.

1.3 The committee considered the Portfolio Budget Statements 2009-2010 for both portfolios at hearings on 25, 26, 27 and 28 May 2009. The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda as follows:

- Monday 25 May 2009 – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio.
- Tuesday 26 May 2009 – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio.
- Wednesday 27 May 2009 – Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government portfolio.
- Thursday 28 May 2009 – Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government portfolio.

1.4 The committee heard evidence from Senator the Hon Nick Sherry, the then Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law, representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, representing the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Evidence was also provided by Dr Conall O'Connell, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Mr Andrew Tongue, Acting Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, and officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 67, 12 May 2009, p. 1920.

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

Changes to departmental structures

1.6 The committee notes that no changes have been made to the departmental structure for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry or the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government since the 2008–09 Additional Estimates round.

Questions on Notice

1.7 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 Wednesday 22 July 2009.

Additional information

1.8 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 2009-2010 – May 2009 - Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee'. Documents not suitable for inclusion in the additional information volumes will be available on request from the committee secretariat.

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

Note on references

1.10 References to the Hansard transcript are to the proof Hansard; page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcript.