

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1.1 On 14 May 2013, 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, the Infrastructure and Transport portfolio, and the Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport portfolio:

- particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014 [Appropriation Bill (No.1) 2013-14]; and
- particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014 [Appropriation Bill (No.2) 2013-14].<sup>1</sup>

1.2 The committee is required to report to the Senate on its consideration of 2013-14 Budget Estimates on 25 June 2013.

### Variation of portfolios

1.3 On 8 February 2012, the Senate amended the continuing order relating to the allocation of departments and agencies to committees. The change of allocations resulted in the committee changing its name from Rural Affairs and Transport, to Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, and also taking responsibility for the oversight of the Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport portfolio.

1.4 On 15 May 2013, the Senate amended the continuing order relating to the allocation of departments and agencies to committees.<sup>2</sup> The change of allocations reflected the Prime Minister's announcement regarding ministerial responsibility of the Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport portfolio.<sup>3</sup>

### Budget Estimates hearings

1.5 The committee considered the Portfolio Budget Statements 2013-14 for all portfolios at hearings between 27 and 30 May 2013. The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda as follows:

- Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 May – Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry;
- Wednesday 29 May – Infrastructure and Transport; and

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1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 144, 14 May 2013, p. 3914.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 145, 15 May 2013, p. 3929.

3 The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Prime Minister of Australia, 'Changes to the Ministry', Media release, 25 March 2013, [www.pm.gov.au/press-office/changes-ministry-2](http://www.pm.gov.au/press-office/changes-ministry-2) (accessed 3 June 2013).

- Thursday 30 May – Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport.

1.6 The committee heard evidence from:

- Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry;
- Senator the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and the Minister for Road Safety; and
- Senator the Hon Kate Lundy, Minister for Sport, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting for Industry and Innovation, representing the Minister for Regional Development and Local Government, Minister for Regional Services, Local Communities and Territories, and the Minister for the Arts.

1.7 Evidence was also provided by:

- Mr Andrew Metcalfe AO, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry;
- Mr Mike Mrdak, Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure and Transport;
- Ms Glenys Beauchamp, Secretary for the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport; and
- officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

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

## **Changes to departmental structures**

1.9 Mr Metcalfe, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry informed the committee in his opening statement on 27 May 2013 of planned changes to the department's structure, which will occur from 1 July 2013.

1.10 On 1 July 2013, two new branches will be established within the Governance Division under the responsibility of Deputy Secretary, Mr Mark Tucker. The Strategic Policy Branch will be established to provide a long-term view across the agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries. The Office of the Chief Lawyer is also being established after Mr Metcalfe commissioned an independent review of DAFF's legal capability shortly after commencing as secretary. The review found that DAFF would

be better served by redirecting some of its external legal expenditure to enhance its in-house legal capability.<sup>4</sup>

1.11 Mr Metcalfe also advised the committee of his decision not to go through with the planned merger of the Agricultural Productivity, Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Change Divisions, which was identified at Additional Estimates in February 2013, stating that:

Having now looked at the issues more closely...it is not the right time for a major restructure across those policy divisions given the amount of work that is underway.<sup>5</sup>

1.12 Mr Mrdak, Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure and Transport, informed the committee of a change to the department's structure in his opening statement on Wednesday, 29 May 2013, which has occurred since Additional estimates of February 2013.

1.13 The Major Cities Unit (MCU) has been merged with the Policy and Research Division, which occurred as a result of Ms Ekelund's decision to leave the department.<sup>6</sup> Mr Collett, General Manager of the MCU, later told the committee that the merger of the MCU into the Policy and Research Division provides an additional senior executive service officer to support the work of unit.<sup>7</sup>

## Questions on notice

1.14 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 resolved that written answers and additional information be submitted by 26 July 2013.

## Additional information

1.15 Answers to questions taken on notice at the committee's Additional Estimates hearings will be tabled in the Senate in separate volumes entitled 'Additional information relating to the examination of Budget Estimates 2013-14 May 2013, 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.

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4 *Estimates Hansard*, 27 May 2013, pp 6–7.

5 *Estimates Hansard*, 27 May 2013, p. 6.

6 *Estimates Hansard*, 29 May 2013, p. 4.

7 *Estimates Hansard*, 29 May 2013, pp 127–128.

1.16 Answers to questions on notice received from the departments will also be posted on the committee's website at a later date.<sup>8</sup>

### **Note on references**

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

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8 Answers to questions on notice, once received, will be published at the following website address:  
[www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate\\_Committees?url=senate\\_committees/estimates/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=senate_committees/estimates/index.htm).