

Introduction

Establishment of the Inquiry

On 21 March 2002, the Senate referred the following matter to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by 12 December 2002: *Recruitment and training in the Australian Public Service.*

In considering these terms of reference, the Senate specifically asked the Committee to examine and report on the following issues:

(a) Recruitment

- (i) the trends in recruitment to the APS over recent years;
- (ii) the trends, in particular, in relation to the recruitment to the APS of young people, both graduates and non graduates;
- (iii) the employment opportunities for young people in the APS;
- (iv) the efficiency and effectiveness of the devolved arrangements for recruitment in the APS;

(b) Training and Development

- (i) the trends in expenditure on training and development in the APS over recent years;
- (ii) the methods used to identify training needs in the APS;
- (iii) the methods used to evaluate training and development provided in the APS;
- (iv) the extent of accredited/ articulated training offered in the APS;
- (v) the processes used in the APS to evaluate training providers and training courses;
- (vi) the adequacy of training and career development opportunities available to APS employees in regional areas;
- (vii) the efficiency and effectiveness of the devolved arrangements for training in the APS;

(viii) the value for money represented by the training and development dollars spent in the APS;

(ix) the ways training and development offered to APS employees could be improved in order to enhance the skills of APS employees;

(c) Public Service Commissioner

(i) the role of the Public Service Commissioner pursuant to s.41 (1) (i) of the *Public Service Act 1999* in coordinating and supporting APS-wide training and career development opportunities in the APS; and

(d) any other issues relevant to the terms of reference but not referred to above which arise in the course of the inquiry.

Due to the complexity of the reference and the large volume of information received by the Committee after the end of the 2002 parliamentary year and in the first part of 2003, the Committee sought and received three extensions of time to report.

Conduct of the inquiry

The Committee advertised the inquiry in the *Canberra Times* and the *Financial Review* on 5 April 2002, and in the *Weekend Australian* on the following day. It called for written submissions to be lodged with the Committee by 10 May 2002. The Committee also wrote to relevant Commonwealth departments, agencies and authorities, trade unions, academics interested in public administration, large private sector employers and peak bodies, drawing their attention to the inquiry and inviting submissions.

The terms of reference and other information about the inquiry were also advertised on the Committee's internet homepage at <http://www.fpa.sen.aph.gov.au>.

A total of 51 submissions were received. A list of submissions is contained in Appendix 1. All submissions were made public documents and can be accessed on the Committee's homepage.

After initial consideration of the submissions, the Committee began public hearings on 14 and 15 August 2002 in Canberra. This hearing was followed by further hearings held in Canberra on 27 September and a final hearing on 11 November. Details of the hearings and the witnesses who appeared at them are contained in Appendix 2. The Hansard transcript of evidence taken at the hearings was made available on the internet.

During the course of the inquiry a number of APS agencies and other witnesses appearing before the Committee provided answers to questions taken on notice at hearings and/or supplementary questions, as well as further information provided at the request of the Committee. These were made available on the internet.

Agencies not providing evidence

Given the importance of learning and development for the APS, it was particularly disappointing to the Committee that some agencies chose not to provide evidence to its inquiry by way of submissions or in person at Committee public hearings. Most significantly, the Departments of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and Education, Science and Training (DEST) did not participate in the inquiry. In view of DEWR and DEST's key roles in employment and training, the Committee is extremely disappointed that their insights and experience were not available for consideration by the Committee.

By way of contrast, the Committee acknowledges those non-APS agencies, such as CSIRO and the ABC, that provided evidence to the inquiry. Their contribution was of significant value to the Committee's work.

Acknowledgments

The Committee expresses its appreciation to everyone who contributed to the inquiry by making submissions, providing other information or appearing before the Committee at public hearings.

