

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

Part One of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's *Report on the 2007-08 Budget Estimates*, tabled on 24 May 2007, provided information from departments in response to the Committee's budget estimates questionnaire. Modelled on the reporting process followed by Senate Standing Committees in considering budget estimates, Part One of the report also provided an index of key matters and associated material relating to the first 23 budget estimates hearings that took place between 3 May 2007 and 11 May 2007.

As foreshadowed in Part One, I now have pleasure in introducing Part Two of the new three part series that covers the 2007-08 Budget Estimates. Part Two includes:

- departmental reviews incorporating additional information sought by the Committee;
- an index of key matters raised at the remaining 20 budget estimates hearings which took place between 14 May 2007 and 31 May 2007 together with the transcripts of these hearings; and
- associated questions taken on notice, unasked questions and a list of documents presented by Ministers at those hearings.

To place in context the scale of the budget estimates hearings process, it is worth noting that the entire process involved:

- 51 hours of proceedings that extended over 14 days;
- in excess of 530 questions researched and raised by Committee members;
- 128 questions on notice;
- 35 unasked questions;
- the provision of evidence by ten departments and the parliamentary departments;
- the hearing of evidence from 91 witnesses; and
- 626 pages of transcripts.

This report is designed to be delivered within a time frame which informs debate on the appropriation bills in the Parliament. It will be complemented by Part Three which will provide information relating to the responses received for questions on notice and unasked questions, as well as the Committee's analysis of matters connected with the 2007-08 Budget Estimates and recommendations to complete the Committee's budget estimates inquiry.

Again I acknowledge the efforts of Ministers and their accompanying officers for their participation in the estimates hearings process, as well as the Committee members for their commitment and cooperation at the hearings. On behalf of the Committee, I am also grateful for the assistance provided by the Committee's secretariat in preparing material for inclusion in the report in a very short time frame.



Bob Stensholt, MP

Chair