

**Current Senate Inquiries**

**November 2013**

On 14 November 2014, the Senate established eight new inquiries and re-adopted eight inquiries instituted by the Senate of the 43rd Parliament. Committee inquiries provide an opportunity for organisations and individuals to participate in policy making and have their views placed on the public record and considered as part of the decision-making process.

This Occasional Paper provides a brief overview of the new and continuing Senate Committee inquiries. These inquiries are either still accepting submissions or are no longer accepting submissions but are yet to report.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on Parliamentary Committees and inquiries is available [here](#).

The Hawker Britton guide to participating in Parliamentary inquiries is available [here](#).

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## **Community Affairs References Committee Inquiries**

[Committee homepage](#) | [Committee membership](#)

### ***Care and management of younger and older Australians living with dementia and behavioural and psychiatric symptoms of dementia (BPSD)***

This inquiry will report on the scope and adequacy of the different models of community, residential and acute care for Australians living with dementia and BPSD, with particular reference services provided both by the Commonwealth, State and Territories, and also the non-government sector. It will examine the resourcing of care and report on scope for improving care and management, increasing access to care and reducing physical and chemical restraints.

Submissions closed 03 May 2013. The reporting date was originally 26 June 2013 and was subsequently extended to 12 August 2013.

On 14 November 2013 the matter was re-referred to the Committee by the Senate for inquiry.

The Committee is due to report by 28 February 2014.

The terms of reference are available [here](#).

The Interim Report is available [here](#).

## **Economics Affairs References Committee Inquiries**

[Committee homepage](#) | [Committee membership](#)

### ***Minerals Resource Rent Tax Repeal and Other Measures Bill 2013***

The inquiry was established on established on 14 November 2013 and will report on the [Minerals Resource Rent Tax Repeal and Other Measures Bill 2013](#).

The bill repeals the minerals resource rent tax, which was levied on 30 per cent of the "super profits" from the mining of iron ore and coal in Australia, was introduced on 1 July 2012 by the previous Labor government. It was a replacement for the proposed Resource Super Profit Tax (RSPT).

The schedules to the bill also include the following repeals and other measures:

- Schedule 2 of the bill seeks to repeal the mining tax related company loss carry-back
- Schedule 3 of the bill amends the instant asset write-off threshold provisions for small business entities.
- Schedule 4 of the bill provides that, from 1 January 2014, motor vehicle purchases made by small business entities will no longer be eligible for an accelerated deduction of \$5,000.
- Schedule 5 of the bill seeks to repeal the geothermal exploration deduction.

- Schedule 6 of the bill seeks to further delay increases in the superannuation guarantee rate for a two-year period.
- Schedule 7 of the bill seeks to abolish the low-income superannuation contribution (LISC). The contribution will not be payable on or after 1 July 2013.
- Schedule 8 of the bill seeks to repeal the income support bonus.
- Schedule 9 of the bill seeks to repeal the schoolkids bonus.

The closing date for submissions is 21 November 2013.

The Committee is due to report by 2 December 2013.

The Hawker Britton Guide to the Minerals Resource Rent Tax is available [here](#).

### ***The performance of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission***

The performance of ASIC with particular reference to its enabling legislation, its accountability, management policies and practices, its relationships with other regulators and law enforcement bodies, and protections for corporate and private whistleblowers.

The terms of reference are available [here](#).

Submissions to the inquiry have closed and can be viewed [here](#).

The Committee is due to report by 31 March 2014.

### **Education and Employment Legislation Committee Inquiries**

[Committee homepage](#) | [Committee membership](#)

### ***Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013 and a related bill***

The inquiry was established on established on 14 November 2013 and will report on the [Building and Construction Industry \(Improving Productivity\) Bill 2013](#) and the [Building and Construction Industry \(Consequential and Transitional Provisions\) Bill 2013](#).

This bill re-establishes the Australian Building and Construction Commission, an independent statutory authority originally established by the Howard government, responsible for monitoring and promoting workplace relations in the Australian building and construction industry. The ABCC was abolished on 31 May 2012 by the previous Labor government.

The 2013 bill also prohibits various forms of industrial action. The bill implements harsh penalties for breaches of these provisions. A wide range of remedies such as injunctions will also be made available to the ABCC and persons affected by prohibited industrial activity.

The closing date for submissions is 22 November 2013.

The Committee is due to report by 2 December 2013.

### ***Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013***

The inquiry was established on established on 14 November 2013 and will investigate and report on the [Fair Work \(Registered Organisations\) Amendment Bill 2013](#).

The bill aims to improve oversight of registered organizations (which includes trade union and employer associations), through the establishment dedicated independent watchdog, the Registered Organisations Commission. The Commission will monitor and regulate registered organisations and will be equipped with enhanced investigation and information-gathering powers.

The commission will be headed by the Registered Organisations Commissioner (the Commissioner), who will be appointed by the minister. Criminal sanctions will also apply where an officer does not comply with the Commissioner's new investigation powers. Some registered organisations have indicated concern that the new penalties will mean that they will have difficulty persuading people to take on official responsibilities.

The closing date for submissions is 22 November 2013.

The Committee is due to report by 2 December 2013.

### **Environment and Communications Legislation Committee Inquiries**

[Committee homepage](#) | [Committee membership](#)

#### ***Australia Post in Australian communities***

The inquiry was established on 14 November 2013 and will report on the overall performance, importance and role of Australia Post in Australian communities, and the challenges it faces in the immediate and longer term. It will also examine the operations of Australia Post in relation to Licensed Post Offices (LPOs), with particular reference to regional LPOs, the licensing and trading conditions applicable to LPOs and the marketing, retail and trading arrangements between Australia Post and LPOs and other entities.

The terms of reference are available [here](#).

The closing date for submissions is 25 November 2013.

The Committee is due to report by 11 December 2013.

### ***Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 and related bills***

The inquiry was established on established on 14 November 2013 and will report on the legislation proposed by the Coalition government to repeal the Clean Energy Legislation implemented by the previous Labor government. The repeal package includes the following bills:

- [Clean Energy Legislation \(Carbon Tax Repeal\) Bill 2013](#)
- [Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas \(Import Levy\) Amendment \(Carbon Tax Repeal\) Bill 2013](#)
- [Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas \(Manufacture Levy\) Amendment \(Carbon Tax Repeal\) Bill 2013](#)
- [True-up Shortfall Levy \(General\) \(Carbon Tax Repeal\) Bill 2013](#)
- [True-up Shortfall Levy \(Excise\) \(Carbon Tax Repeal\) Bill 2013](#)
- [Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas \(Import Levy\) \(Transitional Provisions\) Bill 2013](#)
- [Climate Change Authority \(Abolition\) Bill 2013](#)
- [Customs Tariff Amendment \(Carbon Tax Repeal\) Bill 2013](#)
- [Excise Tariff Amendment \(Carbon Tax Repeal\) Bill 2013](#)
- [Clean Energy \(Income Tax Rates and Other Amendments\) Bill 2013](#)
- [Clean Energy Finance Corporation \(Abolition\) Bill 2013](#)

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the Clean Energy Future Package, which implemented carbon pricing, is available [here](#).

The closing date for submissions is 22 November 2013.

The Committee is due to report by 2 December 2013.

### ***Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Amendment Bill 2013***

The inquiry was established on established on 14 November 2013 and will report on [the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Amendment Bill 2013](#). This private members bill, introduced by Senator Xenophon, will prevent the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings from making conditions preventing the re-broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings for satire or ridicule. This would enable programs like *The Chaser*, *Gruen Nation* and *The Project* to have access to and use broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings for satirical purposes. This bill does not impact on the joint committee's ability to create other conditions or enforce those that already exist in relation to context, fairness and accuracy.

The closing date for submissions is 13 December 2013.

## **Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee Inquiries**

[Committee homepage](#) | [Committee membership](#)

### ***Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013***

The inquiry was established on established on 14 November 2013 and will report on the [Commonwealth Electoral Amendment \(Above the Line Voting\) Bill 2013](#). The purpose of the bill is to reform the current preferential voting system to remove group voting tickets for the Senate—essentially preference deals—and make it easier for voters to demonstrate their democratic will.

It does this by creating an optional preferential system above and below the line. The structure of the existing ballot paper will be maintained, with group squares above the line and individual candidate squares below the line.

Senator Xenophon’s second reading speech is available [here](#).

The Committee is due to report by the first sitting Wednesday in March 2014.

## **Finance and Public Administration References Committee Inquiries**

[Committee homepage](#) | [Committee membership](#)

### ***Commonwealth procedures for procurement***

The inquiry was established on established on 14 November 2013 and will report on the current ratio of Australian goods and services versus imported goods and services utilised by the Commonwealth through procurement procedures.

In particular, it will examine the effectiveness of current policies and procedures for procurement in Commonwealth departments and agencies, including oversight and scrutiny, cost, and requirements relating to transparency and information-sharing. It will also look at the economic, social and environmental benefits of utilising Australian goods and services

The Committee is due to report by the first sitting day in March 2014.

## **Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Legislation Committee Inquiries**

[Committee homepage](#) | [Committee membership](#)

### ***Implementation of the Defence Trade Controls Legislation***

The [Defence Trade Controls Bill 2011](#) was introduced to give effect to the 2007 Australia-United States Defence Trade Co-operation Treaty, which aims to reduce administrative burdens on Australian-US defence trade.

During the 24 month transition period for the bill, the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee is conducting a six-monthly examination of progress of the implementation of the provisions of the bill and report to the Senate. This decision was made in response to [ongoing concerns held by stakeholders](#).

The *Defence Trade Controls Bill 2011 [Provisions] Final Report (October 2012)* is available [here](#).

The First Progress Report is available [here](#).

Submissions received so far are available [here](#).

## **Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee Inquiries**

[Committee homepage](#) | [Committee membership](#)

### ***Review of the Citrus Industry in Australia***

On 28 February 2013 the Senate referred a review of the domestic citrus industry to the Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport for inquiry and report. On 14 November 2013 the Senate agreed to the Committee's recommendation that this inquiry be re-adopted in the 44th Parliament.

The review will report on the scale and structure of the citrus industry, opportunities and inhibitors for growth of the industry domestically, competition and efficiency in the Australian market, and opportunities and inhibitors for export growth.

The terms of reference are available [here](#).

The Committee is due to report by 28 March 2014.

The Interim Report is available [here](#). The Further Interim Report is available [here](#).

### ***The ownership arrangements of grain handling***

This continuing inquiry examines the ownership arrangements of grain handling in Australia, with particular reference to Australia's farmers and Australia's long term food security interest. On 14 November 2013 the Senate agreed to the Committee's recommendation that this inquiry be re-adopted in the 44th Parliament.

This inquiry is closely examining the national interest factors relevant to the treasurer's upcoming decision in relation to ADM's bid for GrainCorp.

The terms of reference are available [here](#).

The First Interim Report is available [here](#). The Second Interim Report is available [here](#).

The Committee is due to report by 11 December 2013.

### **Inquiries on imported food products**

The three inquiries below were all referred to the Committee within a three-month period, and shared similar reporting dates. However, the Committee resolved to conduct hearings for each of the inquiries separately.

The Committee has now made the decision to amalgamate the three reports and table them together as a single report. The committee noted that this approach would enable the recurring theme common to each of these inquiries (the operation of [DAFF Biosecurity's Risk Estimation Matrix](#)) to be a central focus, whilst at the same time allowing for detailed consideration of the significant and specific issues relevant to each separate inquiry.

### ***The effect on Australian ginger growers of importing fresh ginger from Fiji***

The inquiry reports on the effect on Australian ginger growers of importing fresh ginger from Fiji, in particular the scientific basis for and the adequacy of the current pest risk assessments, the adequacy of the quarantine conditions and the risk and consequences of the importation resulting possibly in the introduction of pest species or diseases and soil-borne disease.

On 14 November 2013 the Senate agreed to the Committee's recommendation that this inquiry be re-adopted in the 44th Parliament.

The Committee is due to report by 28 February 2014.

The terms of reference are available [here](#).

The First Interim Report is available [here](#). The Second Interim Report is available [here](#). The Third Interim Report is available [here](#).

### ***The effect on Australian pineapple growers of importing fresh pineapple from Malaysia***

This inquiry examines the effect on Australian pineapple growers of importing fresh pineapple from Malaysia, in particular the scientific basis on which the provisional final import risk analysis report regarding the importation of fresh, decrowned pineapple has been developed, the risk and consequences of the importation possibly resulting in the introduction of pest species and the adequacy of the current quarantine conditions.

The First Interim Report is available [here](#). The Second Interim Report is available [here](#). The Third Interim Report is available [here](#). The Fourth Interim Report is available [here](#).

### ***The proposed importation of potatoes from New Zealand***

The Committee will report on the validity and supporting scientific evidence underpinning the Pest Risk Analysis included in the New Zealand Potatoes Import Risk Analysis 2009 and the extent of scientific knowledge and understanding of the Tomato/Potato Psyllid and other pests identified in the Draft Review of Import Conditions.

The First Interim Report is available [here](#). The Second Interim Report is available [here](#). The Third Interim Report is available [here](#).

### **Further information**

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