



SENATOR
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Liberal Senator for Western Australia



THE REYNOLDS REPORT

SENATE ESTIMATES

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Good morning,

Senate Budget estimates have concluded after 112 hours of hearings over eight days, so it is great to be back home in Western Australia.

It was a highly diverse estimates period characterised by debates ranging from the fate of Johnny Depp's dogs, whether an icon on departmental computers was a mouse or a rat, to the more important issues of national security—such as tensions in the South China Sea.

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The Senate Estimates process is an important forum for the Parliament to scrutinise government expenditure on behalf of Australian taxpayers. It is also an

opportunity to review the Government's progress in ensuring a strong and prosperous economy and a safe and secure Australia.

[Learn more about the Senate Estimates process here](#)

As a member of two of the eight Legislative committees which conduct Estimate hearings, I spent last week in the Legal and Constitutional hearings and this week in the Community Affairs Hearings, two highly diverse and interesting policy areas.

Legal and Constitutional Legislative Committee

This committee covers the entire Attorney General's and Immigration and Border Protection Portfolios and is a Committee which often attracts a lot of media attention during the Estimates process. Given the range of critical national security and border protection issues we currently face, it was surprising, if not unprecedented, that for three of the four days of Estimates we finished early, as Labor and the Greens ran out of questions for our national security agencies! A few of the highlights for me in this Committee included:

As a champion of WA's local shipbuilding industry, I was delighted to hear the CEO of Australian Customs and Border Protection describe the build of the new Cape class patrol boats by Austal in Henderson as 'exceptional'. It is another demonstration that ships can be built in Australia competitively, on time and on budget!

[You can view my Youtube video and listen to my questions on Austal here](#)

As of January 1st this year, the Australian Customs Service will become part of the new Australian Border Force. It was wonderful to have the opportunity on behalf of us all, to congratulate Customs staff, past and present, on the wonderful service they have provided our nation as one of our original agencies of state.

For some of last week it was a quieter affair for me than normal as I contracted laryngitis, nevertheless, I still managed to squeak out some questions, including ones to the AFP on the issue of social media grooming by Daesh.

[Watch me question AFP officials on national security matters here](#)



Community Affairs Legislative Committee

This week in the Community Affairs Committee my focus shifted to the Health and Social Services portfolios, which includes ageing and disability.

After attending the AMA national conference last weekend, I was pleased to put all the key issues raised with me by doctors about the Curtin Medical School. I was particularly happy to hear the Department of Health confirm the WA State Government will fund the clinical training for graduates from the new medical school at Curtin University. This is in addition to the funding and support already provided to graduates from University of Western Australia and the University of Notre Dame WA.

The establishment of a third medical school in WA is especially good news given that WA, when compared to the eastern states, has a per head population shortage of 950 doctors and only 53% of our doctors are Australian trained.

[You can watch my questions to the Department of Health on the Curtin Medical School here](#)

I was also happy to hear the details of the new Community Pharmacy Agreement (CPA6), which will see a doubling of investment in pharmacy primary care support programmes for patients and contain fairer remuneration for our local community pharmacies. I was particularly pleased to hear about the increased governance and flexibility provisions built into this new agreement.



During Estimates I also kept a close eye on the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee hearings. I was amused to hear that Johnny Depp's dogs, Pistol and Boo, were the focus of much attention during Monday's sitting! However, of great importance to WA was the discussion on the relocation of the Grains Research Development Corporation (GRDC). With such strong West Australian presence on the Committee, the discussion inevitably turned to where the GRDC would be best located. I agree with my WA colleagues that, as the largest grain producing state in Australia, WA and possibly Muresk, would be the ideal new location for the GRDC.

Other crackers from Estimates include revelations that a defence petrol card was stolen and used to buy \$585,000 of petrol, and that a typical public servant in the Department of Human Services is \$1,200 out of pocket as a result of opposition to a pay rise by the Community and Public Sector Union.

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Until next time,

Linda

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The Reynolds Report

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