



PBO general election guidance 4 of 4, 2022

2022 PBO election commitments report

This guidance note provides information on the 2022 election commitments report, including arrangements for engagement with parliamentary parties.

In summary:

- the Parliamentary Budget Officer will be preparing a report of the budget impacts of the major parliamentary parties' election commitments
- minor parties and independent parliamentarians who wish to opt in to the 2022 election commitments report will need to advise the Parliamentary Budget Officer of their intention by 5pm on Saturday 7 May 2022.
- included political parties will need to provide the Parliamentary Budget Officer with a list of their publicly announced policies by 5pm on Friday 20 May 2022.
 - in preparing the report, the Parliamentary Budget Officer will provide each political party with a list of the party's election commitments that are determined to have a material effect on the budget
- the 2022 report will include:
 - the financial impact of each party's combined policy platform over the forward estimates period (the budget year and the next three years) and the medium term (the budget year and the next 10 years)
 - the financial impacts of all individual election commitments over the budget forward estimates period and the medium term
 - the distributional impacts of individual election commitments, where parties have previously requested these from the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) outside of the caretaker period and choose to retain them in the updated published costings of these commitments.
- after consulting with the parties, the 2022 election commitments report will be published by the later of the following dates: 30 days after the end of the caretaker period, or seven days before Parliament next sits.
- During the caretaker period for a general election, the PBO is also available to undertake costings of policy proposals. [PBO guidance note 03/2021 Costing policy proposals during the caretaker period](#) provides advice on caretaker costings.

Further details about the election commitments report are provided in the questions below.

Whose election commitments are included in the election commitments report?

The Parliamentary Budget Officer is required to prepare a report of the budget impacts of the major parliamentary parties' election commitments.¹ Major parliamentary parties are those that have at least five members in the Parliament immediately before the commencement of the caretaker period.²

Independent members and parliamentary parties with fewer than five members ('minor parties') are able to opt in to the 2022 election commitments report. For the purposes of this note, 'minor parties' may refer to all independent parliamentarians and parliamentary political parties with fewer than five Members or Senators.

Which election commitments are included in the election commitments report?

The Parliamentary Budget Officer ultimately decides which commitments should be included in the election commitment report, based on announcements made by the parties prior to polling day and any associated fiscal impact. The PBO's legislation (subsections 64MA(3) to (8) of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*) sets out how the Parliamentary Budget Officer must seek and may take into account feedback from major parties.

- Parliamentary parties must submit a list of their election commitments to the PBO on Friday 20 May 2022 and the PBO must publish these on Sunday 22 May 2022. The [election commitments template](#) for parties on the [PBO website](#) is the optional but preferred format for these lists..
- The PBO separately tracks and identifies election commitments made by parties during the campaign and must provide its list to each party within three days after the end of the caretaker period.
 - The PBO's list could differ from that submitted by a party if the PBO identifies more or fewer announced election commitments, or differences between the announced and listed version of commitments.
- In determining the list of commitments it provides to parties, the PBO will consider whether any announcements made during the election campaign and not included on the list provided by the party constitute election commitments for the purposes of the report. In forming this judgement, the Parliamentary Budget Officer will consider a range of factors, particularly including who made the statement and the nature of the commitment made. For example, some announcements made during the election campaign may be judged by the PBO to be aspirational in nature because no firm commitment was made to the policy mechanism or delivery. In this case the PBO would be unlikely to include the announcement as an election commitment in the election commitment report. Where an announcement involves detailed actions to achieve an aspirational target, the PBO would include the commitment in the report.
- In the event that an announced commitment differs somewhat from a similar commitment provided to the PBO as part of the party's list of election commitments, the PBO will err on the side of treating the commitment as new rather than an expansion of an existing commitment.

¹ As required by the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, see sections 64MA to 64MC.

² The caretaker period begins at the time the House of Representatives is dissolved and continues until the election result is clear or, if there is a change of government, until the new government is appointed. See [Guidance on Caretaker Conventions 2021](#), published by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

- The arrangements for determining minor parties' election commitments basically mirror those in legislation for the major parties. Further information on the process for compiling the list of election commitments for each party is at Appendix A and summary of the election commitments report arrangements for major and minor parties is at Appendix B.

What information is provided in the election commitments report?

The election commitments report must include costings of all the election commitments that the Parliamentary Budget Officer, in his or her best professional judgement, reasonably believes would have a material impact on the Commonwealth budget estimates for the current financial year and the following three financial years (the forward estimates period).

The election commitments report will also include the costings of the impact of each party's individual election commitments and their combined impact on the budget over the medium term.³ The combined impact of election commitments will show the effect of any commitments to cap or otherwise limit total tax receipts.

The election commitments report must, for each major party, also include:

- any comments provided to the Parliamentary Budget Officer in response to the list of election commitments provided to the party, or a statement that no comments were provided
- an explanation of why each policy included in the report is taken to be an election commitment
- the source (or sources) of information from which the Parliamentary Budget Officer identified each election commitment.

The election commitments report may also include a statement about any election commitments that were not included because insufficient information or time was provided, if relevant.

Election Commitments Report costings will be prepared using the methods and approaches set out in the *2021 Charter of Budget Honesty Policy Costing Guidelines* issued jointly by the Secretaries to the Treasury and the Department of Finance.⁴

The report does not have to include information that the Parliamentary Budget Officer considers is confidential commercial information or which could prejudice national security.

The detailed costing documentation for individual election commitments in the 2022 report will include the distributional impacts of commitments on an opt-in basis. Where parties have previously requested distributional impacts of their election commitments as part of a PBO costing outside of the caretaker period, they may choose to retain them in the updated costing published in the report.

What must minor parties and independents do to opt in?

Since the 2019 election, minor parties (with fewer than five Members or Senators) and independents have had the option of having the financial impact of their election commitments included in the report of election commitments.

³ For further details of how medium-term estimates are being included in the 2022 election commitments report, see PBO Guidance 02/2021 *Election commitments report: overview*.

⁴ Available at [Charter of Budget Honesty - Policy Costing Guidelines | Department of Finance](#).

Minor parties and independents wishing to opt in to the 2022 election commitments report must notify the Parliamentary Budget Officer of their intention to do so by 5pm on Saturday 7 May 2022. As noted above, any minor party or independent opting in must provide the Parliamentary Budget Officer with a list of publicly announced policies before 5pm on Friday 20 May 2022.

For any minor parties and independents that choose to opt in to the election commitments report, the Parliamentary Budget Officer will release the financial implications of their election commitments in an addendum as soon as possible after the release of the main report. For further details on minor party arrangements, see Appendix B and [PBO Guidance 01/2021, How minor parties and independents can opt in to the PBO's election commitments report](#).

How is information gathered for the election commitments report?

The Parliamentary Budget Officer may seek information regarding election commitments from an authorised member of the relevant party or any other person who it is reasonable to believe has been associated with the calculation, review or announcement of the financial implications of the election commitment. Where parties have previously requested distributional impacts of their election commitments as part of a PBO costing outside of the caretaker period, the PBO will ask nominated contact officers whether that material would be retained in the updated costing published in the report.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer may also seek information from the Head of a Commonwealth body. This will include obtaining information from the Secretaries to the Treasury and the Department of Finance in respect of the caretaker period costings they have prepared under the *Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998*.

How and when will the election commitments report be published?

The Parliamentary Budget Officer must publicly release the election commitments report by the later of:

- 30 days after the end of the caretaker period for the general election
- seven days before the first sitting day of either or both Houses of the Parliament after the general election.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer will provide each major party with a confidential copy of the part of the report setting out the costings and totals of that party's election commitments at least 48 hours before publicly releasing the election commitments report. The Parliamentary Budget Officer may include any comments received from parties in the final report, or may revise the report to take account of the comments.

Once the election commitments report is finalised, the Parliamentary Budget Officer will advise the major parties at least one hour in advance of the public release of the report. The report will be emailed to all major parties immediately prior to its release.

If there is an addendum to the election commitments report, containing the financial implications of the commitments of minor parties or independents that opt in, it will be published as soon as possible after the release of the main report. As with the main report, a confidential copy of the relevant section of the addendum will be provided to each minor party that chooses to opt in at least 48 hours before it is publicly released. The Parliamentary Budget Officer may include any comments received from parties in the final addendum, or may revise the addendum to take account of the comments. Once the addendum is finalised, the Parliamentary Budget Officer will advise the relevant minor parties and independents at least one hour in advance of its public release.

The 2022 election commitments report will be publicly available on the PBO website (www.pbo.gov.au).

Appendix A: Election commitments lists: summary of arrangements for major and minor parties

Major parties

The process for compiling the list of election commitments for each major party is as follows:

1. Each major party must, before 5pm on Friday 20 May 2022, provide the Parliamentary Budget Officer with a list of its publicly announced policies. Minor parties wishing to opt in to the election commitments report must also meet this requirement. The [election commitments template](#) for parties on the [PBO website](#) is the optional but preferred format for these lists.
2. On Sunday 22 May 2022, the Parliamentary Budget Officer must release each list of commitments that has been provided, or where no list has been provided, a statement to that effect.
3. Within three calendar days of the end of the caretaker period the Parliamentary Budget Officer must, for each major party:
 - provide the party with a list of election commitments that, in his or her best professional judgement, would have a material effect on the budget, having regard to the lists provided by the party and any public announcements made by the party before or during the caretaker period
 - provide the party with a statement explaining the reason(s) for any differences, in the event that the list prepared by the Parliamentary Budget Officer differs from the list of election commitments provided by the party.
4. Each major party has three calendar days to provide the Parliamentary Budget Officer with comments on the list of its election commitments. The Parliamentary Budget Officer may take account of such comments, but is not required to do so.

The election commitments report must only include costings of election commitments that are included in the list the Parliamentary Budget Officer provides to a party, or additional commitments in the response a party provides to that list.

Minor parties and independents

The process for compiling the list of election commitments for minor parties and independents choosing to opt in to the election commitments report broadly replicates the process for major parties:

1. Each party or independent must, before 5pm on Friday 20 May 2022, provide the Parliamentary Budget Officer with a list of its publicly announced policies. The election commitments template for parties on the [PBO website](#) is the optional but preferred format for these lists.
2. On Sunday 22 May 2022, the Parliamentary Budget Officer must release each list of commitments that has been provided, or where no list has been provided, a statement to that effect.
3. The Parliamentary Budget Officer may amend the commitments list provided and, in that case, would provide the party or independent with a statement of reasons for this amendment. The PBO would not endeavour to match the legislated timeframe applying to major parties.

Appendix B: summary of arrangements for the PBO’s election commitments report for designated and minor parties

Table 1: PBO’s election commitments report – summary of designated and minor party arrangements

	Designated parties	Minor parties and independents
Participate in election commitments report	Y Legislated	Optional - later addendum to main report If choosing to opt in, advise PBO no later than 14 days before polling day
PBO includes interactions between individual party commitments in report	Y	Y, same as designated parties
Party provides commitments list to PBO	Legislated, by 5pm on day before polling day	Y, same time as designated parties
PBO publishes commitments list	Legislated, day after polling day	Y, same time as designated parties
PBO develops own commitments list and gives to parties	Legislated, PBO gives to parties no later than three days after end of caretaker	The PBO may amend the party's list, in which case the PBO will provide the party with a statement. The PBO would not endeavour to match the legislated timeframe applying to similar statements for designated parties
Scope of PBO’s commitments lists	Legislated, list is all commitments that Parliamentary Budget Officer judges have a material impact on the Commonwealth budget	PBO amendments could be for 'major' publicly announced commitments not in party’s list, or commitments listed but not actually announced. That is, the PBO retains option to amend a list, but amended lists would not have the same scope as those of designated parties
Party gives PBO comments on PBO commitments list	Legislated, 3 days after receiving list	Not required, but parties may comment
PBO publishes any party comments in election commitments report	Legislated, 30 days after caretaker or 7 days before first sitting of parliament	In addendum to the election commitments report, as soon as possible after the release of the main report

	Designated parties	Minor parties and independents
Pre-publication comments by party	Legislated, party receives a confidential copy of its part of the report at least 48 hours before release. PBO may include any comments from the party in the report, or may revise the report.	Same as timing and process as for designated parties. Minor party/independent receives a confidential copy of its part of the addendum at least 48 hours before release. PBO may include any comments from the party in the addendum, or may revise the addendum

Note: a designated party for the purposes of the election commitments report is one with five or more Members or Senators. A minor party is one with fewer than five Members or Senators. For further details on legislative requirements for the report, see *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, sections 64MA to 64MC.