



Australian Government
The Treasury
Department of Finance and Deregulation

Ms Julie Dennett
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2602

Dear Ms Dennett

**SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AMENDMENTS (PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICE) BILL 2012**

Thank you for your email of 12 October 2012 inviting the Department of Finance and Deregulation and the Treasury to make a submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee.

Please find attached a joint submission to be considered as part of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry and report.

We note that our submission will be published on the committee's website following the committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Ray
A/g Secretary to the Treasury
24 October 2012

David' Tune
Secretary of the Department of Finance and
Deregulation
24 October 2012

**JOINT SUBMISSION FROM THE TREASURY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
AND DEREGULATION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AMENDMENTS (PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICE) BILL 2012**

We welcome the introduction of the Freedom of Information Amendment (Parliamentary Budget Office) Bill to amend the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and *Privacy Act 1988* to provide a new FOI exemption for documents related to requests for information from the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO).

The PBO is an important new institution that will further strengthen Australia's fiscal and budget frameworks by providing independent information to the Parliament on the budget, fiscal policy and financial implications of proposals.

While the PBO is an exempt agency under the FOI Act, documents related to PBO requests may be held by departments and other agencies. Currently, this information may not be protected from release under the FOI Act. The proposed amendments will ensure the confidentiality of requests for information from the PBO.

Procedures and protocols between the Parliamentary Budget Office and departments have been established, but this Bill takes a further step in clarifying the appropriate protections. These amendments will ensure that the integrity of the PBO processes are maintained.

Importantly, these reforms will protect the confidentiality of the PBO's work and ensure that it will operate as it was intended when the Parliament expressly exempted the PBO from the FOI Act.

Nigel Ray
A/g Secretary to the Treasury
24 October 2012

David Tune
Secretary of the Department of Finance and
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