

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE AND PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION**

**LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**Parliamentary Budget Office Bill 2010**

**SUBMISSION**

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: 6**

**SUBMITTER**

**Ms Roxanne Missingham, Parliamentary Librarian**



21 July 2010

Ms Christine McDonald  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration  
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Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia  
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Dear Ms McDonald,

### **Inquiry into the Parliamentary Budget Office Bill 2010**

1 Thank you for offering me the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee's inquiry into this very important issue. Because of the relatively short period of time for preparation of submissions the Parliamentary Library's submission addresses a number of key issues with limited detail. We have also provided a summary of the characteristics of parliamentary budget offices/officer in the US, Korea, the Netherlands and Canada. The analysis of international budget offices and background work was undertaken by Dr Miles Goodwin, Director and Ms Paige Darby, Researcher, Economics Section.

2 We are keen to provide further information through submissions or hearings in the future, should this be possible.

3 I believe that the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library is interested in making a submission, should this be possible after the election. The announcement of the election has meant that the Library Committee was unable to prepare a submission that could meet your committee's submission deadline.

4 In considering the role of a Parliamentary Budget Office, I draw the Committee's attention to the important issue of the funding of the parliament per se. Mr Jenkins paper "Funding of the Australian Parliament – financial autonomy – is there a way forward?" presented to the 41st Conference of Presiding Officers and Clerks of Australia and the Pacific earlier this month (<http://www.nt.gov.au/lant/parliament/41%20Conference%20POC%20July/4.%20Jenkins%20-%20Funding%20the%20Australian%20Parliament-%20Speakers%20Paper.pdf>) argues that the notion of executive government control over the parliamentary budget does not sit happily with best practice ideals that are espoused for the financial autonomy of the Parliament. The previous speaker, the Hon. David Hawker, has also argued for independent funding, for example in his article "Don't starve the watchdog" published in *The*

*Australian* on 22 February 2010. I suggest that the committee might consider whether it would be timely to take some time to review the overarching issue of funding of parliamentary departments.

5 I am delighted that the bill has been prepared by Senator Barnett and referred to the committee as it is clear that senators and members perceive that there is a real need for better economic and budget advice to enable them to perform their parliamentary roles fully. While the Library does provide advice, it is limited both by the resources available to it and the lack of a remit in this area.

6 The models outlined in the submission provide an opportunity to consider what is appropriate for Australia in the light of international experiences, including the recent creation of a Parliamentary Budget Officer in Canada and the establishment of the UK's Office of Budget Responsibility this year. There are similarities and differences in the Australian context that I am sure the committee will consider.

7 Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission. I hope that I can discuss the matter more fully with the committee in their future deliberations of a Parliamentary Budget Office.

Yours sincerely

Roxanne Missingham  
Parliamentary Librarian