

Introduction

- 1.1 The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) exists to hold Commonwealth agencies to account for the lawfulness, efficiency and effectiveness with which they use public monies.
- 1.2 Section 8(1) of the *Public Accounts and Audit Committee Act 1951* (PAAC Act) outlines the Committee's specific duties, which include 'to report to both Houses of the Parliament, with any comment it thinks fit, on any items or matters in those accounts, statements and reports, or any circumstances connected with them, that the Committee thinks should be drawn to the attention of the Parliament'.
- 1.3 To meet this mandate and ensure the Committee is fully informed, the Committee has met annually with the heads of the key Australian Public Service (APS) agencies responsible for public sector governance and administration, to discuss whole-of-government issues and trends, and review performance.
- 1.4 Previously held as a private briefing, the Committee agreed, in accordance with section 11 of the PAAC Act, to hold the 2012 meeting as a public hearing.
- 1.5 This year, the Committee was particularly interested to hear from witnesses about progress on the APS reform initiatives stemming from the *Ahead of the Game: Blueprint for the Reform of the Australian Government Administration*; and to discuss the results of the latest State of the Service report and the potential impact of the increased efficiency dividend.
- 1.6 The Committee is also responsible for approving annual report guidelines for Commonwealth departments on behalf of the Parliament. This

responsibility is conferred by sub-section 63(2) of the *Public Service Act 1999*. Again, the Committee decided that questions relating to the proposed *2011-12 Requirements for Annual Reports for Departments, Executive Agencies and FMA Act Bodies* would be discussed at this hearing.

1.7 The public hearing was held on Wednesday, 20 June 2012.

The Committee's report

1.8 This report draws attention to the main issues raised at the public hearing. Where appropriate, the Committee has commented on unresolved or contentious issues.

1.9 The Committee's report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 – APS Reform Initiatives
- Chapter 3 – The State of the Service
- Chapter 4 – APS Annual Report Requirements.

1.10 The following appendices provide additional information:

- Appendix A – List of public hearings and witnesses
- Appendix B – List of submissions
- Appendix C – Progress report on APS Reform initiatives.

1.11 A copy of this report, transcripts of hearings and submissions are available on the Committee's website: www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa.