



Independent Parliamentary Budget Office recommended

The Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) today presented its report which includes a recommendation to establish the position of Parliamentary Budget Officer as an independent officer of the Parliament.

The PBO would receive funding of at least \$6 million per annum to provide independent, non-partisan and policy neutral analysis on the full Budget cycle, fiscal policy and the financial implications of proposals for all Members of the Australian Parliament, including parliamentary committees.

In addition, the PBO would also be tasked with undertaking election policy costings from nominated parliamentary party representatives and Independent Members during caretaker periods.

Other recommendations made include:

- Access to Government information for the PBO through Memoranda of Understandings with relevant agencies, supplemented through the option of accessing information at no cost through *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cwlth);
- *The Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998* (Cwlth) be amended to enable the leaders of parliamentary parties with a minimum number of parliamentary members (currently 5 members) to have access to the Charter's policy costings process;
- that wherever possible, the work of the PBO be made publicly available, while including provisions to maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information;
- the Parliamentary Budget Officer be empowered to make public statements, especially where there may have been a misrepresentation of work undertaken;
- a requirement that the Parliamentary Budget Officer report their annual work program and annual report to the Parliament;
- the appointment, dismissal and remuneration determination processes for the Parliamentary Budget Officer be in line with those of the Auditor-General with the exception of a term of office of 4 years with the option of renewing the appointment;
- that the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit oversee the Parliamentary Budget Officer's annual work program, draft Budget estimates, annual report and workload protocols; and
- an independent operational evaluation of the PBO be undertaken within nine months of an election result.

Copies of the report are available at:

www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jscpbo/report.htm

Further information is available: by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4576, via email jscpbo@aph.gov.au or by visiting the committee's webpage at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jscpbo/index.htm>.