



New inquiry into the Parliamentary Budget Office

A Joint Select Committee has been established to inquire into and report on the proposed Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO). The PBO is an initiative arising from the *Agreement for a Better Parliament*.

The PBO will have a dual role: to support the work of the Parliament by providing information and advice to all Members of Parliament on Budget related matters including financial analysis and policy costing; and to promote a greater public awareness of key budget and fiscal policy issues.

The inquiry will examine:

- (a) the appropriate mandate for the PBO;
- (b) the nature of information needed to assist the Parliament in its consideration of matters related to the budget;
- (c) the role and adequacy of current institutions and processes in providing this information, and the areas in which additional support is required;
- (d) the scope for a PBO to fulfil its mandate in a cost-effective manner; and
- (e) bearing in mind these considerations, the most appropriate structure, resourcing and protocols for a PBO, including but not limited to:
 - (i) the PBO's functions and lines of accountability and oversight;
 - (ii) the routine work expected of the PBO and the minimum reporting requirements;
 - (iii) the protocols for members of parliament requesting non-routine work of the PBO, including the types of work and the rules for prioritising and carrying out these requests;
 - (iv) the protocols around access to and disclosure of the PBO's work and any confidentiality requirements;
 - (v) the protocols around the PBO's relationships with other institutions and processes, including government departments and agencies; and
 - (vi) an appropriate level of staffing, appropriate qualifications for staff, and resources to allow the PBO to fulfil its mandate; and
- (f) in conducting its inquiry, the Committee may choose to consider the operation and effectiveness of similar offices in other parliamentary democracies and their relevance to Australian circumstances.

The committee is expected to report no later than 31 March 2011.

Submissions addressing the terms of reference are invited and should reach the Committee Secretariat no later than 21 January 2011. Persons who may require an extension to this deadline are encouraged to contact the committee secretariat.

Further information about the inquiry including information on preparing a submission is available at: www.aph.gov.au/jscpbo or by contacting the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4576.

For background information: please contact the Secretariat on (02) 6277 2336