

Introduction

- 1.1 The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) is a committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, established pursuant to the *Public Accounts and Audit Committee Act 1951 (PAAC Act)*.¹
- 1.2 The PAAC Act provides for Committee members to be drawn from both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Following the 2010 Federal Election and subsequent 'Agreement for a Better Parliament – Parliamentary Reform',² the Chair of the JCPAA for the 43rd Parliament is an Independent Member of the Parliament, and the Deputy Chair a Government Member.
- 1.3 The JCPAA is one of the oldest committees in the Parliament, with legislation for a Public Accounts Committee first passed in December 1913. The Committee's effective mandate has been essentially unchanged throughout the time of its existence: to hold Commonwealth agencies to account for the lawfulness, efficiency and effectiveness with which they use public monies.

Committee duties

- 1.4 The PAAC Act provides that the Committee may report to the Parliament, with any comment it thinks fit, on any items or matters concerning the financial accounts and affairs of Commonwealth authorities, any report of the Auditor-General tabled in Parliament, or any circumstances connected with either. This allows the Committee to essentially set its own work

1 The Act can be viewed at the Committee's website: <http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa>

2 *The Australian Labor Party & the Independent Members (Mr Tony Windsor and Mr Rob Oakeshott) ('the Parties') – Agreement, 'The Committee System', signed 7 September 2010, p.6.*

program – a power unique amongst parliamentary committees – and ensures a high degree of autonomy from executive government.

- 1.5 The duties of the Committee, as outlined in the PAAC Act, include:
- to examine the financial affairs of authorities of the Commonwealth;
 - to examine all reports of the Auditor-General that are tabled in the Parliament;
 - to consider the operation and resources of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO);
 - to approve or reject any nomination for appointment of any person to the office of the Auditor-General or Independent Auditor of the ANAO;
 - to increase parliamentary and public awareness of the financial and related operations of government; and
 - ‘any other duties given to the Committee ... by any other law’.³
- 1.6 A minor amendment was made to the PAAC Act in March 2013 to reflect gender neutral terms.
- 1.7 An amendment to the *Parliamentary Services Act 1999* in 2012 incorporated the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) into legislation and named the JCPAA as the PBO’s oversight body.
- 1.8 On 29 June 2013, the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* received Royal Assent. This Act sets out additional duties for the JCPAA including being consulted regarding review of the Act and approval of the rules governing agency annual reporting. The JCPAA will also be consulted in the development of the other rules under the Act.
- 1.9 Chapter 2 provides more detail on the Committee’s specific roles and functions, as well as a summary of work undertaken in 2012-13.
- 1.10 Further information is also accessible on the JCPAA’s website at www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa, or by contacting the Committee secretariat by email at jcpaa@aph.gov.au or by telephone on 02 6277 4615.

3 The duties of the JCPAA are described in detail in sections 8 and 8A of the Committee’s Act.