



Committee concludes examination of public finance bill

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit released its advisory report today on the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Bill 2013.

Stemming from the Commonwealth Financial Accountability Review, the Bill proposes the creation of a single Act to replace the two existing Acts regulating financial management and accountability in government departments, statutory authorities and other public entities. It was referred to the Committee to ensure that there would be no imposition of additional and unnecessary reporting requirements, reduction in transparency or removal of important oversight.

Following the examination of the Bill, including through a public hearing and the receipt of 20 submissions, the Committee recommended that the objectives of the Bill be supported, but the timing of its passage be a matter for the broader Parliament to determine.

The Committee recommended support for the introduction of additional coherence to the Commonwealth financial framework — including through improving the planning, performance and accountability processes — and specifically supports the introduction of:

- more mature approaches to risk management;
- the concept of earned autonomy;
- positive obligations to cooperate and partner with others;
- better recognition of the resource management cycle of planning through to evaluation; and
- the intent of improved performance reporting and transparency to the Parliament and the public.

Responding to matters raised in submissions and by witnesses at the public hearing, the Committee also made a number of recommendations around independence, transparency and ongoing evaluation of the reform.

“This Bill is an important reform for Australia’s public sector and looks to be broadly supported by key stakeholders”, said Mr Oakeshott, “but the Committee found that there are issues that require some further consideration, including: timing of the passage of the legislation; development of detailed rules; and ongoing consultation to assist agencies and other affected bodies through this change process.”

Mr Oakeshott noted that “while ultimately, it is a choice for the minister, the government and this parliament as to when and under what basis to progress, the commitments given by the Finance Minister and department regarding the rules in detail and ongoing consultation are both critical to the success or failure of this important reform”.

The report includes a dissenting report by the Coalition members of the committee.

An electronic copy of the Advisory report can be found on the committee’s website at www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa under ‘Bill inquiries’.

For media comment: please contact Committee Chair, Rob Oakeshott MP, on (02) 6584 2911.

For general information: please contact the committee secretariat by telephone (02) 6277 4615, email jcpaa@aph.gov.au, or visit the committee website <http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa>.