



Parliament of Australia
Parliamentary Budget Office

Report to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee on PBO activity

14 October 2015

Overview

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) 2014–15 Annual Report was tabled on 14 October 2015. This activity report provides an update on PBO activities since the commencement of 2015–16.

Requests from parliamentarians and parliamentary parties

In the first quarter of 2015–16, the PBO responded to 366 requests from parliamentarians at an average turnaround time of 16.3 business days and a median time to completion of 14 business days (refer to Table 1).

In the same period, the PBO received 65 responses from Commonwealth agencies to information requests at an average turnaround time of 6.7 business days and with an average punctuality of 0.7 business days early (refer to Table 2). Table 3 contains details of the responsiveness of Commonwealth agencies to information requests during the first quarter of 2015–16.

Self-initiated research program

Details of the PBO's published research program are set out in our 2015–16 work plan that was published on 27 August 2015.

The first of the PBO's research papers for 2015–16—Report no. 03/2015 *Alcohol taxation in Australia*—was published on 14 October 2015.

A report on the historical and projected drivers of Medicare expenditure will be published shortly.

The remaining reports flagged in the work plan are expected to be published progressively over the course of the financial year.

Capacity building and information management

We continue to acquire detailed datasets and develop models covering major demand driven expenditure programs and elements of the tax and transfer system to further improve the PBO's responsiveness and the quality and reliability of our costings and budget analyses.

We are presently in contract negotiations for a new workflow management system. Subject to contract negotiations, the new system is expected to be operational around April 2016.

External engagement

The PBO continues to engage on a regular basis with government agencies, peer organisations, and international institutions and bodies.

In late September 2015, the Parliamentary Budget Officer participated in the 4th International Policy Forum on Budgeting in Seoul at the invitation of the Korean Ministry of Strategy and Finance and the Korea Institute of Public Finance.

PBO staffing

The PBO has a staffing establishment of approximately 40 positions and receives additional funding every third year in the lead up to a general election to boost its staffing. At 30 September 2015, the PBO had 39 staff (refer to Table 4) with further recruitment in train.

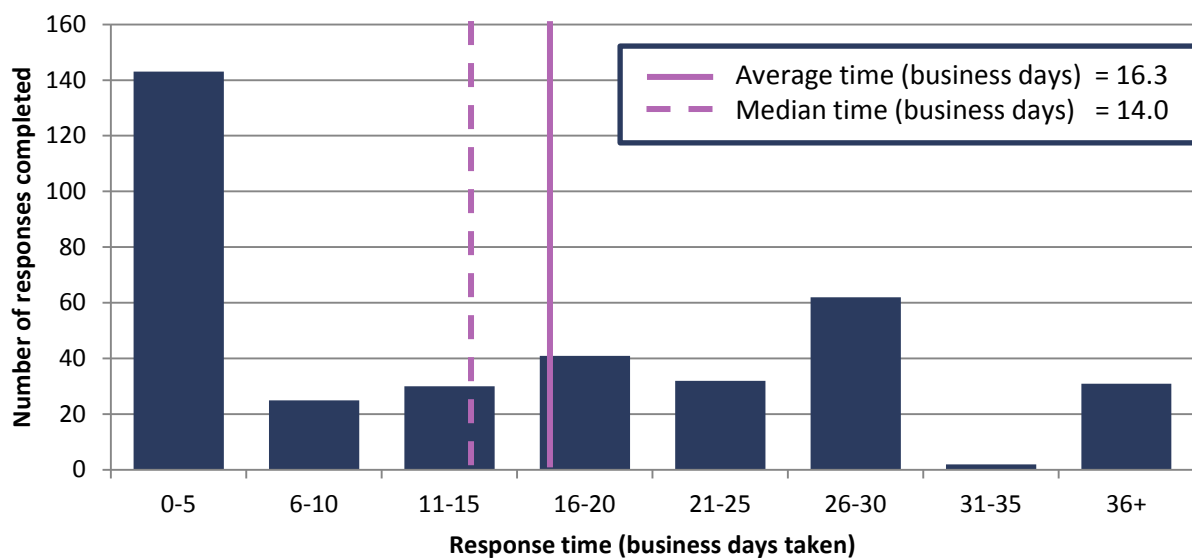
Requests from parliamentarians and parliamentary parties for costings and budget analyses

Table 1: Costing and budget analysis requests from parliamentarians and parliamentary parties to 30 September 2015

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2015–16
	Total	Total ¹	Total	Q1	Total
Requests outstanding at start of period	–	463	76	138	138
Requests received in period	1,146	1,297	973	418	418
Requests withdrawn in period	19	162	42	25	25
Requests completed in period	664	1,522	869	366	366
Average time to completion (business days)	33.9	13.8	19.7	16.3	16.3
Median time to completion (business days)	n/a	6.0	12.0	14.0	14.0
Requests outstanding at end of period	463	76	138	165	165

¹ Data has been updated following a review of the PBO's records.

Figure 1: PBO response times for completed requests in 2015–16 to 30 September 2015



Requests by the PBO for information from agencies

Table 2: Information requests to agencies to 30 September 2015

	2012–13 Total ¹	2013–14 Total ¹	2014–15 Total	2015–16 Q1	2015–16 Total
Requests outstanding at the start of the period	–	28	16	3	3
Requests sent in period	360	388	203	70	70
Requests received in period	332	400	216	65	65
<i>Requests received by due date</i>	149	209	147	58	58
<i>Requests received after due date</i>	183	191	69	7	7
Average time taken to respond (business days)	13.1	12.6	13.5	6.7	6.7
Average punctuality (business days late)	3.0	5.3	2.9	-0.7	-0.7
Average lateness of late requests (business days)	6.5	11.9	11.2	2.4	2.4
Requests outstanding at end of period	28	16	3	8	8

¹Data has been updated following a review of the PBO's records in consultation with agencies.

As at 30 September 2015, one request was overdue.

Figure 2: Agencies' response times for completed information requests in 2015–16 to 30 September 2015

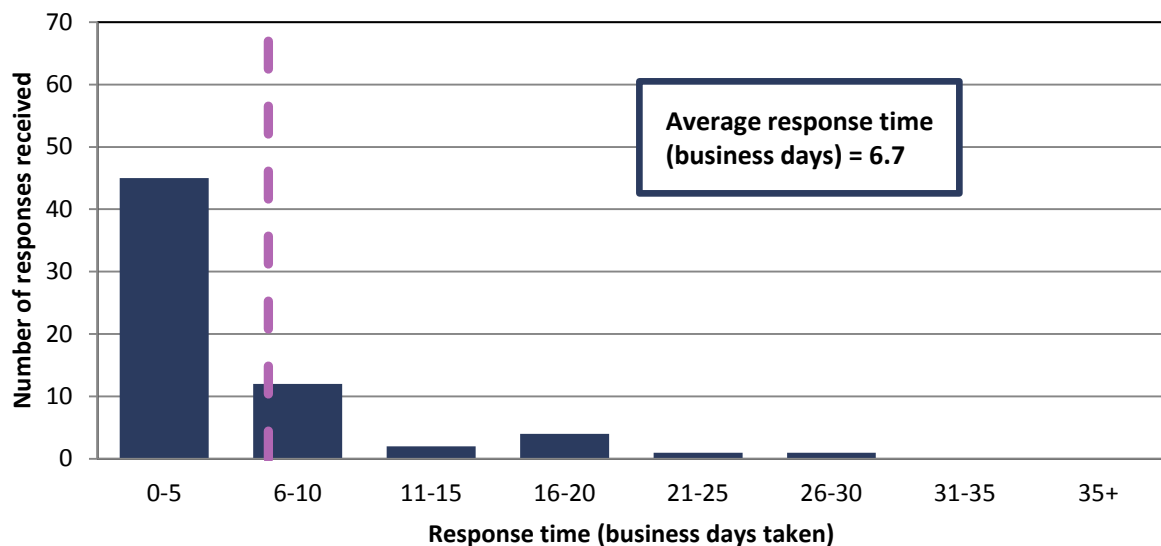
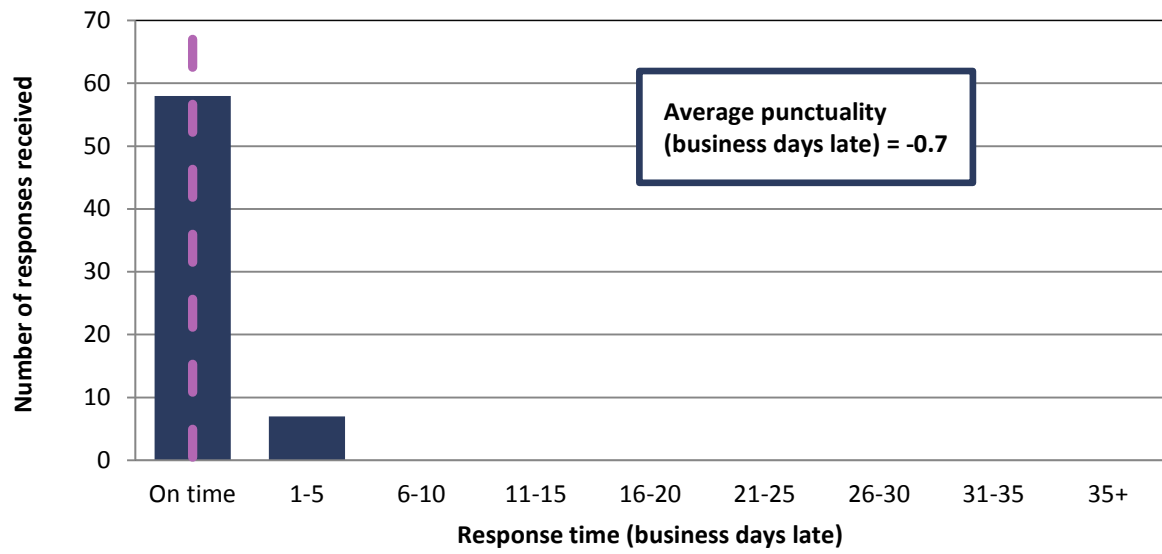


Figure 3: Timeliness of response by agencies to information requests in 2015–16 to 30 September 2015



'On time' responses include responses provided before the due date.

Table 3: Information request responsiveness by agencies in 2015–16 to 30 September 2015

Department/Agency	Requests sent in period ¹	Requests received in period	Average time taken to respond (business days)	Requests received after due date	Average lateness of late requests (business days)	% Late	Requests outstanding at end of period	Requests overdue
Departments								
Agriculture	1	1	5					
Attorney-General	3	3	4					
Communications	3	3	9	1	1	33%		
Defence	2	2	4					
Education and Training	5	5	5					
Employment	2	2	5					
Environment	2	2	4					
Finance	10	5	2	1	1	20%	5	-
Foreign Affairs and Trade	1	1	5					
Health	9	7	11	2	4	29%	2	-
Human Services	2	2	5					
Immigration and Border Protection	1	1	5					
Industry and Science	4	4	8	1	4	25%		
Infrastructure and Regional Development	1	1	5					
Prime Minister and Cabinet	2	2	4					
Social Services	6	6	11	1	3	17%		
Treasury	11	10	7	1	1	10%	1	1
Veterans' Affairs	2	2	6					
Statutory Agencies								
Australian Bureau of Statistics	1	1	4					
Australian Taxation Office	5	5	5					
Total	73	65	6.7	7	2.4	11%	8	1

¹ Includes three outstanding requests as at 30 June 2015 carried over to 2015–16.

PBO staff by function and employment level

Table 4: PBO staff by function and employment level as at 30 September 2015

Classification	PBO Executive	Budget Analysis Division	Fiscal Policy Analysis Division	Corporate Strategy Branch	Total
Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO)	1	–	–	–	1
Senior Executive Service Band 2 (SES B2)	–	1	1	–	2
Senior Executive Service Band 1 (SES B1) ¹	–	2	1	1	4
Parliamentary Executive Level 2 (PEL2)	–	4	3	1	8
Parliamentary Executive Level 1 (PEL1) ²	–	11	3	2	16
Parliamentary Service Level 6 (PSL6)	1	3	1	–	5
Parliamentary Service Level 5 (PSL5)	–	–	–	1	1
Parliamentary Service Level 4 (PSL4)	–	1	–	1	2
Total staff	2	22	9	6	39

¹ One ongoing SES B1 officer is on long term leave without pay and is not included in these totals.

² One ongoing PEL1 officer is on long term leave without pay and is not included in these totals.

Figure 4: PBO staff by function and employment level as at 30 September 2015

