



**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION**

COMMITTEE REPORT

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2008-09

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that the Government respond to the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing reports on the ordinary annual services of government as a matter of priority.

Agreed: The Government has a clear policy to enhance budget transparency. This is set out in our Operation Sunlight policy document. Clarifying the ordinary annual services of the government is part of this policy. The Government is considering proposals to be put to the Senate to clarify the allocation of items between appropriation bills. It is expected that the clarification of the Compact of 1965 will address the concerns underpinning this recommendation.

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the Department of Finance and Deregulation conduct briefings for members of Parliament and their staff on the implementation of Operation Sunlight.

Agreed: The Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance) provided briefings to Senate Committee members on 18 May 2008 and 20 May 2009, prior to the 2008-09 and 2009-10 Budget Estimates Hearings respectively. Finance will be available to provide further briefings prior to future Estimates Hearings.

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the Department of Finance and Deregulation publish, on a quarterly basis, a newsletter for members of Parliament on the progress of implementing Operation Sunlight.

Not Agreed: The Government released the former Senator Andrew Murray's report on Overhauling Budget Transparency in December 2008, together with the response and a revised presentation of Operation Sunlight which incorporates the agreed recommendations from the Murray report. In the response the Government committed to provide progress reports on the range of initiatives under Operation Sunlight, the initiatives that have been implemented and the effect of these changes.

This includes assisting the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit to examine Budget documents and related reporting arrangements (Murray recommendation 34).

Together with the commitment for Finance to be available to brief Committee members prior to Estimates Hearings, this will meet the intent of this recommendation while at the same time, allowing the Government to present progress reports in the most effective and efficient manner.