

Opening statement – President

I would also like to provide the Committee with information on three matters:

- The process underway to fill the vacancy in the office of Secretary DPS;
- the establishment of the Parliamentary Budget Office;
- the review of IT services for the Parliament.

Secretary DPS

Under the Parliamentary Service Act 1999, the Presiding Officers are responsible for making an appointment to the office of Secretary DPS. The Presiding Officers are required to obtain a report from the Parliamentary Service Commissioner before making such an appointment.

Since 1999, on the two occasions when the office of Secretary DPS has become vacant, the Presiding Officers have agreed that a full and transparent selection exercise should be conducted, including advertising the vacancy and assessment of the candidates by a selection committee chaired by the Parliamentary Service Commissioner with other members generally being Secretaries of Australian Public Service departments.

The Speaker and I have agreed that a similar course be followed on this occasion. In addition, we have approved the engagement of a suitable executive search agency by the Commissioner in order to identify potential candidates. This is a role that has proven difficult to attract a strong field of applicants from standard vacancy advertising and this extra step might serve to produce a larger and stronger field.

The Request for Offer (RFO) has been issued to three Executive Search firms. The closing date for lodgement of proposals was Friday 10 February 2012.

The sign off of the report, selection and contract negotiation of the preferred provider should be finalised by next week. We then expect the vacancy to be advertised in late February. All being well we expect the process to be completed by mid-May and the appointee commencing in June.

PBO

The legislation to establish the Parliamentary Budget Office received Royal Assent on 4 December last year. Commencement of the Act awaits proclamation, which I understand will happen very shortly.

The Speaker and I wrote to the Remuneration Tribunal last December seeking determination of a salary for the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The Department of Finance and Deregulation, and the Parliamentary Service Commission have also provided advice on an appropriate salary.

The tribunal has provided the Speaker and I with a preliminary response, and we intend to have a discussion with the tribunal before a final determination is made.

Once a salary has been set, we intend to commence the process of making an appointment to the office.

In the meantime, we have agreed to the non-ongoing appointment of an executive officer – initially for a period of six months.

The officer would undertake administrative and other tasks necessary to ensure that the PBO is able to become operational as soon as possible after the appointment of the head. If necessary, a small number of additional staff could also be appointed.

While DPS has identified a potential location for permanent accommodation for the PBO, no final decision should be made until the head of the office is appointed.

DPS will provide accommodation and associated services to the PBO until permanent accommodation has been settled.

Funding for these interim arrangements will be available once the relevant provisions of the legislation have been proclaimed.

ICT Review

Following the transfer of responsibility for Electorate Office Information Technology from the Department of Finance and Deregulation to DPS, the Speaker and I have initiated a review of ICT for Parliament.

The Review will examine the management and delivery of ICT services and equipment to Senators, Members, their staff and the parliamentary departments.

The review was considered at the last meeting of the Appropriations and Staffing Committee.

We have asked the Parliamentary Services Commissioner to engage an independent expert to conduct the review.

We expect the review to commence later this month.