

Inquiry into aspects of bank mergers

On 24 November 2008, the Senate referred the following matters to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics for inquiry and report by 26 February 2009. The Senate has granted an extension of time to report until 17 September 2009.

- a) the economic, social and employment impacts of the recent mergers among Australian banks;
- b) the measures available to enforce the conditions on the Westpac Banking Corporation/St George Bank Limited merger and any conditions placed on future bank mergers;
- c) the capacity for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to enforce divestiture in the banking sector if it finds insufficient competition;
- d) the adequacy of section 50 of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* in preventing further concentration of the Australian banking sector, with specific reference to the merits of a 'public benefit' assessment for mergers;
- e) the impact of mergers on consumer choice;
- f) the extent to which Australian banks have 'off-shored' services such as credit card and loan processing, information technology, finance and payroll functions;
- g) the impact 'off-shoring' has on employment for Australians; and
- h) alternative approaches to applying section 50 of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* in respect of future mergers, with a focus on alternative approaches to measuring competition.

The Committee invites written submissions which should be sent to:

Committee Secretary
Senate Economics Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

The closing date for submissions is **Friday, 6 March 2009**.

The Committee requests that where possible, submissions should also be provided by email to economics.sen@aph.gov.au preferably as MS Word or RTF format documents. Notes to assist in preparing submissions are available from the website http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/wit_sub/index.htm or telephone the Secretariat on 02 6277 3540, fax: 02 6277 5719, or e-mail at the above address.

Once the Committee accepts your submission, it becomes a confidential committee document and is protected by Parliamentary Privilege. You must not release your submission without the Committee's permission. If you do, it is not protected by Parliamentary Privilege. At some stage during the inquiry, the Committee normally makes submissions public. Please indicate if you want your submission to be kept confidential.

Inquiries from hearing and speech impaired people should be directed to the Parliament House TTY number (02 6277 7799). Adobe also provides tools for the blind and visually impaired to access PDF documents. These tools are available at: <http://access.adobe.com/>. If you require any special arrangements in order to enable you to participate in a committee inquiry, please contact the Committee Secretary.

If you need any further information, consult the Committee's website at http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_economics/ or contact the Committee Secretary on (02) 6277 3540 (phone); (02) 6277 5719 (fax); or by email to economics.sen@aph.gov.au; or by writing to the above address.