



POST-ELECTION REPORT ON ELECTION COMMITMENTS

The Parliamentary Budget Officer is required, within 30 days after the end of the caretaker period for a general election, to prepare a post-election report setting out costings of the publicly announced policies of designated parliamentary parties and the combined impact the policies of each party would have on the budget.

A designated parliamentary party means a party with five or more members of either House in the Parliament immediately before the commencement of the caretaker period.

The post-election report must include, for each designated parliamentary party, costings of all the election commitments of that party that the Parliamentary Budget Officer, in his or her best professional judgement, reasonably believes would have a material impact on the Commonwealth budget estimates for the current financial year and the following three financial years, along with the total combined impact of those commitments on the budget.

Policies to be included in the post-election report

The process for compiling the list of election policies for each designated party is set out in the recently passed amendments to the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* and comprises the following steps:

- Each designated party must, before 5pm on the day before polling day in the election, give the Parliamentary Budget Officer a list of its publicly announced policies.
- On the day after polling day, the Parliamentary Budget Officer must release each list of policies that has been provided, or where no list has been provided, a statement to that effect.
- Within three days after the end of the caretaker period:
 - the Parliamentary Budget Officer must prepare for each designated parliamentary party, a list of those policies that in his or her best professional judgement, would have a material effect on the budget, having regard to the lists provided to the Parliamentary Budget Officer by a party and any public announcements made by that party before or during the caretaker period, and
 - the Parliamentary Budget Officer must give the list to the party and, if the list prepared by the Parliamentary Budget Officer differs from the party's list of election commitments, the Parliamentary Budget Officer must also give the party a statement explaining the reasons for the difference.
- The party has three days to provide the Parliamentary Budget Officer with any comments on the list of its election commitments
 - the Parliamentary Budget Officer may take account of such comments, but is not required to do so.

Contents of the post-election report

The report must not include any costings of election commitments other than those included in the list of policies provided to the party by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

In addition to the costings of the impact of individual election commitments and their combined impact on the Budget in the current financial year and over the next three financial years, the post-election report for each designated party must also include the following information:

- Any comments given to the Parliamentary Budget Officer in response to the list of election commitments, or a statement that no comments were provided.
- For each commitment reported in the post-election report:
 - an explanation of the reason why the Parliamentary Budget Officer has decided it was an election commitment
 - the reason why the Parliamentary Budget Officer decided that it should be included in the report, and
 - the source (or sources) of information from which the Parliamentary Budget Officer identified the election commitment.
- Where there is insufficient information or time to assess the cost of any election commitment, this may also be reflected in the report.

The report does not have to include information that the Parliamentary Budget Officer considers is confidential commercial information or which could prejudice national security.

Information gathering

The Parliamentary Budget Officer may seek further information regarding an election commitment from an authorised member of a designated parliamentary party that made the election commitment or any other person who it is reasonable to believe has been associated with the calculation, review or announcement of the financial implications of the election commitment.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer may also seek information from the head of a Commonwealth body. This will include obtaining information from the Heads of the Treasury or the Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance) in respect of caretaker period costings they have prepared under the *Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998*.

During the caretaker period and the post-election report preparation period, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is able to request the head of a Commonwealth body to give information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the head is required to comply with the request in time to allow the information to be taken into account in preparing policy costings or the post-election report. This requirement to provide information applies unless:

- (a) it is not practicable to do so; or
- (b) it would be unlawful to do so; or
- (c) it would require the head to disclose confidential commercial information; or
- (d) it would require the head to disclose information that could prejudice national security.

Publication of the post-election report

The post-election report is to be publicly released no later than 30 days after the end of the caretaker period for a general election.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer is to give each designated parliamentary party a copy of that part of the report which sets out costings and totals for that party's election commitments at least 48 hours before publicly releasing the post-election report. The part of the report must be accompanied by a notice informing the party that the part of the report must be kept confidential, and requesting any comments from the party. If the Parliamentary Budget Officer is given comments from the party he may include the comments in the report, or revise the report to take account of the comments, if it is practicable to do so.

Once the post-election report is finalised, the Parliamentary Budget Officer will advise the offices of the designated parliamentary parties at least an hour in advance of the public release of the report and confirm delivery arrangements with them. The report will be emailed to all designated parties immediately prior to its release.

The post-election report will be publicly released on the PBO website (<http://www.aph.gov.au/pbo>).

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