

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

17 October – 18 October 2012

Question: SBT 148-150

Topic: Final Budget Outcome - Disaggregated Data

Written: Received from Committee – 26 October 2012

Senator JOYCE asked:

Regarding the publishing of more disaggregated data at FBO, more in line with that at Budget:

148. Is it time that more disaggregated FBO cash and accrual data be made available to the public – on a portfolio, departmental, administrative and program-by-program basis? That is, publishing (at least on-line) the disaggregated outcomes data from the Government's Accrual Information Management System (or AIMS) that the FBO is compiled from?
- a. For example, this would enable line-by-line comparison with the budget portfolio statements (PBSs, which otherwise remain as estimates only). It would also provide greater detail upon which policy platforms could be better formulated, and costings could be more reliably made, to aid and enhance the level of public policy debate – a level that Dr Ken Henry, the PM's current top economic adviser and ex-Treasury Secretary, was right to express grave concerns over, in a video he posted online just two months ago.
149. If publishing this level of disaggregation is not possible – at least to the level of detail in the PBSs (and on-line only, albeit in print-friendly format) – then what logistics are in the way?
150. If such publishing is not desirable (as opposed to logistically possible), then what *genuine* sensitivities may be in the way?

Answer:

A Commonwealth Financial Accountability Review (CFAR) Position Paper, *Sharpening the Focus* will shortly be released for public consultation. This document builds on the CFAR discussion paper *Is Less More?: Towards Better Commonwealth Performance* and proposes a suite of reforms to the Commonwealth financial framework. One suggestion will be a proposal to have a clear line of sight between appropriations, Portfolio Budget Statements and the information contained in annual reports thereby allowing comparison of planned and actual performance. This would enhance transparency and provide parliament with a better basis for scrutiny.