

Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics (the committee) is responsible for scrutinising the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) and for ensuring its transparency and accountability to the Parliament, the community and the financial sector.
- 1.2 The appearance by the Governor of the RBA at biannual public hearings of the committee is an important element of the RBA's accountability framework. The details of this framework are set out in the *Statement on the Conduct of Monetary Policy*, agreed between the Treasurer, the Hon Joe Hockey MP, and the RBA Governor, Mr Glenn Stevens. The statement formalises the biannual appearance before the committee. The statement, which is reproduced at Appendix B, states:

... the Governor will continue to be available to report twice a year to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, and to other Parliamentary committees as appropriate.

The Treasurer expresses support for the continuation of these arrangements, which reflect international best practice and enhance the public's confidence in the independence and integrity of the monetary policy process.¹
- 1.3 A second procedural mechanism for achieving this accountability is set out in the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, which provide for the referral of annual reports within a committee's area of portfolio responsibility for any inquiry the committee may wish to make. Accordingly, the committee may inquire into aspects of the annual report of the RBA.

1 Reserve Bank of Australia, *Statement on the Conduct of Monetary Policy*, 24 October 2013.

Scope and conduct of the review

- 1.4 The second public hearing of the committee with the RBA during the 44th Parliament was held in Sydney on 7 March 2014.
- 1.5 The proceedings of the hearing were webcast (audio only) over the internet, through the Parliament's website, allowing interested parties to listen to the proceedings as they occurred. The transcript of the hearing is available on the committee's website.²
- 1.6 Before the hearing, the committee received a private briefing from Mr Alan Oster, Group Chief Economist, National Australia Bank. This briefing provided valuable background information for the committee and perspectives on issues for discussion at the public hearing. The committee appreciates Mr Oster's cooperation and assistance.
- 1.7 Public hearings with the RBA continue to bring issues of monetary policy into the public arena and provide a public face to parliamentary committees and the RBA. These hearings are also an important means by which financial markets can be better informed on the current thinking of the RBA.
- 1.8 This report focuses on matters raised at the public hearing in Sydney on 7 March, and also draws on issues raised in the RBA's February 2014 *Statement on Monetary Policy*. The *Statement on Monetary Policy* may be viewed through the RBA website.³

2 See: <<http://www.aph.gov.au/economics>>

3 See: <<http://www.rba.gov.au/monetary-policy/index.html>>