

## CEO Senate Estimates opening statement 2023

### Chair and Committee Members

An opening statement at the first Estimates of the calendar year has become a tradition and I thank you once again for the opportunity to provide my reflections on the year gone and thoughts on the year ahead.

### **2022, opportunities to regulate through education**

IPEA commenced the year with the knowledge that there would be an election. We prepared by implementing the lessons from our first election in 2019. These included early engagement with political parties to reinforce the role of IPEA and the application of the Principles, defined under the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017* (the PBR Act), that regulate the use of parliamentary expenses.

Post the election, as polls were declared, IPEA made early and personal contact with the 35 newly elected parliamentarians and their staff. We provided opportunities for refresher information for returning parliamentarians and reached out to non-returning parliamentarians to discuss their post-election arrangements. From feedback this prompt and targeted engagement was well received. We will continue to build upon and refine our approach.

Education first has always been an important aspect to IPEA's approach. With the large number of newly elected parliamentarians, IPEA is working hard to build understanding of the Principles-based framework with offices, and the necessary trust with IPEA, to raise queries early and often. The response to our interactive education sessions is always very positive. In 2022, 96% of education session participants that completed our survey were satisfied with their session.

A significant piece of feedback has been confusion around 'who does what' in the parliamentary environment; particularly between IPEA and the services provided by other agencies including Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MaPS) in the Department of Finance. In summary, IPEA is responsible for:

#### Domestic and International Travel:

- Personal advice
- Administration of expenses and allowances
- Travel provider (CTM) and Cabcharge.

#### All parliamentary work expenses:

- Reporting
- Monitoring
- Assurance and audit.

### **2023, opportunities to regulate through service delivery**

In addition to the election, there were many influences on the parliamentary environment in 2022. For example, nearly 60 recommendations for changes - in the combined IPEA and PBR Act Review

Report<sup>1</sup> and the Set the Standard Review Report<sup>2</sup> – were published. These recommendations signal important opportunities for parliament to take a whole-of-system consideration of the parliamentary workplace, its culture and how to support diversity. Through applying good policy principles there is also the potential to reduce client confusion and enhance the effectiveness of services provided.

IPEA welcomes opportunities arising in 2023 from these recommendations to fulfil its dual roles of:

1. supporting parliamentarians when undertaking their important role representing all Australians and
2. providing Australians with transparency and assurance on the appropriateness of work expenses incurred by parliamentarians and their staff.

With regard to transparency, on 8 November 2022, the Government announced that publication of parliamentary Expenditure Reports from 1 July 2022 would be postponed until the second half of 2023. This is due to delays in finalising the build of the expenditure reporting module in the Parliamentary Expenses Management System or PEMS for short. IPEA continues to work with the Department of Finance, the project owner, to define, build, test and implement this functionality. Eventually, IPEA is keen to move from quarterly to monthly reports as the build is finalised, system issues are resolved and full functionality across all of PEMS is implemented.

While published Expenditure Reports are not currently available, Australians can be assured that IPEA continues to undertake our many behind the scenes assurance activities. Consistent with our 'no surprises' approach in previous openings statements and our responsibility for assurance on all parliamentary work expenses provided under the PBR Act, in 2023 parliamentarians can expect IPEA to look more broadly at non-travel related expenses administered by other agencies. This focus is in addition to expenses, such as Family related travel, Business Class travel and desirable destinations, previously targeted for assurance activities.

IPEA continues to lead in the parliamentary regulation arena with excellent results in the APS Census and independently conducted Client Satisfaction Survey. The most current results are available on our website. These results are a reflection of the commitment to service and integrity of all IPEANs, including staff and the Members of the Authority.

Thank you Chair, I am available for questions.

Annwyn Godwin

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<sup>1</sup> The *Independent Expenses Authority Act 2017* (the IPEA Act) and the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017* (the PBR Act) Reviews were conducted in 2021 by the Hon Kelly O'Dwyer and the Hon Kate Ellis, completed December 2021 and tabled August 2022.

<sup>2</sup> 'Set the standard' the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces by the Human Rights Commission was completed in November 2021.