

Background

Referral of the Bill

- 1.1 The Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Bill 2013 (hereafter referred to as the Bill) was introduced into the House of Representatives on 16 May 2013.
- 1.2 On the same day, the House of Representatives Selection Committee referred the Bill to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) for inquiry and report.
- 1.3 In referring the Bill, the Selection Committee provided the following reason:
 - ... to ensure that combining the two Acts into a single Act does not impose additional and unnecessary reporting requirements on bodies subject to the Act and does not reduce transparency or remove important oversight where it is appropriate.¹
- 1.4 On 16 May 2013 the Senate referred the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Bill 2013 to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee for report by 3 June 2013. However the Finance and Public Administration Committee determined that as the Bill had also been referred for inquiry and report to the JCPAA it would not proceed with a separate inquiry.

1 House of Representatives Selection Committee Report No.80, 16 May 2013.

Scope of this inquiry

- 1.5 The purpose of this report is to identify and discuss matters surrounding the provisions of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Bill 2013.
- 1.6 With the Bill being introduced and referred to the JCPAA in the last sitting period prior to the scheduled prorogation of Parliament, the Committee decided to form a sectional committee for the purposes of examining the report at a high level in short period of time. This decision was taken to provide Parliament as a whole with as much time as possible to debate the Bill before the end of June.
- 1.7 The Committee's examination of the Bill has sought to balance the need for speed with the importance of providing sound advice to the Parliament. On this basis, the sectional committee did not examine the Bill clause by clause but instead focused on the broader issues raised in the prelude of the Explanatory Memorandum, and those mentioned in the referral.
- 1.8 A number of submissions to the inquiry raised clause specific or other matters outside the scope of this inquiry. Many of these issues have been addressed by the Department of Finance and Deregulation through supplementary submissions to the Committee. Full copies of Finance's submissions can be found on the Committee's website.²

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.9 Details of the inquiry were placed on the Committee's website. A media release announcing the inquiry and seeking submissions was issued on 17 May 2013. The Department of Finance and Deregulation assisted in the distribution of advice on the Committee's inquiry by including a reference in information that went out with a Finance Circular released on 17 May 2013.
- 1.10 A further media release was distributed on 23 May 2013 advising interested parties of the public hearing. Social media was also utilised to publicise the inquiry, including a request for submissions and notification of the hearing.

2 Submissions to inquiry are available at http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jcpaa/accountability_bill/subs.htm

- 1.11 To inform the Committee of key issues related to the proposed modernisation of the financial framework, submissions made to the Department of Finance and Deregulation's Commonwealth Financial Accountability Review (CFAR) process were reviewed. From this a number of stakeholders were contacted to invite further comment either through submission or attendance at the public hearing.
- 1.12 Seventeen submissions, three supplementary submissions and an exhibit were received. They are listed at Appendix A and B. A number of stakeholders also referred the Committee to their submissions made to the Finance Department as part of the CFAR.
- 1.13 The public hearing was held in Canberra on Friday 24 May 2013. A list of witnesses who appeared is at Appendix C.
- 1.14 Copies of all relevant documents, including submissions and a copy of the transcript, are available on the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa.

