

Sent: Wednesday, 18 March 2009 12:01 PM

SUBMISSION No. 1

To: Committee, JCPAA (REPS)

Subject: Invitation to make a Submission to the Inquiry into the Auditor-General Act 1997

Dear Kris,

Thanks for the kind invitation to make the above Submission.

My general comment is that the above legislation has long been regarded as being a benchmark for many other countries.

I am personally in favour of principles-based legislation, particularly in a regulatory area.

The Parliament can have confidence in the independence provided to the Auditor-General that he/she will perform in accordance with those principles. And the Auditor-General is directly accountable to the Parliament in a very meaningful way (particularly through the JCPAA).

Therefore I would not be suggesting detailed prescription of what the Auditor-General can or cannot do. There are two basic types of reports prepared, one on assurance and the other on performance. The Parliament has put some limitations on the latter which seem to me to be sufficient. I would suggest that the Auditor-General could be left to decide the kind of Assurance reports needed in the light of any Parliamentary concerns expressed. As well, the Auditor-General is guided by " public interest " considerations.

I note that the ANAO has included Agency comment in its reports for many years without any criticism or complaint. I personally think this is a useful discipline provided that the comments are relevant.

Regards, Pat Barrett.

Senior Fellow, Australian National University.