



Appointment of the Parliamentary Budget Officer

Mr Phil Bowen was today appointed as the inaugural Parliamentary Budget Officer, with the approval of the Joint Public Accounts and Audit Committee.

Expected to start in the job on 23 July 2012, Mr Bowen's first task will be to establish a fourth parliamentary department – the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO).

The PBO will improve the transparency of Australia's fiscal and budgetary frameworks, and help level the playing field by giving all Senators and Members access to independent policy costings and additional support to scrutinise the Budget.

The appointment of the right person to establish and lead this new Office was of the utmost importance to the Committee. The Committee unanimously agreed to the appointment after meeting with Mr Bowen. The Committee also heard from the Parliamentary Service Commissioner, who undertook the initial selection process at the request of the Presiding Officers. This helped satisfy the Committee that the appointment process was thorough and transparent.

The Committee was impressed by Mr Bowen's strong finance-related background, but also considers his diversity a real asset. Committee Chair Mr Oakeshott said 'Following our meeting with Mr Bowen, we were all confident that he brings the whole package – knowledge, skills, experience and ability to communicate all of this in a no-nonsense style'.

Since 2007, Mr Bowen has been the Australian Director on the board of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In this role he has represented a constituency of eleven ADB members, as well as worked to continuously improve the Bank's operations. Following criticism of the ADB's Operations Evaluation Department (responsible for monitoring the billions of dollars of loans made by the bank to Asian nations), Mr Bowen led a review that made significant recommendations to improve the independence and effectiveness of the office.

Prior to this international appointment, Mr Bowen held a range of senior positions within the then Department of Finance and Administration, directly relevant to the role of Parliamentary Budget Officer, including five years as head of the Budget Group. During this time, Mr Bowen was awarded an Australian Public Service Medal for his work in developing and implementing enhanced whole-of-government budget processes.

Mr Bowen has held senior positions in the former Department of Transport and Communications and the Civil Aviation Authority. He has served on a number of boards and advisory committees including the Australian Public Sector Accounting Standards Board. In addition to qualifications in agricultural science, economics and accounting, Mr Bowen is a Fellow of CPA Australia and an alumnus of the Harvard Business School's Advanced Management Program.

'We only get one chance to get this great new Office right. The establishment of a credible, independent and strong PBO is a unique opportunity for this Parliament, and all

Parliamentarians should work together to ensure we make the most of it', Mr Oakeshott said.

Along with the selection of the best person to head the Parliamentary Budget Office, the Committee considers that decisions made about the location of the Office to be fundamental to its success. While ultimately a decision for the newly appointed Parliamentary Budget Officer, the Committee is of the strong view that it is an absolute priority that the Parliamentary Budget Officer and his key staff have an office located within Parliament House to ensure ready access for Senators and Members.

The Committee welcomes its new role as the oversight committee for the Parliamentary Budget Office, and looks forward to working with Mr Bowen, as prescribed in the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, upon his commencement in late July 2012.

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