

Independent post-election review of the Parliamentary Budget Office

2025-26

Dr Martin Parkinson AC PSM

January 2026

Mr Josh Burns MP
Chair
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA)
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

22 January 2026

Dear Mr Burns

I am pleased to present the report of my independent post-election review of the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), commissioned by the JCPAA on 4 September 2025.

The Review has benefited from 15 individual interviews with members of parliament from both houses. It has also been informed by extensive discussions with Secretaries and senior members of the SES from the PBO's main interlocutors in the APS, and from engagement with independent experts comprising the PBO's expert panel and key senior economic journalists.

I am pleased to be able to report that across members of Parliament, the APS, the independent experts and members of the media, the message was consistent – the PBO is held in high esteem, its work is regarded as insightful and highly credible, and it is seen as making a major contribution to better policy-making in the interests of all Australians.

That said, even the best performing organisations can strive to do even better. To that end, the Report contains 23 recommendations grouped under 4 broad headings:

- Credibility is central
- Enhancing transparency
- Enhance service offering
- Maximising impact for continued success.

These recommendations set out a practical path for the PBO to be more open, more engaging, more visible and more impactful, primarily through communication, transparency and light-touch innovation. They are recommendations that could enhance efficiency and assist parliamentarians in the pursuit of their own policy development initiatives. We also encourage the PBO to reach out more proactively to parliamentarians to get input when it is developing its self-initiated work program.

Importantly, though, one message that came through loud and clear is that the rising demand for PBO assistance cannot be met from its current budget – unless this is addressed, and addressed quickly, the support provided to parliamentarians will decline in terms of both quantity and quality.

This was recognised by key APS leaders who were supportive of a budget rebasing in the national interest.

Finally, while we recognise the challenges facing the Department of Parliamentary Services in juggling space allocations within APH during the current multi-year renovation program, it was a consistent message from parliamentarians that the PBO needed to maintain a significant

footprint in APH during the renovation program and that it should be a priority to return the PBO to APH as early as possible.

I would like to express my appreciation to the individuals who generously donated their time to assist our deliberations.

I would also like to record my appreciation for the work of the Secretariat for the Review, ably led by Chrysanthe Psychogios and supported by Harry Withers, Christen Whisson and Maddi Ciuffetelli.

Thank you for the opportunity to lead this review – I hope our joint efforts assist parliamentarians in their ongoing efforts to build a better Australia for all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Parkinson', written in a cursive style.

Dr Martin Parkinson AC PSM

Terms of reference

The review will:

- examine and provide a report on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) in executing its purpose to inform the parliament by providing independent and non-partisan analysis of the budget cycle, fiscal policy and the financial implications of proposals. The analysis should also consider the levels of demand for PBO services and the available resources of the PBO.

The review may also consider:

- the appropriateness and scope of the PBO's mandate, in the context of the evolving needs of the parliament
- the role of the PBO during the election period, including the timing of the election commitments report.

The review will have regard to:

- the views of the PBO's primary stakeholders, including parliamentarians, parliamentary parties, parliamentary committees and other Commonwealth agencies
- the PBO's legislative mandate
- the impact of the PBO's current outputs in achieving its mandated objectives, including the manner and extent of use in public debate
- the appropriateness of the PBO's resourcing arrangements to execute any extensions of work or responsibility.

The review will provide the report to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit no later than 3 February 2026.

Executive summary

In the 13 years since it was established, the Australian Parliamentary Budget Office (the PBO) has matured into a highly regarded, credible and authoritative source of assistance on budget costings, analysis and the understanding of fiscal developments. Parliamentarians are overwhelmingly supportive of the PBO and the manner in which it has discharged its legislated role. As one noted:

'...the existence of the PBO holds me to a higher standard for what I might put out publicly...[In addition] when I release a policy [with a PBO costing] it gives me additional credibility.'

While the PBO and its staff, current and former, are to be congratulated for the way in which they have delivered on their mandate, even high performing institutions have opportunities to improve.

This Review has identified actions around 4 themes where the PBO can enhance its engagement with individual parliamentarians, parliamentary parties and the Parliament as a whole, while also better helping to educate the Australian public about budget and fiscal developments.

Importantly, the Review concludes that the mandate of the PBO remains as appropriate today as it was when the PBO was established in 2012. The PBO is not broken and suggestions to change the mandate offer no obvious additional value to the PBO's mission. Rather, they risk politicising the institution, undermining the credibility and effectiveness of its work, and eroding its carefully nurtured relationship with the Australian Public Service. All of these elements contribute to the high regard in which the PBO is held today.

The Review's recommendations recognise and reinforce the primacy parliamentarians place on the PBO's costings of potential budget initiatives. They also reinforce the importance placed on the PBO's highly-regarded, self-initiated, research, and suggest ways to enhance the impact of that work. The recommendations aim to help the PBO become faster and more efficient in supporting parliamentarians on more basic budget and fiscal issues, thereby freeing resources to focus on more complex requests. Finally, they aim to strengthening the ability of the PBO to continue to deliver high quality, credible support on all dimensions of its mandate going forward.

However, the PBO's ability to implement these recommendations and fully discharge its legislative responsibilities is increasingly hampered by its existing resource constraints. The growing volume of costing requests is straining staff capacity and reducing operational flexibility to address other priorities. As the PBO must seek additional resources through competitive budget processes – without the benefit of ministerial advocacy – it is placed at a significant disadvantage. Absent a structural increase in funding and support, service standards will decline and the PBO's ability to innovate and adapt to emerging challenges will be curtailed.

To deliver on these recommendations the PBO will require the support of the Presiding Officers of the Australian Parliament, the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA), the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS), the major parliamentary parties, and parliamentarians more broadly.

The contribution the PBO has made, and can continue to make, to the better operation of Australia’s democracy – through the ‘non-partisan analysis of the budget cycle, fiscal policy and the financial implications of proposals’ – is to the benefit of all Australians. It should be recognised as such and appropriately supported by all who value our democratic institutions and way of life.

Recommendations

Credibility is central

Recommendation 1: To strengthen relationships and credibility with parliamentarians, and enhance their understanding of PBO services, processes and products, the PBO should continue to mature its engagement activities with parliamentarians and parties informed by the parliamentary cycle, including for example:

- hosting 2 separate induction sessions for all parliamentarians within the first 12 months of a new parliament, which includes explaining the legislative underpinnings for the way in which the PBO operates
- providing pre-recorded and on-demand live demonstrations of how to utilise PBO self-help tools
- developing a suite of on-demand educational materials, such as short explainer videos, on topics such as how to navigate the budget process/papers, considerations to take into account when requesting a PBO service, when to use the PBO versus the Parliamentary Library, and why costings may change over time or as more detail becomes available
- short video introductions to Budget Explainer (and other) publications.

Recommendation 2: The PBO should provide greater transparency and visibility to parliamentarians of the status of their requests, including an indication of the total costing stock on hand to help parliamentarians understand the likely timing of a response to their request.

Recommendation 3: The PBO should promote and raise awareness of its costing prioritisation criteria to support better engagement with its parliamentary clients.

Recommendation 4: So that it can better prioritise the most important requests of parliamentary parties, the PBO should encourage parties to consider centralising requests in the lead-up to an election.

Recommendation 5: The PBO should introduce mechanisms to ensure there is early, open and ongoing engagement with requestors on their costing requests to ensure clarity of specifications and assumptions and improve understanding of results.

Enhancing transparency

Recommendation 6: To ensure that its key findings have a significant impact, the PBO should highlight the important insights of its research more prominently, rather than burying them within reports.

Recommendation 7: The PBO should provide embargoed copies of new self-initiated reports to journalists and conduct media background briefings to enable journalists to provide more substantive coverage of PBO outputs.

Recommendation 8: To allow for independent scrutiny of the implications of the Intergenerational Report (IGR), upon each release of the Report the Parliamentary Budget

Officer should write to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) offering to provide the Committee with sensitivity and other analyses.

Recommendation 9: To enhance the quality of future public discussions on fiscal sustainability, the PBO should undertake research on fiscal frameworks and rules, including an explainer that describes those used in various jurisdictions internationally.

Recommendation 10: To support the JCPAA and the broader parliamentary community in identifying fiscal risks to the Australian Government, the PBO should consider publishing analysis and commentary on state and territory fiscal positions.

Recommendation 11: To enhance the impact of the Election Commitments Report (ECR), the PBO should conduct a readership analysis to identify which additions beyond what is required under legislation are valuable for inclusion.

Recommendation 12: The PBO should explore publicly releasing lists of potential commitments weekly throughout the caretaker period, given that publishing the ECR prior to polling day is not currently feasible and may face political resistance.

Enhance service offering

Recommendation 13: To ensure parliamentarians have relevant information about their costing requests, in consultation with requestors the PBO should include distributional analysis with costing responses where impacts across groups are material and where data and resources permit.

Recommendation 14: The PBO should commence a program of costing ready-reckoners to support parliamentarians' collective understanding of the fiscal impacts of policies. The program should be supported by a framework setting out the criteria for topic selection, ensuring that they are apolitical, educative and relevant, and draw on input from parliamentarians.

Recommendation 15: To ensure the PBO's self-initiated work is meeting parliamentary expectations, it should consult with parliamentarians when preparing its self-initiated work plan.

Maximising impact for continued success

Recommendation 16: The PBO's resources should be rebased to ensure it can continue to effectively meet its legislative mandate and deliver high-quality and timely outputs including extending its service delivery in some of the ways recommended in this report (such as distributional analysis, more outreach, and additional fiscal analysis and reporting).

Recommendation 17: As maintaining full physical presence within Australian Parliament House (APH) is essential for maximising visibility, accessibility and effective engagement, the Presiding Officers should commit to moving the entire PBO back into APH as soon as possible. Further, the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) should provide the JCPAA, Presiding Officers and the PBO with a clear timeline for the PBO's return and 6-monthly updates on progress against this timeline.

Recommendation 18: The PBO should encourage an internal culture of engagement and greater outreach, to ensure that parliamentarians and their staff are aware of its service offerings, particularly while located outside APH.

Recommendation 19: A formal service level agreement should be developed with DPS that clearly defines roles, responsibilities, and priorities for ICT support and cyber risk management. This agreement should reflect the PBO's specialised operational needs and ensure accountability for both service delivery and governance. Additionally, the Government should provide dedicated resourcing to the PBO to support core maintenance and security within its ICT and data environment, as well as ongoing innovation, recognising that the PBO's requirements are outsized relative to its size.

Recommendation 20: In order to support continued efficient collaboration with Australian Government agencies, portfolio secretaries should remind their portfolio agencies of their obligations to engage with the PBO. Where issues with specific requests are encountered and cannot be quickly resolved, the PBO should raise these directly with the portfolio secretary.

Recommendation 21: The Parliamentary Budget Officer should present at Secretaries Board twice per parliamentary cycle (immediately after an election and 12 months out from the formal end of a term of Parliament), to discuss the PBO's work and remind agencies of their obligations.

Recommendation 22: The PBO should consider greater opportunities for joint outreach, engagement and collaboration with the Parliamentary Library.

Recommendation 23: The PBO should review and revamp its performance metrics to place greater emphasis on meaningful service delivery and engagement indicators.

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Part A: Setting the scene

1 History of the PBO

The PBO was established in 2012 to strengthen fiscal transparency and support informed decision-making within the Australian Parliament. Its creation was a direct outcome of negotiations following the 2010 federal election, which resulted in a minority government led by Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

Those supporting the minority Gillard Government demanded a raft of parliamentary reforms spelt out in a 10-page annex to their agreement to support the Government. These reforms included the creation of the Parliamentary Budget Office, perhaps the most significant institutional reform to the Commonwealth government in the past 15 years¹.

The idea for a body such as the PBO was raised at various times in the decades before it was established². In her second reading speech of the *Parliamentary Service Amendment Bill 2005*, then Shadow Minister for Health, Julia Gillard MP, noted that³:

'...One of the things that should always be viewed as right is giving members of parliament, whether or not they are members of the government, fair access to budget and economic projections, given that so much of the public policy debate in modern times ends up being about the fiscal position and the affordability of policy changes.'

In November 2010, the Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office was formed to determine the PBO's mandate, structure, and resourcing. The committee examined international models, considered the role of existing institutions, and reviewed the election costing provisions under the *Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998*.

Drawing from the work of that committee, legislation to establish the PBO was introduced in 2011 through the *Parliamentary Service Amendment (Parliamentary Budget Officer) Act 2011*, amending the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*.

In his second reading speech, then Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband, Malcolm Turnbull MP noted that, as part of the motivation for establishing the PBO⁴:

'...In our system, because the government by definition controls the House of Representatives and because the opposition is left with very little in the way of resources, all too often our ability to hold the government to account is very, very limited.'

That Act provided the statutory basis for the PBO's operations, and the office officially commenced in 2012, funded through the 2011-12 Budget (\$24.9 million over 4 years).

These two statements by members of the alternative parties of government, albeit both in opposition at the time they were made, are similar to many other statements by parliamentarians over time. Collectively, these statements highlight an important point – the concept of a PBO was intended to provide ballast to those outside government to assist them in

¹ [Gridlock: Removing barriers to policy reform](#)

² For example: Senator Lewis, '[Financial impact statements](#)', Senate, Debates, 11 March 1982

³ [Parliamentary Service Amendment Bill 2005 - Julia Gillard MP Second Reading Speech - 16 March 2005](#)

⁴ [Parliamentary Service Amendment \(Parliamentary Budget Officer\) Bill 2011 - Malcolm Turnbull MP Second Reading Speech - 12 September 2011](#)

responding to the issues of the day. However, it took the balance of power sitting with members outside the traditional parties to bring this to fruition.

It is clear from the purpose of the Act, the collected second reading speeches and the public commentary of the time⁵, that the PBO's purpose is to inform parliament by providing costings of policy proposals and analysis of the budget, and to enrich Australia's democracy through independent budget and fiscal analysis. As such, its services are available to all parliamentarians.

Importantly, and unlike similar institutions in other countries, the PBO was not established with assessment or production of macroeconomic or fiscal forecasts, or providing policy advice, as part of its mandate. The Act explicitly sets out that:

Section 64E Functions of the Parliamentary Budget Officer

(1) The Parliamentary Budget Officer has the following functions:

- (a) outside the caretaker period for a general election—to prepare policy costings on request by Senators or Members of the House of Representatives under section 64H;*
- (b) during the caretaker period for a general election—to prepare policy costings on request by authorised members of Parliamentary parties or independent members under section 64J;*
- (c) to prepare responses (other than policy costings) to requests relating to the budget by Senators or Members of the House of Representatives;*
- (d) to prepare submissions to inquiries of Parliamentary committees on request by such committees;*
- (da) after a general election—to report on election commitments of designated Parliamentary parties under section 64MA⁶*
- (e) to conduct, on his or her own initiative (including in anticipation of requests referred to in paragraphs (a) to (d)), research on and analysis of the budget and fiscal policy settings.*

These legislated functions indicate that the PBO was established to assist and inform the Parliament. In so doing it enriches Australia's democracy by:

1. responding to requests made by senators and members for costings of policy proposals or for analysis of matters relating to the budget.
 - Specifically, the PBO provides parliamentarians with access to advice on the budgetary implications of policy initiatives they may be considering, based on the specifications they provide, to help them understand the implications of the policies being contemplated.

⁵ See for example: [PBO a no-brainer for Abbott](#) (1 April 2011) and [Costing the promises: what is a Parliamentary Budget Office?](#) (13 September 2011).

⁶ This PBO function was added subsequently, in the [Parliamentary Service Amendment \(Parliamentary Budget Officer\) Act 2013](#).

2. publishing and presenting information to enhance the public understanding of budget and fiscal policy settings.
 - The PBO publishes self-initiated analysis, chart packs, data and interactive tools on the budget and fiscal policy settings, seeking to enhance budget transparency and promote better understanding by parliamentarians, and the public more broadly, of fiscal and budget policy issues.
3. publishing a report after every general election that provides transparency around the fiscal impact of the election commitments of major parties, and minor parties and independents that choose to be included.
 - This report presents the impacts on a policy-by-policy basis, as well as the aggregate impact of each party’s policy platform.

Reflecting on the maturing of the PBO at its 10th anniversary conference in November 2022, the Hon Julian Hill MP noted⁷:

‘ . . .The PBO has matured into an authoritative, trusted and independent source of budgetary and fiscal policy analysis. . .The trusted reputation of the PBO has in effect banished the previously predictable emergence of so-called Budget 'black holes' that used to pervade federal politics, especially during elections.’

⁷ [Parliamentary Budget Office 10th Anniversary - 3 November 2022](#)

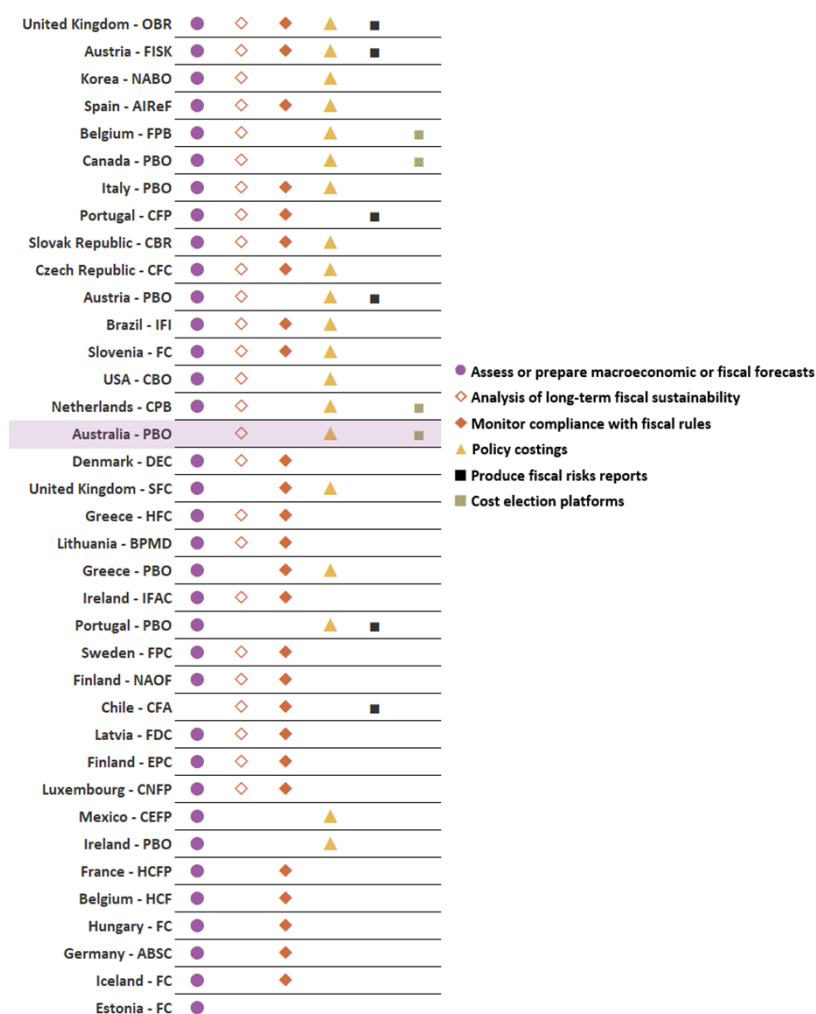
2 Comparison of the PBO with equivalent overseas institutions

The PBO is often compared with independent fiscal institutions (IFIs) in other countries. A simple comparison can be misleading as, internationally, IFIs vary widely in size, scope, and function, driven by the motivation for their establishment.

The reasons leading to the PBO’s establishment, its mandate and its size are unique in the international context (see Figure 1), and the motivation for its existence is, in many ways, encapsulated in the previous quote from the Hon Julian Hill MP.

In contrast, different contexts elsewhere have led to the establishment of very different IFIs. The US Congressional Budget Office (CBO), for example, is mandated to cost nearly every bill that is approved by a full committee of either the House or the Senate. It has a significantly larger budget and staff than the Australian PBO⁸. Many European IFIs also monitor compliance with fiscal rules and produce economic forecasts – functions the Australian PBO does not undertake (see Box 1) – driven by crises of credibility in their governing arrangements. This is a very different motivator from that seen in the Australian context.

Figure 1: Independent fiscal institutions in OECD countries by function, 2024



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [Independent Fiscal Institutions database](#).

⁸ The only exceptions are appropriation bills, which do not receive written cost estimates. CBO estimates the budgetary effects of these bills for the appropriations committees ([Frequently Asked Questions | CBO](#)).

Box 1: Australia's place in the independent fiscal institution (IFI) landscape

The Australian PBO was established in 2012 as an independent department of the Parliament under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*. Its creation was a consequence of the political negotiations following the 2010 federal election, which had resulted in a hung parliament. As part of the agreement with independent members of the House of Representatives to support the Australian Labor Party (ALP) to form government, the incoming government committed to strengthen transparency and accountability in fiscal policy by establishing a parliamentary budget office. Its origin contrasts with that of many European IFIs, which were created in response to sovereign debt crises and broader concerns about the operation of fiscal policy and fiscal sustainability. This focus ramped up after the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 as the OECD and the International Monetary Fund began advocating for stronger fiscal oversight mechanisms.

As a result of these different origins, the Australian PBO is one of only 2 IFIs that do not have a role in producing or assessing macroeconomic or fiscal forecasts. Conversely, however, the PBO is one of only 4 IFIs that cost election platforms. The PBO's core functions include providing independent and non-partisan analysis of the budget cycle and fiscal policy, and costing the financial implications of proposals. Its services are available to all parliamentarians. It is accountable to Parliament through the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) and its work is subject to scrutiny via the standard Senate estimates processes.

The OECD's *Government at a Glance 2025* report outlined that the number of IFIs surged following the global financial crisis, with most OECD countries (29 out of 38, 76%) now having established at least one IFI. Most IFIs do at least some of the analytical work core to a fiscal advocacy role. A majority of institutions (25 out of 35, 71%) cover long-term sustainability analysis, and just over two-fifths produce either macro or fiscal forecasts or both (15 out of 35, 43%). However, only a few IFIs produce dedicated fiscal risks reports (6 out of 35, 17%) and even fewer produce election costings (4 out of 35, 11%).

3 Overview of past reviews

There have been 2 past reviews of the PBO, in addition to one audit and one inquiry (see Box 2). One review was conducted independently (by Dr Ian Watt AC and Mr Barry Anderson) during 2016–17, while the other was undertaken by the JCPAA in 2019–20. Following the 2022 election, the JCPAA chose not to request a review. Accordingly, the 2025–26 Review is the first independent review since 2016–17.

The 2016–17 independent review produced 17 recommendations, which were organised thematically to address the following objectives:

- Establishing a level playing field for costings, including recommendations to provide indications of uncertainty and to improve the timeliness and prioritisation of costings.
- Increasing the accuracy of costings, with recommendations focused on enhancing technical engagement and conducting ex-post analysis.
- Enhancing transparency, with recommendations spanning various fiscal issues, the Election Commitments Report, and PBO procedures.
- Ensuring appropriate resourcing and governance.

The PBO agreed with these recommendations and implemented them all. Of note, Recommendation 7 called for ex-post analysis of a limited selection of its costing estimates, to help identify areas for improvement in future costings. The PBO developed an evaluation methodology and conducted ex-post evaluations of costings. The outcomes of these were published in the PBO's Activity Reports. While this activity ceased in late 2021 as the PBO pivoted to election readiness work, the PBO has an ongoing process of reviewing and refining key models and costing approaches.

Recommendation 14 called for reconsideration of the PBO's post-fiscal update chart pack work, given that stakeholders found it to be of only limited benefit. After careful consideration, the PBO decided that rather than discontinue the chart packs, it would redevelop them to better address the concerns raised. The PBO has continued to iterate the chart packs, making them progressively more interactive and accessible.

The 2019–20 JCPAA review made 4 recommendations, primarily concerning future review governance and content. It also included a recommendation to increase gender distribution analysis. The PBO addressed this recommendation by including distributional analysis in its costing request form as an example of supplementary analysis. It also updated the costing guidance document to provide additional information on requesting distributional analysis in a costing. All other recommendations that were within the PBO's purview were addressed and implemented.

However, Recommendation 1 to establish an automatic referral process for future independent reviews requires legislation that has not been pursued by either the current or former Government. However, legislation already exists for the JCPAA to request a review after an election, so from a practical perspective the absence of progress on this legislation is not curtailing the operations of JCPAA or the PBO⁹. Recommendation 4 was for the next independent review to consider the election commitments report and the participation of minor parties and independents. This is considered in Chapters 6 and 10.

⁹ [Parliamentary Service Act 1999, section 64T\(1\)](#)

A comprehensive list of all recommendations from these 2 reviews, along with their implementation status, is provided in Appendix A.

Box 2: Past reviews of the Parliamentary Budget Office

- *Report 482: Review of the Operations of the Parliamentary Budget Office 2019-20*, JCPAA, September 2020
- *Parliamentary Budget Office Review 2016-17: Report of the Independent Review Panel*, Dr Ian Watt and Mr Barry Anderson, March 2017
- *Report 446: Review of the Operations of the Parliamentary Budget Office*, JCPAA, November 2014
- *The Administration of the Parliamentary Budget Office*, Australian National Audit Office, June 2014

Part B: PBO functions and responsibilities

The PBO plays a central role in supporting parliamentary scrutiny and informed fiscal debate by providing independent, non-partisan analysis and policy costings. Its responsibilities encompass responding to policy costing requests from parliamentarians, developing self-initiated research products, producing the Election Commitments Report, and engaging with a range of external stakeholders. Through these activities, the PBO seeks to strengthen fiscal transparency and enable better informed decision-making, underpinned by robust processes, responsive service, and a commitment to impartiality.

4 Parliamentary costing requests

The PBO provides all parliamentarians (including parliamentary committees) with access to advice on the financial implications of their policy proposals on request, based on the specifications¹⁰ they provide. This last point is critical. The requestor must submit detailed specifications to ensure an accurate costing. The PBO may engage the requestor to better understand the policy intent and establish appropriate assumptions, but it does not provide policy advice on the request *per se*.

Outside the caretaker period for a general election, parliamentarians may submit requests for policy costings on a confidential basis, requiring the PBO to keep both the request and its response confidential.

During the caretaker period¹¹ for a general election, parliamentary parties and independent parliamentarians can request costings of their publicly announced election policies. However, during this period the PBO is required to publish these requests, complete the analysis, and publicly release the costing response as soon as possible.

The PBO also provides parliamentarians with access to information relating to the federal Budget. For example, the actual spending profile of a budget measure over the last 3 years or what effects a policy change would have on the budget or on different groups of people. Parliamentarians can request this information on a confidential basis, regardless of when the request is made.

4.1 Process

The process for requesting policy costings and budget analyses is detailed in sections 64H and 64J of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*. Any parliamentarian, whether a member of the government, the official opposition, a minor party or an independent, can submit a request to the PBO. Costings can be requested to help develop policy or to influence internal and external debates. The PBO encourages parliamentarians and their offices to discuss draft requests with them, noting that to formally lodge the request, the parliamentarian or their staff must submit it with a signed letter or email from the parliamentarian.

¹⁰ This report uses the term 'specifications' to refer to policy design features provided by the requestor. The term 'assumptions' refers to those elements where the PBO applies independent judgement to inform the costing. Both terms are used by the PBO.

¹¹ The 'caretaker period' for a general election commences at least 33 days before the announced date for the election. It begins when the House of Representatives expires or is dissolved ahead of that election. It ends when it is clear that the Government has been re-elected or, if there is a change of Government, when the new Government is sworn in.

A parliamentarian requesting policy costings from the PBO specifies whether the costing should be public or confidential and whether they are submitting it as a private request or on behalf of their parliamentary party. The PBO provides request templates on its website along with guidance on how to complete them. The level of policy detail specified by parliamentarians can vary significantly, often reflecting the stage of policy development. Box 3 illustrates how costing approaches differ for parliamentarians working with government agencies and those engaging with the PBO.

When the PBO receives a costing request, staff often consult with the parliamentarian (or their nominated officer) to ensure the policy intent is clearly understood and the policy is comprehensively specified. The PBO researches the policy topic (engaging with the Parliamentary Library where necessary if the parliamentarian has given permission), requests any confidential data needed from other government agencies to model the policy, and builds or updates a costing model. On completion of the costing, the PBO provides the requesting parliamentarian with key information on assumptions, methodology and financial implications in a costing minute. This minute can also include distributional analysis in the response but this, typically, only occurs if the parliamentarian has requested it. The Review explores this aspect of the costing process further in Part C, section 11.2.

When the PBO is costing requests, it is **required** to use the economic forecasts and parameters and fiscal estimates (the baseline) from the most recent economic update. This is to ensure comparability with government costings prepared by the Australian Public Service.

'...in performing his or her functions under subsection (1) the Parliamentary Budget Officer must use the economic forecasts and parameters and fiscal estimates contained in the most recent relevant reports released under Parts 5, 6 and 7 of Schedule 1 to the Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998...'¹².

Under its legislation, the PBO operates at all times in an independent and non-partisan manner. If the PBO was to cost policies attributed to an individual parliamentarian or political party without their knowledge and active participation, the PBO could be perceived as acting in a partisan manner. Accordingly, the PBO does not prepare costings of policies attributed to an individual parliamentarian or political party without the knowledge and active participation of the originating parliamentarian or political party in the costing process.¹³

Occasionally, the PBO may receive requests to cost a policy that superficially looks similar to a policy initiative of another parliamentarian or party. Without the detailed specifications underpinning that initiative, the PBO is costing the requester's proposal, not that of the original policy proponent. Where the PBO has considered this to be the case, it has engaged with the requestor to ensure that they have been able to describe the policy intent as their own and to provide their own specifications. Where the requestor is unable or unwilling to do that the PBO has deprioritised that request.

¹² [Parliamentary Service Act 1999, section 64E\(3\)](#)

¹³ The PBO will, on occasion, provide analysis of announced government policy which is, due to timing, yet to be reflected in the budget baseline, particularly where it is likely to have a material impact on the federal budget.

Box 3: Different costing processes

Australian Government agencies work with their ministers to develop and iterate policy over a protracted period. They usually revise the cost of a draft policy multiple times to reflect considerations such as how to increase the likelihood of effectiveness, improve the ease of implementation, achieve particular distributional impacts, and address other implications.

Before the Government considers policy through the Expenditure Review Committee, the relevant line agency generally costs the final policy and the Department of Finance verifies the costing (for expenditure policy) or the Treasury (usually) prepares the costing (for revenue policy). In each case Finance or Treasury (or both) will comment on the implications of the policy as proposed, any trade-offs that may be required, and the relative merits of the policy vis a vis other initiatives under consideration by Government. In virtually all cases, a policy costing changes from initial idea to final decision as the form of the policy itself evolves.

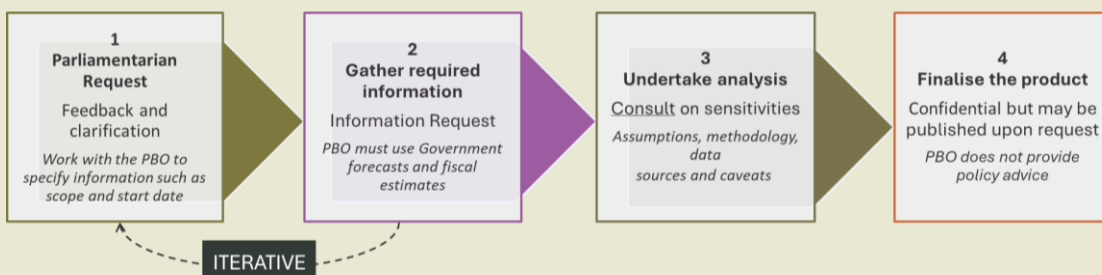
Unlike government agencies, the PBO does not advise parliamentarians on how to refine their policies to achieve particular outcomes because that would constitute policy advice. As such, it limits its role to interpreting the intent of a parliamentarian's costing based on the specifications in the request.

The PBO often contacts parliamentarians or their staff to clarify policy intent, specifications or intended implementation to cost the proposal accurately.

The PBO can also cost multiple iterations of a policy idea as a parliamentarian refines their thinking. However, it is neither mandated nor resourced to provide a service equivalent to what the Department of Finance and the Treasury are able to provide Government.

Figure 2 sets out the high-level process the PBO follows in responding to requests.

Figure 2: PBO parliamentary costing request process



Despite the best estimates of a policy's budget impact, all costing estimates carry some uncertainty about whether they would deliver actual outcomes in line with the intent. The level of uncertainty varies by the nature of the proposal being costed. It depends on factors such as data quality, assumptions, methodology, volatility of the costing base, and the magnitude of the policy change, as well as the behavioural response of affected parties.

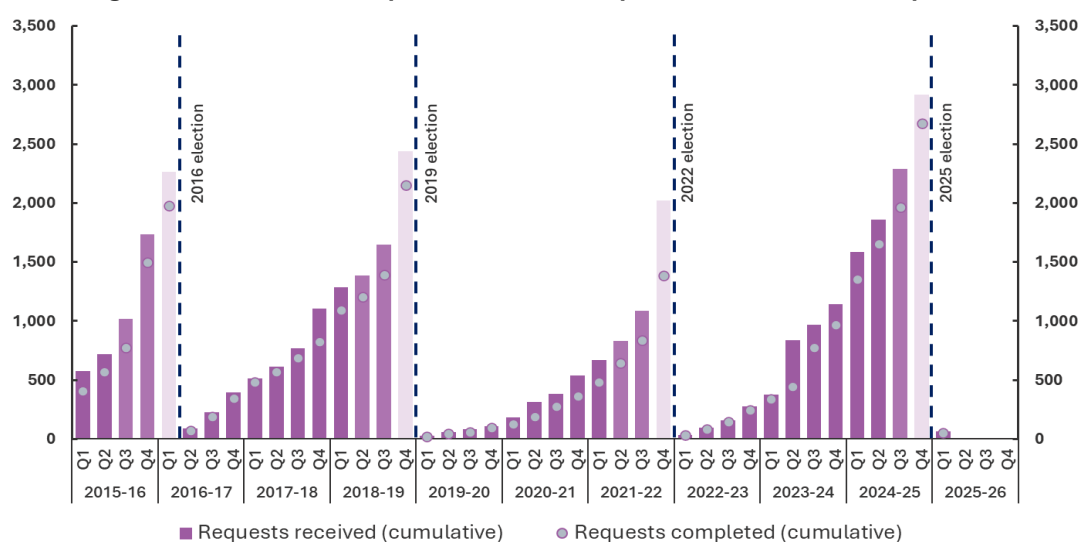
4.2 Demand

Request volumes tend to follow the parliamentary cycle, typically declining immediately after a general election and then increasing as policy platforms are developed and finalised, peaking in an election year (Figure 3).

The 47th Parliament generated the highest demand for costings in the PBO’s history, with almost 3,000 individual requests, of which the PBO completed over 2,600. Noting that a single request can contain multiple options, across the 47th Parliament the PBO received 6,100 request options and completed 5,713¹⁴. As expected, the number of requests fell after the May 2025 election, but the request volume in the first quarter of the 48th Parliament continues to rise, in line with an upward trend. The PBO received 64 requests (containing 174 options) in the first quarter after the 2025 election, compared with 35 requests (124 options) in the first quarter after the 2022 election.

A key theme coming through in the Review’s consultations and consistent with the continually growing costing demand is that parliamentarians consider the costing function to be the PBO’s primary business. The Review considers ways the PBO can further strengthen its credibility with parliamentarians through this function in Part C, section 9.

Figure 3: Total number of parliamentary requests received and completed



Source: PBO, *Parliamentary Budget Office Activity Report*, 23 October 2025.

4.3 Timeliness

The time required to complete a costing request depends on many factors. These factors include: the size and complexity of the request (and whether the PBO must research or develop new modelling to support the costing); whether the PBO must seek additional data or models from a government agency (agencies have up to 10 days to provide data); and whether the request is clearly specified. When a request lacks clarity, the PBO often spends additional time engaging with the requestor to seek clarification. If the PBO misjudges any factor, the overall time for completion changes.

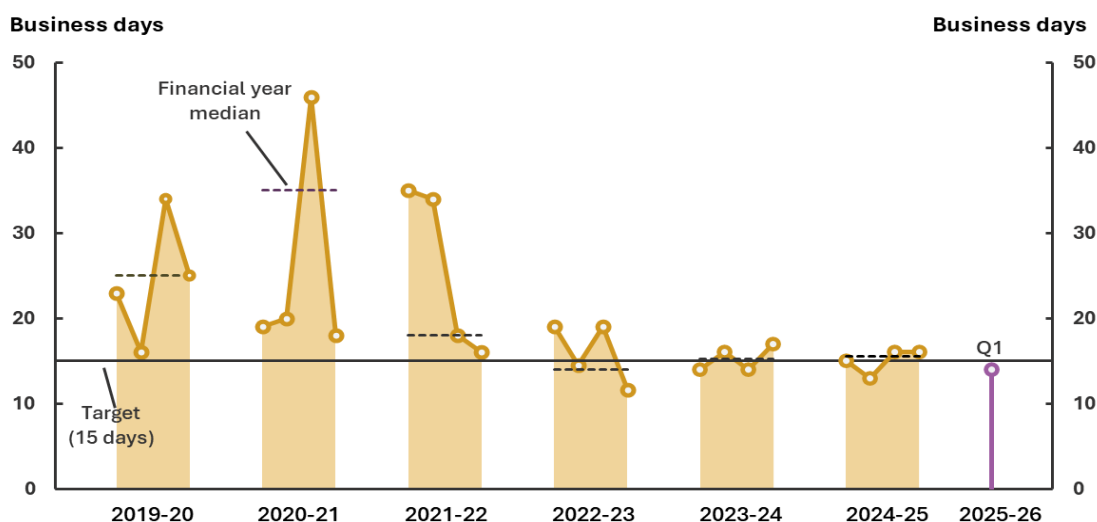
¹⁴ [2024-2025 Annual Report](#)

In 2024-25 the PBO’s reported metrics suggest a median completion time of 15 working days for a parliamentary request option (Figure 4). That the PBO delivered this result, despite receiving and completing a record number of requests, reflects a proactive approach to managing prioritisation in partnership with requestors.

However, the underlying results may not be as good as they initially appear as they reflect ‘adjusted’ days to completion. This metric excludes any time when requests were ‘on hold’. Requests are placed on hold while the PBO is awaiting clarification on the specifications from the requestor, or if the PBO has negotiated with the requestor to deprioritise the request, or at the request of the requestor.

For completed requests that were placed on hold in 2024-25, the average time on hold was 16 working days¹⁵. A total of 454 requests, representing 1,029 options and 41% of all requests, were placed on hold for some time during the period.

Figure 4: Median response time for policy costing and budget analysis request options (by quarter)



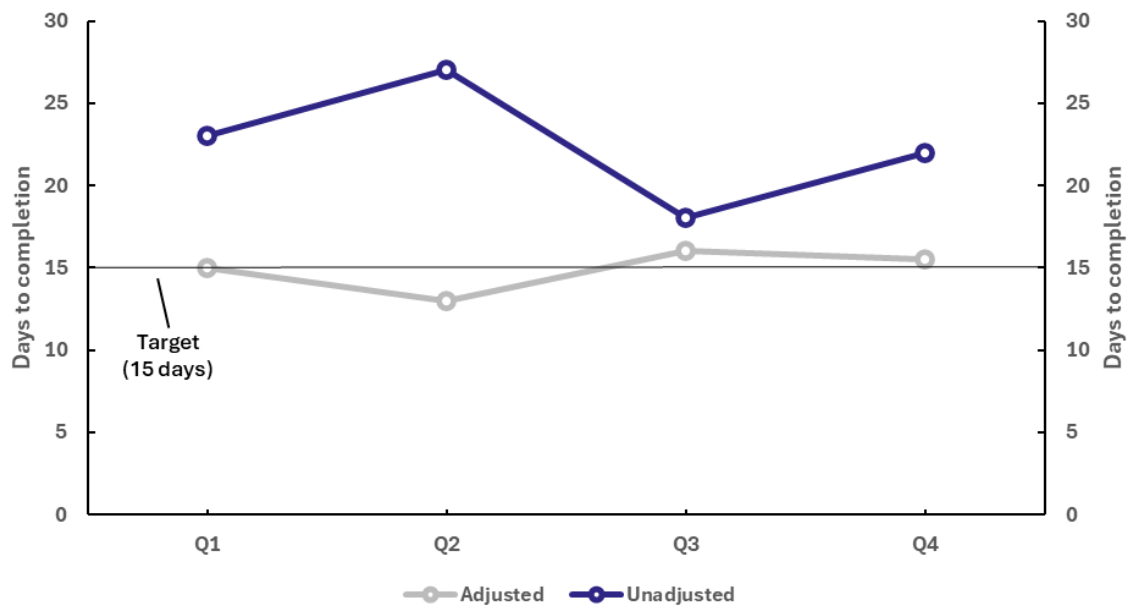
Source: PBO, *Parliamentary Budget Office Activity Report*, 23 October 2025

When days on hold are taken into account (to reflect ‘unadjusted’ days for completion), the median completion time per parliamentary request option in 2024-25 was significantly higher, at 22 working days. There was also significant variance by quarter (Figure 5) and some significant outliers. In particular in 2024-25, the PBO had 307 request options on the books for over 60 working days. This indicates that while the PBO’s official metric appears to show that it is achieving its target response time, this masks the lived experience of parliamentarians with the PBO’s timeliness. It suggests there is significant pressure on PBO resources, which is currently being met through active management and prioritisation of requests. For further analysis on the distribution of requests by adjusted and unadjusted days see Figure B1 in Appendix B.

The Review observes that parliamentarians and their staff advise that actual timeliness, reflecting unadjusted days to completion, is the key metric in their assessments of how effective the PBO is in providing support to the parliament. The Review explores this further in the context of the PBO’s corporate performance metrics in Part C, section 12.5.

¹⁵ The use of ‘on hold’ requests is described further in Box 4.

Figure 5: Median response time in 2024-25, adjusted and unadjusted working days (by quarter)



Source: Analysis of the PBO Review

4.4 Prioritisation

The PBO's prioritisation framework¹⁶ sets out the factors that the PBO considers when it must sequence large volumes of work. The priority setting framework criteria include:

- Relevance of the request to matters before the Parliament or soon to be before the Parliament
 - the PBO recognises the necessary timeliness of requests that are closely linked to current parliamentary debates, relate to upcoming Bills or relate to current Parliamentary committee inquiries.
- Level of priority given to the request by the parliamentarian's party and/or the parliamentarian
 - if a party does not have a central point to advise on its priorities, the PBO uses the party's leadership hierarchy to guide prioritisation.
- Level of representation in the Parliament of the requesting parliamentary party or the group of parliamentarians supporting a joint request
 - within this criterion, the PBO prioritises:
 - non-government parties ahead of government parties, given that Government members and senators can seek access to the public service
 - requests submitted on behalf of a group of parliamentarians ahead of those supported by a single parliamentarian, all else being equal.
- Extent to which the parliamentarian or party has recently made use of the PBO's services
 - the PBO prioritises infrequent users of its services.

¹⁶ [PBO costing processes, timeframes and prioritisation framework | pbo](#)

- Length of time that a request has been with the PBO
 - the PBO prioritises requests that have been with it for some time over requests which are afforded a similar priority by parliamentarians but which have only just been received.

In operationalising this framework, the PBO asks parliamentarians with multiple active requests to rank their requests by priority and identify any critical deadlines (for example, whether the costing will inform an item before Parliament). Box 4 describes how the PBO prioritises multiple requests. However, the way the PBO operationalises its costing work creates complexity when engaging with requestors, because while the PBO asks individual parliamentarians to prioritise their own costings, it does not disclose in real time the total number of requests on its books, of which the costings of each requestor form only a fraction. The Review explores this further in Part C, sections 9.2 and 9.3.

Box 4: Example prioritisation of a parliamentary request

Where an individual parliamentarian has several active requests with the PBO, the PBO asks them to provide a ranked list to assist with workflow management. This approach enables the PBO to allocate analytical resources according to the requestor's priorities. If a parliamentarian advises that a request is a lower priority, the PBO may place it on hold. The PBO engages with requestors to understand their priorities and assesses the prioritisation on a case-by-case basis.

5 Self-initiated products

In line with its legislated mandate, the PBO publishes a range of self-initiated products to enhance public understanding of the budget and fiscal policy. In its early years, the PBO limited this work to reports on specific issues, but it has since expanded to include self-help digital tools and interactive charts. This program of work aims to help parliamentarians, their advisers, the media, and the public grasp key fiscal concepts and engage more effectively in policy discussions.

The self-initiated work program includes new reports and updates to interactive tools. The latter are typically released after each budget update. However, the PBO's capacity to deliver enhancements – such as new analyses in regular reports, features on existing tools, and ad-hoc reports during the parliamentary cycle – is often limited by its resources and heavy costing workload as discussed in section 4.2.

5.1 Research mandate

The PBO can produce 'research' on any aspect of 'the budget', and it takes a broad interpretation of this legislated mandate (its research offering is outlined in section 5.2). There is one clear condition: it must base its analytics on the most recent economic forecasts and parameters and fiscal estimates¹⁷.

The Treasury prepares the government's macroeconomic forecasts (which underpin budget forecasts of revenue and expenditure) and the Intergenerational Report (the IGR, which contains long-run macroeconomic and fiscal projections).

In other international jurisdictions, independent fiscal institutions like the US Congressional Budget Office and the UK's Office for Budget Responsibility produce macroeconomic forecasts.

Some contend that the PBO should have similar responsibility for macroeconomic forecasts and the IGR, arguing that PBO-produced outputs would benefit from independence from Government and therefore not face suspicions of political interference. Indeed, this was part of the Australian Labor Party's platform in the 2019 election, although not part of its 2022 election platform. The Review considers this issue in Part C, section 10.2.

5.2 Research service offering

The PBO produces a series of regularly updated reports linked to fiscal updates, such as the budget, to help readers understand issues relevant to the current budget and fiscal outlook. Its flagship publications include the following:

- *Medium-Term Budget Outlook: Beyond the Budget* provides a detailed and independent view of the budget, fiscal outlook, and associated risks (Box 5).
- The *National Fiscal Outlook* consolidates short-term forecasts from state and territory budgets with the federal budget to present an aggregated view of the national fiscal position in the short-term. This is based on the independent assumptions made by each jurisdiction.
- The *Budget Snapshot* and *MYEFO Snapshot* offer interactive, graphical summaries of information contained in the most recent Budget release.

¹⁷ [Parliamentary Service Act 1999, section 64E](#)

Box 5: Medium-Term Budget Outlook: Beyond the Budget

The PBO's annual flagship publication, the *Medium-Term Budget Outlook: Beyond the Budget* (MTBO) report, has been produced in some form since 2015-16. It is published following the release of the annual federal Budget.

The budget outlines how the current government is forecasting revenue and allocating its resources (expenditure) and the resulting fiscal aggregates, over the forward estimates period (4 years), with limited information beyond this period.

In contrast, the PBO's MTBO provides detailed independent projections and analysis of the Australian Government's fiscal position across the medium term (10 years), based on those shorter-term forecasts.

The PBO also regularly provides updates to its *Historical fiscal data and forecasts*, and its *Unlegislated Measures Tracker*.

The PBO publishes other material, in various formats, to inform understanding of budget and fiscal issues, including:

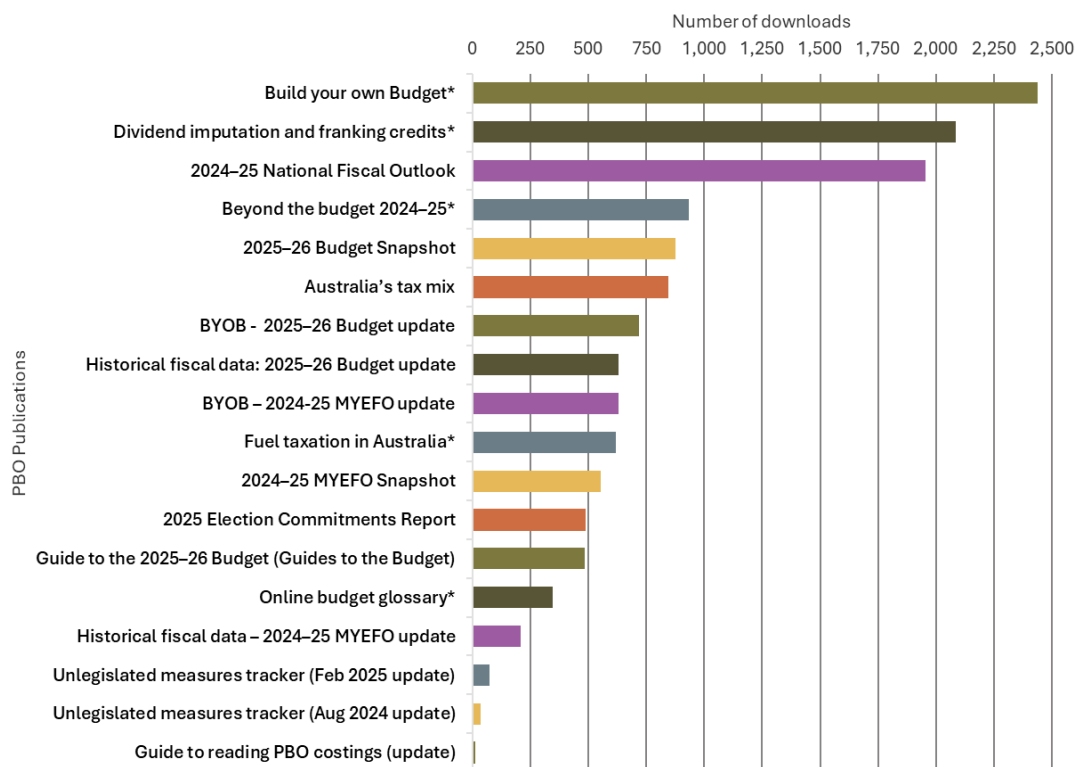
- research papers, which provide holistic analysis of specific topics
- explainers, which present easy-to-understand information about particular areas of policy
- budget bites, which provide insights based on targeted and topical analysis, such as the short-term impact of COVID-19 and the long-term trends in JobSeeker recipient demographics¹⁸
- information papers, which explain the underlying data, concepts, methods and processes used to prepare costings of policy proposals and budget analyses.

Appendix C lists the reports and tools the PBO has released since the JCPAA Review of 2019-20 (published in September 2020).

Figure 6 shows that many of the PBO's most popular publications date back to previous years, reflecting the continued relevance of 'explainers' and online tools. Some products experience a rapid increase in page views when public policy debates return to those topics, such as the explainers on dividend imputation and franking credits. However, the Review considers there are opportunities for the PBO to increase the impact of its publications, including through greater consideration of publishing key messages and through improved use of the media. This is explored further in Part C, section 10.1.

¹⁸ [JobSeeker Payment: COVID-19, age & gender | pbo](#)

Figure 6: Number of downloads between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025 for publications released in 2024-25 and prior years



* Publications released in years prior to 2024-25

Source: Google Analytics data from PBO, [Parliamentary Budget Office Annual Report 2024-25](#)

5.3 Evolution of interactive tools

The PBO has introduced several innovations through its self-help tools. These tools aim to make fiscal analysis more accessible and interactive for parliamentarians, advisers, media, and the public. Key areas of innovation have included:

- the development of interactive tools such as *Build Your Own Budget (BYOB)*, which allows users to adjust economic parameters and fiscal settings to investigate their impacts on the Commonwealth's fiscal position. Similarly, the *Small Model of Australian Representative Taxpayers (SMART)* allows users to adjust various personal income tax policy settings and to explore the fiscal implications of changes, as well as the distributional impact across taxpayers
- a move beyond static reports to interactive charts and dashboards that help users explore fiscal trends, projections and structural issues in the budget
- the establishment of a data portal that includes historical data published as part of PBO research publications.

The PBO has received positive feedback from both its direct client base and the public on the usefulness of these tools. Informal feedback suggests that parliamentarians use the tools to better target their formal PBO requests, some government analysts use them to consider the likely cost of options before developing formal proposals, educators incorporate them into

teaching in both schools and universities, and members of the public use them to deepen their understanding of the budget.

In addition to use by external stakeholders, the PBO uses these tools itself in completing costings, and they have driven significant efficiencies. For instance, SMART has reduced the time taken for personal income tax costings from days or weeks, to hours, while BYOB has several internal use cases, including estimating the impacts of CPI changes that flow from potential GST or excise adjustments.

5.4 Identifying and prioritising self-initiated research

The PBO's process for identifying and prioritising self-initiated research is designed to ensure that the research program aligns with its legislative mandate, delivers value to the Parliament and broader community, and makes efficient use of available resources.

The PBO chooses projects in part by the strength of the topic's relationship with its mandate and the contribution it can make by publishing on the topic. It focuses on:

- informing the assessment of medium-term trends and pressures on Australia's fiscal position
- improving the understanding of the budget, including through improving the accessibility and transparency of budget data.

In developing the program, the PBO consults primarily with its Expert Panel (see Box 6) to help ensure that topics are of interest to the Parliament and community.

Once topics are identified, the PBO undertakes a planning process that includes scoping the research, assessing resource requirements, and establishing timelines. Project plans are documented to clarify objectives, deliverables, and milestones. The self-initiated research pipeline is not static. Projects are reviewed regularly, with adjustments made in response to changing priorities, stakeholder feedback, and operational realities.

Box 6: The PBO's panel of Expert Advisers

In response to a recommendation from the 2016-17 Independent Review, the PBO established a panel of Expert Advisers. The panel provides:

- views on the PBO research program
- input into the scope of individual pieces of research and reviewing draft reports
- feedback on the guidance and technical material the PBO releases publicly
- expert advice on specific issues to improve the PBO's understanding of policy issues, including behavioural responses and consideration of distributional issues, and to better inform the development of models to cost policy proposals.

The Expert Panel comprises individuals who have experience across a broad range of policy areas. Panel members have no direct role in the preparation and provision of policy costings. The specifics of the confidential policy costing requests, including details of the requestor, are not disclosed to panel members.¹⁹

¹⁹ Terms of reference and membership of the expert panel is available here: [Expert panel | pbo](#)

The Review considers that there are further specific ways in which the PBO's self-initiated publications can contribute to informed national debate, and that wider consultation with the Parliament can better inform the research pipeline. This is discussed in Part C, section 10.3.

The PBO could also consider further how its self-initiated research pipeline supports parliamentarians in understanding the fiscal impacts of policies, which the Review explores in Part C, section 11.4.

6 Election commitments report

After each federal election the PBO is required to produce an Election Commitments Report (ECR), which shows the fiscal impacts of each major parliamentary party's election commitments. The ECR presents the impacts on a policy-by-policy basis, as well as the aggregate impact of each party's policy platform.

The purpose of the ECR is to provide transparency around the fiscal impact of election commitments. It serves an important role in encouraging parliamentary parties to announce fully costed election commitments underpinned by PBO analysis.

6.1 Requirements

Section 64MA of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* requires the Parliamentary Budget Officer to release a report outlining the financial impacts of all the election commitments that have a material impact on the budget for all parties with 5 or more members ('designated' or major parties). The officer must release the report within 30 days after the caretaker period ends for a general election or 7 days before the first sitting day of the new parliament, whichever is later.

The ECR must include the total combined impact of each party's election commitments on the budget for the current financial year and the following 3 financial years (the forward estimates period). The report may also include additional information beyond the statutory requirements.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer decides which commitments to include in the report based on party announcements made before polling day and their fiscal impact. Subsections 64MA(3) to (8) of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* set out how the Parliamentary Budget Officer must seek and may consider feedback from parties on the list of commitments with financial implications. Box 7 describes the requirements for an announcement to be considered a commitment for the purpose of the ECR.

In each post-election period, the PBO has met its legislative obligations on the ECR's timing.

Box 7: What makes a commitment for the purpose of the ECR?

For an announcement to be included as an election commitment in the Report, it must satisfy the following:

- The commitment must have been publicly announced. This may include announcements made before or during the caretaker period.
- The announcement must have been made by a candidate for, or member of, the party. This may include sitting parliamentarians who were not contesting the election (e.g. current members who are retiring or senators who are part way through their term).
- The announcement must be specific enough to cost. Where no firm commitment is made about the policy mechanism or details that would deliver on the announcement, it may be considered aspirational in nature. Announcements judged as aspirational are excluded from the Report, unless they have detailed actions to achieve an aspirational target.
- The commitment must have a material impact on the Australian Government budget. This includes commitments for additional expenditure that would be material but have a net zero impact because the party specifies that they would be offset by savings.

6.2 Evolution of the ECR

Since its establishment in 2012, the PBO has published 5 election commitments reports. At each election, the report has evolved – either in response to formal reviews or to enhance transparency.

Following a recommendation from the 2016-17 Independent Review of the PBO²⁰, the report's scope now allows minor parties (those with fewer than 5 members) and independents to opt in. Dr Helen Haines, the Independent Member for Indi, chose to participate in both the 2022 and 2025 reports. This resulted in her commitments being subject to the same rigorous costing and publication standards as those of the major parties for the 2022 and 2025 elections.

Another notable development has been the inclusion of medium-term impacts for each party's combined election platform, as well as for individual commitments. This extension beyond the traditional forward estimates period reflects that the impacts of many policies become most pronounced a number of years after the policies are implemented. Including the medium-term impacts means there is now a clearer view of the longer-term fiscal consequences of policy platforms.

The report now also features analysis on gross debt, net debt, and public debt interest payments, providing a more complete assessment of the fiscal impact of each party's platform. To further improve accessibility and public understanding, the ECR includes an interactive chart pack, enabling users to explore commitments by party, portfolio, and fiscal impact. In addition, the PBO now publishes individual costing documents for all election commitments with a material impact – including those with specified (capped) funding amounts – enhancing transparency and clarity for parliamentarians and the public alike.

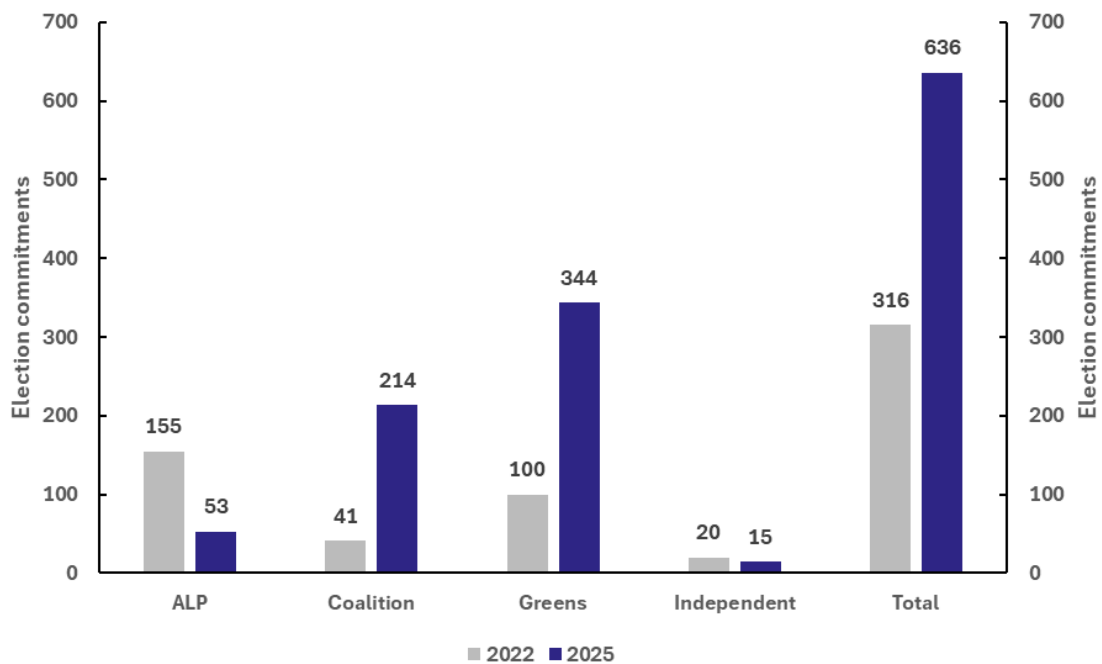
Enhancements to the ECR process have also been substantial. The PBO has strengthened its engagement and communication with major parties, notably through the provision of weekly lists of tracked potential commitments to each party during the caretaker period. This 'no surprises' approach ensures that parties are aware of which commitments are being tracked, reducing the risk of disputes and protracted discussions at the end of the caretaker period and supporting the accuracy of the final report. Internally, the PBO has developed a suite of new tools and systems to support the ECR process. These innovations have delivered efficiencies and improved staff engagement, while also reducing the risk of error.

The scale of the ECR has grown markedly over time, reflecting both the increasing number of election commitments made by parties and the PBO's commitment to comprehensive coverage. The 2025 ECR, for example, included over 2,500 pages of documentation and a record number of individual costings. Individual costings appear to be the most referenced aspect of the ECR, especially for the new or returning government.

Figure 7 illustrates the number of election commitments by party in the 2022 and 2025 ECRs. Despite the growth in the ECR's scale and features over time, the Review has observed that the ECR's impact appears to be limited. The Review considers this further in Part C, section 10.4.

²⁰ [Parliamentary Budget Office Review 2016-17](#), recommendation 13.

Figure 7: Election commitments by party in the 2022 and 2025 ECRs



Note: For the 2022 election, the Liberal-National parties in Coalition was the incumbent government. In 2025, the Australian Labor Party was the incumbent government.

Source: Analysis of the PBO Review

6.3 How the PBO organises itself to deliver the ECR

Delivering the ECR is a major undertaking for the PBO, requiring a coordinated, whole-of-agency approach. In the lead-up to and during the caretaker period, the PBO pivots its operations to focus almost exclusively on supporting election work. Staff from across the PBO are redeployed to priority tasks associated with the ECR, including tracking election commitments, preparing costings and managing stakeholder engagement. If needed, staff also work on the delivery of caretaker costings (see Box 8 below). This agency-wide mobilisation ensures that the PBO can meet tight legislative deadlines and maintain the rigour expected of its analysis.

Box 8: The PBO's role during the caretaker period

During the caretaker period for a general election, the PBO is available to cost policy proposals in specific circumstances. The PBO can only accept requests to cost publicly announced policies from an authorised member of a parliamentary party or an independent parliamentarian. Requests may only be submitted to either the PBO or the Treasury/Department of Finance, but not both.

Costing requests received in the caretaker period will be prioritised and completed as soon as possible, and the request and associated response will be published on the PBO website. During both the 2022 and 2025 general election caretaker periods, the PBO did not receive any caretaker costing requests.

A central element of the ECR process is the systematic tracking of election commitments made by parties and independents that opt in to the report. The PBO maintains a dynamic register of commitments, monitoring public announcements, party platforms and media releases throughout the campaign. The register is regularly updated and forms the basis for engagement with parties, which are provided with the weekly lists of tracked commitments. In the absence of the ECR being published ahead of the election, the Review considers that the weekly lists of tracked commitments present an opportunity to enhance transparency in the election context. This is explored in Part C, section 10.5.

To manage the significant workload during the election period, the PBO supplements its core team with secondees from other Australian Government agencies and Parliamentary departments. These secondees bring specialist expertise and additional capacity, supporting both the costing of complex policies and the administrative work required to track and document commitments. Their involvement enables the PBO to maintain high standards of accuracy and timeliness, even as the volume and complexity of work peaks. Secondees also receive valuable experience they might not otherwise easily get under normal circumstances.

The Review supports this approach and encourages the PBO and Australian Government agencies to continue this in the years ahead.

7 External engagement

The PBO's external engagement activity is an integral part of sustaining strong relationships with parliamentarians, other parliamentary departments, Australian Government agencies and the audience for its self-initiated products.

7.1 Parliamentary stakeholders

The PBO maintains a program of regular engagement with parliamentarians and their staff to support understanding of fiscal issues and facilitate effective use of PBO services. Budget Insights seminars are held throughout the year and cover various topics including explanation of the budget papers and demonstration of the PBO's analytical tools. These sessions are tailored to current parliamentary priorities and updated to reflect feedback from participants.

In addition to formal seminars, the PBO also offers drop-in sessions. These informal sessions allow parliamentarians and their staff to seek advice about how they might refine and submit a request, discuss costing processes, or receive demonstrations of PBO tools such as *Build Your Own Budget* and the *Unlegislated Measures Tracker*. Drop-in sessions are, at times, co-hosted with the Parliamentary Library, enabling participants to benefit from the combined expertise of both teams. The format encourages open dialogue and enables the PBO to respond to immediate needs and interests.

The induction program for new parliamentarians is another key element of the PBO's engagement strategy. New members and senators receive briefings on the PBO's functions, confidentiality protocols, and practical guidance on submitting requests. Induction sessions are also open to existing staff who wish to deepen their understanding of PBO operations. The program is refined based on participant feedback to ensure relevance and accessibility.

However, the induction sessions are typically conducted only at the very outset of the new Parliament, when new and returning parliamentarians are digesting large amounts of information from multiple sources. As a result, while the sessions provide essential guidance on PBO services and processes, the sheer volume of competing briefings means participants may not fully absorb or retain all the details at the time. From our observations, there are opportunities to improve the way the PBO engages with parliamentarians and their staff (see Part C, sections 9.1, 9.2 and 9.4).

Beyond scheduled events, the PBO maintains an open-door policy to ensure parliamentarians and their staff have ongoing access to support and expertise. PBO staff are available for ad-hoc queries, whether by phone, email, or in person, and can provide tailored advice on submitting costing or budget analysis requests, or on the use of PBO tools. This is typically supplemented by client relationship managers with each major party. This approach allows parliamentary offices to seek clarification or assistance as issues arise, without waiting for formal engagement events. The Review encourages the PBO to continue with these approaches to engagement.

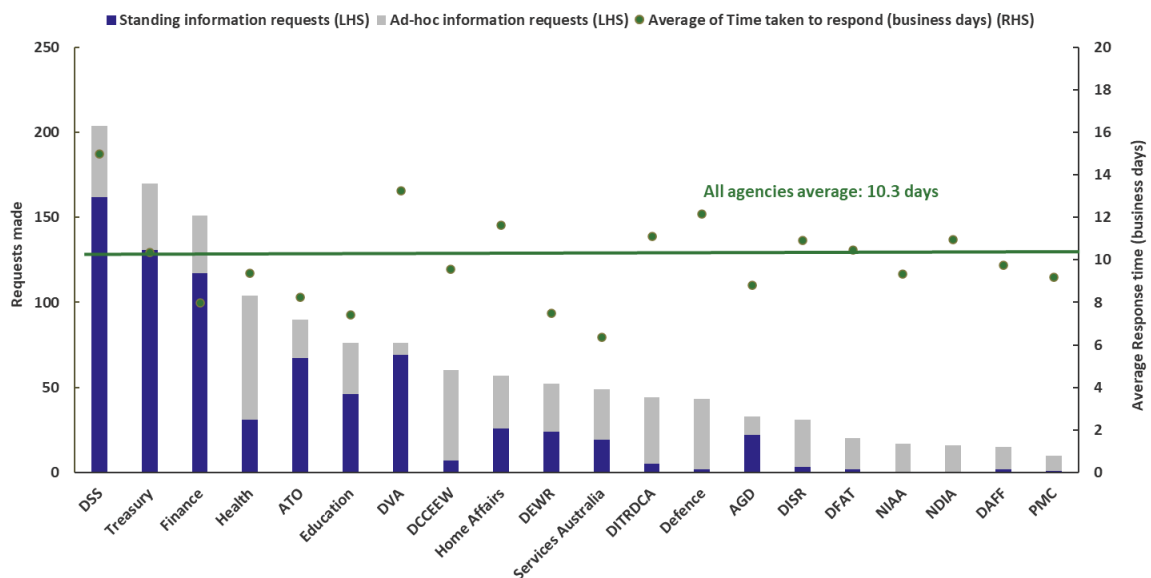
7.2 Australian Government agencies

The PBO engages with Australian Government agencies under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2012. The MOU formalises arrangements for the exchange of information necessary for the PBO to fulfil its statutory functions. It is accompanied by the [*Australian Government protocols that govern engagement between Commonwealth bodies and the PBO*](#) (the Protocols). The MOU and supporting protocols emphasise cooperation, a pro-disclosure approach, and the timely provision of documents and data.

Under the MOU and protocols, agencies must respond to PBO requests within set timeframes, providing data and model inputs required for the PBO to respond to parliamentary requests. As exemptions are very limited, it is critical that both the PBO and any agency providing information protect confidentiality. Agencies must not discuss PBO requests with their Ministers' Offices and the PBO protects the confidentiality of data to the maximum extent possible. The PBO's exemption from Freedom of Information (FOI) requirements supports secure engagement.

The PBO holds an annual meeting with Australian Government agencies to discuss its operating context and any questions that agencies might have. In addition, the PBO regularly reaches out to agencies to test costing methods without breaking the confidence of the requestor, particularly when approaching new policy costing topics. Figure 8 illustrates the number of information requests from the PBO to Australian Government agencies across the 47th Parliament. Box 9 describes how the PBO requests information, and the Review considers opportunities to further strengthen the PBO's collaboration with agencies in Part C, section 12.4.

Figure 8: Number of information requests made in the 47th Parliament, by agency



Note: Agencies where the PBO made fewer than 10 requests in total in the 47th Parliament have been excluded from this figure but included in the 'all agencies average'.

Source: Analysis of the PBO Review.

Box 9: How the PBO requests information

Information requests made by the PBO to Australian Government agencies can be standing, or ad-hoc requests.

- A standing request is a request for data that automatically follows each economic update, to ensure the PBO has up-to-date data, models and parameters to support its work without needing to issue multiple individual requests. An example standing request is one made to the Treasury for the projected economic parameters across the 10-year medium term, including gross domestic product, CPI and yield curve projections, which then underpin the PBO's own costings.
- Ad-hoc information requests for data or modelling happen as a one-off so the PBO can respond to a specific request from a parliamentarian. Ad-hoc requests may relate to specific policy programs of government, seeking projection or outcome data that is not publicly available but which is required to support PBO costing analysis, or is sought directly by the requesting parliamentarian and which is of a type that can be shared without creating confidentiality concerns.

7.3 Broader engagement

The PBO undertakes a range of engagement activities beyond its core interactions with parliamentarians and agencies. These activities are intended to support its statutory role and maintain awareness of developments in independent fiscal institutions globally. The PBO's Expert Panel – comprising academics and practitioners with expertise in economics, media and public finance – provides ongoing advice and feedback on the PBO's research agenda, methods, and outputs. Panel members are consulted on the design and review of self-initiated products, technical papers, and major reports.

International engagement is also a feature of the PBO's outreach activities. The PBO hosts delegations from overseas fiscal institutions and government agencies seeking to learn from the Australian experience. These visits typically involve briefings on the PBO's functions, operating model, and innovations in fiscal analysis, as well as discussions on challenges and lessons learned. The PBO also engages with the OECD, including through participation in the Annual Meeting of Asian Parliamentary Budget Officials. Engagement with the OECD and other international bodies, such as the International Monetary Fund, aims to ensure that the PBO remains abreast of global trends and notes the activities and experiences of peer institutions.

7.4 Coordinating engagement

The Review understands that the PBO coordinates its engagement activities to align with activities in the parliamentary cycle, aiming to ensure that support is available when it is needed and that resources are allocated efficiently. Engagement initiatives – including seminars, briefings, drop-in sessions, and outreach to external stakeholders – are planned with consideration of parliamentary sitting periods, major fiscal events, and the PBO's operational workload.

Early in the parliamentary cycle, engagement is generally more introductory in nature, while later in the cycle it typically has a greater focus on the election and the PBO's role. Seminars and briefings are usually scheduled around the time of key economic updates, such as the

release of the federal Budget or the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO). These sessions provide analysis and guidance to parliamentarians and their staff, helping them interpret new fiscal information and understand its implications for policy development. The PBO also increases the frequency of drop-in sessions and targeted outreach during periods of heightened parliamentary activity, such as around budget week.

The PBO's engagement with international delegations and external experts is managed on a demand-driven basis, subject to the availability of staff and the timing of core deliverables. For example, during the preparation and delivery of the Election Commitments Report, the PBO's capacity to host delegations or participate in external forums is limited. Resources are concentrated on meeting statutory deadlines and supporting parliamentarians through the election period.

8 People and systems

The PBO's people, culture, and systems are critical to its ability to deliver its legislated functions. They enable the PBO to provide robust and timely support for Parliament, underpinning the credibility and effectiveness of its work.

8.1 Culture

The PBO's 2024-25 Annual Report describes how the PBO has adopted a flexible operating model that is designed to maximise efficiency and enable it to meet the demand for its services. The Review notes that this model aims to break down traditional siloes, such as between the PBO's costing function and its self-initiated research function. Staff routinely work across multiple functions, contributing to policy costings, research, and corporate activities as needed. The Review understands that, within the PBO, there is an emphasis on open communication and a willingness to 'pitch in', with everyone encouraged to contribute ideas and take ownership of outcomes.

The 2025 PBO staff census results²¹ reflect high levels of staff engagement and satisfaction:

- 83% of staff responses to the statement '*I would recommend my agency as a good place to work*' were positive, a 6 percentage point positive variance from specialist agencies and a 7 percentage point positive variance from the Australian Public Service (APS) overall.
- 81% of staff responses to the statement '*My agency really inspires me to do my best work every day*' were positive, a 13 percentage point positive variance from specialist agencies and a 15 percentage point positive variance from the APS overall.

The PBO is seen as an employer of choice given the unique nature of its work and its parliamentary clientele. Staff often join the PBO as part of their career progression from the APS to obtain this broader experience of working for the Parliament.

In addition, the PBO's involvement in the Parliament of Australia Graduate Program provides early-career professionals with exposure to the different aspects of the PBO's work. Graduates gain experience in fiscal analysis, stakeholder engagement, and technical modelling, while receiving mentoring from substantive PBO staff. This program has helped the PBO attract talented individuals with diverse backgrounds and skill sets, complementing the recruitment of experienced professionals from across the public sector and academia.

Based on consultation with past and present staff, Australian Government agencies and parliamentarians, it is clear to the Review that the PBO is regarded as being highly collaborative with strong technical capabilities. From our observation, the PBO's reputation for high-quality, independent analysis has enabled it to attract and retain staff with strong technical and analytical capabilities. The agency's small size and flexible structure mean that staff are often involved in multiple projects simultaneously, fostering a culture where 'everyone works on everything' and where collaboration is the norm.

The Review observes, however, that although technical and analytical strength is a feature of PBO staff, there are opportunities to strengthen a staff culture of outreach and proactive engagement with the PBO's clients. This is explored further in Part C, section 12.1.

²¹ [APS Employee Census 2025](#)

8.2 Data and modelling capability

The PBO holds and manages valuable data assets and models sourced from across Australian Government agencies. However, the PBO's current ICT infrastructure limits its ability to fully leverage these resources. The Review notes that the PBO is working to further strengthen its data security, efficiency, timeliness and the overall quality of its products through several targeted projects. These include:

- Making greater use of integrated workflows to accelerate research and data discoverability. The PBO has strong internally-built workflow management capability, which handled over 2,600 completed costings and close to 1,400 information requests in the 47th Parliament alone. This project aims to ensure that past costing work is easier to search and analyse for the preparation of new request responses. In this way, analysts can better leverage past work and not start from scratch in response to incoming costing requests or new research tasks.
- Enhancements to the PBO's key data and models. The PBO utilises models provided by departments as well as PBO-developed models. In some cases, these internal models have decreased the time to undertake the costing analysis from 2 weeks to less than 2 hours, such as with personal income tax modelling and higher education loan modelling. Work to enhance the key models used by the PBO is continuing, focused on company tax, household assets and social security payments, to support the PBO's costing capability and to provide the ability to respond to requests in these policy areas more quickly.
- The PBO is also actively considering opportunities to integrate artificial intelligence (AI), where appropriate, into its work. It is already being used for meeting summaries and code development. Currently, AI's ability to produce a costing is unproven and, without a centralised data repository to act as a 'source of truth', AI's potential in this space will be limited. To maintain security, and to best leverage the potential of AI in the PBO's analysis, a centralised data repository (sometimes known as a data lake) would seem essential.

8.3 Security and data environment

Currently, the PBO stores data and models across SharePoint, SAS servers and staff laptops. The Review believes this fragmented approach risks compromising both efficiency and security, a view strongly shared by the PBO leadership.

The PBO's ICT environment depends on a shared services arrangement with the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS). While this provides a foundation for the PBO's technology needs, the PBO's requirements for advanced analytics and data management are unique within the parliamentary context. The PBO has acted as a testbed for new DPS initiatives, piloting tools and approaches before DPS rolls them out more broadly across Parliament. While this relationship allows the PBO to innovate, it also means that it is dependent on DPS for core infrastructure, security standards and ongoing support.

To increase its ability to deal with large costing request volumes – and since DPS priorities and PBO needs do not always align – the PBO has an internal citizen development approach. Staff can design, build and deploy digital tools, workflows and data solutions that directly support its business processes (see example in Box 10). This approach allows the PBO to more quickly respond to emerging needs and leverages the business expertise of staff.

Box 10: AI and Machine Learning in PBO Request Registration

The PBO has integrated AI and machine learning into its request registration process to improve efficiency and accuracy. The PBO's Registration App features an 'Assisted Registration' mode, which leverages an AI document processor to extract information from PDF costing requests and automatically populate the required fields in the registration form. PBO staff simply upload the PDF, and the AI securely reads and transfers the relevant data, allowing staff to confirm and submit the request with minimal manual input. This approach streamlines the registration workflow, reduces errors, and frees up staff time for higher-value tasks.

The Review notes that the PBO holds one of the largest collections of data and analytical models across the Australian Government, so data security and capability are fundamental priorities. The Review also acknowledges that PBO is investigating options with DPS for a suitable data management solution to address the fragmentation of data holdings, to support efficiency and security in the PBO's data management. The Review also recognises that the DPS approach to prioritising projects and funding involves balancing requests from all parliamentary departments. However, this means the PBO's projects must compete for attention and resources within a broader portfolio, notwithstanding the severe potential consequences of a breach of the PBO's data and information holdings. This leads to extended timeframes for the PBO's ICT priorities to be addressed which, in turn, delays potential efficiency gains in its core business of responding to parliamentary costing and budget analysis requests.

Although the PBO is working with DPS to develop a secure and centralised data holding platform, this has been a protracted process. It commenced in July 2022 with a request to DPS outlining the business case and has not yet come to fruition.

Depending on the scope of the identified solution for the PBO's data management, the range of costs could vary significantly and the timeline to implementation remains uncertain. The PBO may need to secure additional funding to ensure it can update this critical infrastructure. The Review regards it as critical that these issues are addressed as a matter of priority and further explores the PBO's ICT arrangements and its relationship with DPS in Part C, section 12.3.

8.4 PBO resourcing

Since its establishment in 2012, the PBO has operated with annual funding that began at approximately \$6.3 million, subsequently indexed by Wage Cost Index 3 (WCI3), less an efficiency dividend. While the WCI3 index has averaged 1.95% growth per year before application of the efficiency dividend, actual wage growth has been higher, at around 2.8% per year. The efficiency dividend has varied between 1% and 2.5% per year.

Over the period from 2012-13 to 2025-26, WCI3 has grown a cumulative 28.8%. When the offsetting impact of the efficiency dividend is taken into account, absent any one-off changes, over the same period the PBO's resourcing has declined in real terms. The PBO has on 2 previous occasions been provided with additional funding to meet resourcing pressures:

- 2013-14 Budget²²: \$4.5 million over 5 years (\$1 million per year ongoing from the second year and a fixed \$0.5 million (not indexed) in an election year) to enhance the PBO's fiscal policy analysis and costings capabilities as well as additional costing capacity prior to an election.
- 2019-20 Budget²³: \$5.3 million over 4 years and then \$2 million ongoing to meet additional costs associated with modelling and analysis and increased demand for services.

Since the most recent additional funding was provided in the 2019-20 Budget, some 7 years before the tabling of this report, the PBO's funding has not grown in real terms. This is despite the sustained increase in demand for the PBO's services (see section 4.2), and the importance of the PBO as a credible and trusted institution of the parliament.

The PBO was provided with a special appropriation reserve fund of \$6 million at its establishment in 2012, of which \$1.85 million remained as at 30 June 2025. The purpose of the reserve fund was to provide a financial buffer to support operational flexibility and independence. This carefully husbanded reserve has been utilised at an average of a little over \$300,000 per year for the last 13 years to cover early capital fit out costs, workflow software, additional staff and unexpected employee provisions on the PBO's balance sheet.

As highlighted above, in an election year, the PBO receives an additional \$500,000 appropriation to support its election-related work. This supplement has remained fixed in nominal terms since it was first provided in 2013-14. As a result, its real value has declined over time - \$500,000 in 2013-14 is equivalent to \$362,455 today if deflated by the CPI, or \$394,440 if deflated by WCI3. It can now only support a smaller increase in election year uplift.

The Review notes the PBO has sought to mitigate the risks associated with its level of resourcing through implementing a flexible workforce approach, including providing training and support for all staff to be able to deliver costings; investing in data and models to deliver efficiency gains; and exploring further opportunities for more self-service and automation. Part of implementing the workforce approach included reducing the number of Senior Executive Service (SES) staff from 7 to 5, and re-investing this saving in additional operational staff. As at 31 December 2025, the PBO had 44 full-time equivalent staff and a headcount of 48.

Recognising the steady deterioration in the real value of the PBO's funding, notwithstanding the steps the PBO has taken to mitigate risks, the Review considers that the PBO's resourcing is unlikely to be adequate to meet its ongoing requirements on a business-as-usual requirements. Indeed, the Review notes the PBO operated on a cash deficit last year and is likely to find itself in a similar situation this year – in both cases relying on a drawdown from its rather limited cash reserve.

Further, recommendations in this Review, such as the need for new pieces of research, additional distributional analysis, and more activities in the outreach and engagement space, are likely to require additional resources in an environment where there are little further trade-offs other than to cut dramatically the current and future service offering.

²² [Budget 2013-14 - Budget Paper No. 2: Budget Measures](#)

²³ [Budget 2019-20 - Budget Paper No. 2: Budget Measures](#)

Given the rise in the number of crossbench MPs and our earlier findings, this jars sharply!

The Review explores the PBO's resourcing further in Part C, section 12.2.

In order to undertake capital works in Australian Parliament House (APH), DPS has required the PBO to relocate out of its premises in APH, to West Block (a building within the Parliamentary Triangle) (see Box 11). As part of this relocation, the PBO incurred an additional operating loss of approximately \$1,062,000 related to asset disposal, reflecting the total carrying value of the fit-out and excess assets at the date of disposal.

This additional loss is attributed to the fit-out that will now be demolished, despite years left on its usable life, and a stock of furniture that cannot be re-used in West Block due to space constraints and which cannot be stored or moved to the alternative office space.

If we fast forward and imagine the timeline for a return to APH, it is clear that the PBO will need additional funding to support the relocation.

None of these costs – moving out, scrapping usable equipment, refitting to maintain necessary capabilities, potentially scrapping these, and moving back and fitting out a vacant space in APH – are decisions made by the PBO.

Rather, they are costs imposed on the PBO.

Without explicit and one-off supplementation, separate from a rebasing of the PBO's budget, there will only be one entity bearing these costs. The parliamentarians the PBO has been established to serve will inevitably see a diminution of the quality, and timeliness of support. It is hard to imagine how this can be squared with the PBO's important role in supporting them and our democratic processes.

The Review considers the PBO's accessibility while located outside APH further in Part C, section 12.2.

As an aside, while the Reviewer understands the need for repair and restoration work in APH and passes no judgement on the management of that building over different Parliamentary terms, he cannot help but reflect on the fact that yet again this is a national institution failed by the current budgeting system which does not allow managers to have the financial wherewithal to account for depreciation and regular maintenance on public assets, in the faith that the budget process will provide funds as needed.

Box 11: Capital works in APH

The PBO's move to West Block, along with parts of DPS, is to facilitate a long-term building renewal capital works program at APH. DPS is progressively addressing aged infrastructure, such as cabling, lighting, water pipes, sewerage and heating and cooling systems. This will also require DPS to ensure works are compliant with current building codes, and will take time and planning and is subject to funding. As part of the planning process, DPS will develop a communications plan for engaging building occupants, including the PBO. Indicative timeframes are also being developed.

Part C: Opportunities to enhance the PBO's effectiveness

As is clear from the previous sections, the PBO plays a vital role in supporting Australia's democracy by improving the quality of parliamentary and public debate on fiscal issues. Stakeholders from across Parliament, government, the public service, media and academia have consistently recognised the value of the PBO's role, in particular its highly regarded costing analysis and research publications.

That said, there remain opportunities for the PBO to further enhance its effectiveness by building on established strengths, taking advantage of underutilised opportunities, and addressing emerging challenges. These themes highlight ways to maximise the value and relevance of the PBO's work in an evolving parliamentary and fiscal landscape.

The PBO's influence relies on 4 pillars: credibility, transparency, service quality and impact. Credibility comes from rigorous, impartial costings that build trust. Transparency ensures fiscal sustainability assessments and election work are accessible and clear. Strong service offerings enable timely, relevant support for parliamentarians. Finally, impact is maximised when the enablers of the PBO's success are optimised.

Key enablers of the PBO's ongoing success include effective communications, an open culture, appropriate resourcing and effective allocation of those resources, robust ICT and cyber security infrastructure, and a collaborative approach to problem solving.

9 Credibility is central

Since its establishment, the PBO has expanded its capabilities to meet its mandate amid ongoing changes in the political, fiscal and technological environment. Interlocutors have consistently pointed to the PBO as delivering highly credible outputs, in particular by actively preserving its independence, maintaining a clear separation from political debate, and delivering uncompromised quality in its work.

The PBO provides an important service available to all parliamentarians and their staff. Parliamentarians rely on the PBO for independent costings and fiscal analysis, and sustaining this support depends on clear communication, timely responses, and a shared understanding of processes. By strengthening these elements of client service, the PBO can enhance its credibility, trust, responsiveness, and value for all parliamentary stakeholders even further.

9.1 The PBO's credibility is vital to its reputation as a trusted independent institution

Highly credible PBO outputs support democracy in numerous ways. Parliamentarians across the political spectrum have outlined the ways in which the PBO provides them with policy credibility while also holding them to account. When a parliamentarian uses a costing quantified by the PBO in party or public debate, it signals that they have properly considered and specified the proposal. Although parliamentarians would like the PBO to deliver costings with quicker turnaround times, they also recognise the broader benefit of the discipline required to specify and submit policy costing requests early in the policy formation process.

Parliamentarians spoke highly about the role of the PBO. As a member of parliament noted:

‘...I don’t know what life would be like without the PBO. I think it provides a really valuable contribution, and I can only image how difficult it would be, especially for an opposition without the resources, to be costing policies and challenging our thinking. I think it [also] forces a discipline on our own policy development approach, because ultimately we’ve got to satisfy the inputs required for the PBO [to cost]. So I think that’s a positive, and thank God we’ve got the PBO, is the short of it’.

A crossbench senator noted that the growth in minor parties and crossbenchers emphasises the importance of having a trusted and independent costing mechanism, stating that it is:

‘...incredibly important for democracy to have the PBO. It is an important plank for democracy [especially if] people are distrusting of politicians – important to have a trusted costing vehicle’.

The PBO’s credibility sometimes faces challenges, particularly in the lead-up to elections. During these periods, parliamentarians depend on the PBO to cost policies that will shape their election platforms, knowing these figures will appear in the Election Commitments Report. Under this pressure, parties occasionally dispute the PBO’s work – publicly or privately – if they believe their policies have been costed inaccurately or unfairly. Box 12 illustrates a contentious example from the 2025 election.

Box 12: Costing contention and the Coalition’s ASL reduction policy

The costing of election commitments can be a source of contention, particularly when assumptions diverge from party expectations. One example from the *2025 Election Commitments Report* involved the Coalition’s proposal to reduce the size of the Australian Public Service (APS) over time through natural attrition ([ECR-2025-2147](#)).

When preparing policy costings, the PBO is legislatively required to use the economic forecasts and parameters and fiscal estimates (the baseline) contained in the most recent economic update²⁴. As the trajectory of the APS staffing level is not explicitly published in the Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook (PEFO), the PBO needed to infer a projected number of APS staff - based on other information in the budget, including projected public sector employment, wage and salary data, this resulted in an inferred reduction of 22,500 staff over the 2025-26 forward estimates period.

However, the Coalition strongly objected to this approach, arguing that the assumed baseline was ‘fictitious’ and not reflective of the Government’s stated position. The Coalition cited public statements from senior Government ministers who rejected plans for such reductions, describing the PBO’s assumptions as hypothetical.

In its [formal response to the draft Report](#), the Coalition expressed concern that the PBO’s costing methodology effectively discounted savings from its public service policy by comparing it with a baseline that the Government had ‘no intention of implementing’. The Coalition argued that consistent treatment would require the PBO to also adjust the ALP’s

²⁴ [Parliamentary Service Act 1999, section 64E \(3\)](#)

costings to reflect the additional expenditure associated with maintaining higher APS staffing levels.

This example highlights the challenges the PBO faces in costing proposals where the policy space is uncertain or contested. It also underscores the importance of clarity in assumptions and the need for ongoing dialogue between the PBO and parties. This is to ensure that costings are fair, that budget mechanics are well understood and that the legislative requirements under which the PBO operates are clearly appreciated.

Recommendation 1: To strengthen relationships and credibility with parliamentarians, and enhance their understanding of PBO services, processes and products, the PBO should continue to mature its engagement activities with parliamentarians and parties informed by the parliamentary cycle, including for example:

- hosting 2 separate induction sessions for all parliamentarians within the first 12 months of a new parliament, which includes explaining the legislative underpinnings for the way in which the PBO operates
- providing pre-recorded and on-demand live demonstrations of how to utilise PBO self-help tools
- developing a suite of on-demand educational materials, such as short explainer videos, on topics such as how to navigate the budget process/papers, considerations to take into account when requesting a PBO service, when to use the PBO versus the Parliamentary Library, and why costings may change over time or as more detail becomes available
- short video introductions to Budget Explainer (and other) publications.

9.2 Parliamentarian perceptions of the PBO as a ‘black box’

Consultation feedback showed that some clients – parliamentarians and their staff – perceive the PBO as a ‘black box’. This perception stems from uncertainty about turnaround times and the prioritisation of requests, as well as limited visibility into some of the assumptions and methods the PBO uses when preparing costings based on the requestor’s provided specifications.

The PBO has established guidance for engagement and communication such as promptly acknowledging requests and providing indicative timeframes. However, PBO staff do not always follow these processes, especially during periods of high demand. Clients have reported that while the PBO generally quickly acknowledges receipt of requests, updates on the likely completion dates or progress are often sporadic. Surges in requests exacerbate this inconsistency, making it harder for the PBO to estimate completion times. Delays can also result from complex requests, the need for additional data from agencies, or misunderstandings about specifications. As a result, clients often feel uncertain about when they will receive responses. Some noted that significant requests can take 2 months or longer, and it is not always clear at the outset which requests will experience extended delays.

Direct feedback from parliamentarians reinforces these themes. For example, a crossbench parliamentarian described the process as:

‘...a bit of a black box...’

They noted uncertainty about when work would be returned and the importance of maintaining dialogue to ensure requests are understood.

Another member reflected on the lack of transparency and the difficulty in obtaining timely responses, sometimes waiting days for a call back. Others, including a crossbench senator, acknowledged the PBO’s reputation but noted that the assumptions and calculations behind costings are at times unclear.

The PBO’s interpretation of the confidential nature of its work manifests in clients not being informed about the total volume of requests. The Review considers that providing information about the stock of requests would not undermine the PBO’s commitment to confidentiality.

The Review also believes that the PBO’s current approach leads to unnecessary client frustration and the perception that the PBO’s decision-making is opaque. All of these concerns can be partially addressed by the PBO being more open about the volume of work and resource constraints the PBO faces without disclosing details of specific work or clients.

To strengthen its credibility, the PBO should engage more effectively with parliamentarians. It can achieve this by educating them on PBO processes and services, engaging early and consistently with individual requestors, and more clearly communicating acknowledgement, specifications, method, and progress.

Recommendation 2: The PBO should provide greater transparency and visibility to parliamentarians of the status of their requests, including an indication of the total costing stock on hand to help parliamentarians understand the likely timing of a response to their request.

9.3 The PBO’s use of its prioritisation framework

The *PBO costing processes, timeframes and prioritisation framework*²⁵ is intended to manage expectations by setting out the criteria that the PBO applies to determine the priority given to particular parliamentarian requests against all other outstanding requests. The framework was first issued in February 2018 and updated in September 2022. It considers factors such as the relevance of particular issues in the contemporary debate and the priority that parliamentarians place on individual requests if they have submitted multiple requests.

Parties engage with the PBO in different ways. Differing approaches influence both the efficiency of the PBO’s engagement and parliamentarians’ experience of its transparency and responsiveness. Box 13 sets out differing approaches parties have taken to engaging with the PBO, and the different results these can have for parties’ experiences of the PBO prioritisation process.

²⁵ [PBO costing processes, timeframes and prioritisation framework | pbo](#)

The Review does not suggest that the PBO should be prescriptive in how parliamentarians choose to engage, or reduce the ability of any parliamentarian to seek costings. However, in the lead up to the election it may be beneficial for both political parties and the PBO for engagement to be more centralised. The Review would encourage the PBO and parliamentary parties to explore whether this is feasible and, if so, how best it might be implemented, noting that the Review is not suggesting it be mandated or that such engagement follow any particular model.

Box 13: Differing approaches to engagement with the PBO

Parties adopt varying approaches to engaging with the PBO, which can significantly affect how their costing requests are managed and prioritised. The following examples illustrate 2 different approaches pursued in the run-up to previous elections, and their respective outcomes:

- Party A centralised all requests through the party leader’s office, with oversight and coordination from one of the leader’s policy advisers. This centralised approach allowed the party to maintain a comprehensive overview of all active requests and to set internal priorities before submitting them to the PBO. As a result, the PBO could engage with a single point of contact, enabling clearer communication about progress, deadlines and any required clarifications. This structure also allowed the party to strategically sequence its requests, ensuring that what it regarded as the most critical issues were addressed first.
- In contrast, Party B did not centralise its engagement. Instead, individual parliamentarians submitted requests directly to the PBO, sometimes nominating the request as a ‘party’ request and sometimes as a ‘private’ request. While this approach offered flexibility and autonomy to parliamentarians, it likely led to fragmented communication and less visibility across the party about the status and prioritisation of requests. The PBO must engage separately with each parliamentarian where requests are designated ‘private’. This can make it challenging to coordinate timelines and manage expectations, particularly during periods of high demand.

Recommendation 3: The PBO should promote and raise awareness of its costing prioritisation criteria to support better engagement with its parliamentary clients.

Recommendation 4: So that it can better prioritise the most important requests of parliamentary parties, the PBO should encourage parties to consider centralising requests in the lead-up to an election.

9.4 The challenges in preparing independent policy costings

The PBO has built trust and credibility with both the public and parliamentarians. Stakeholders noted that when PBO information is published, it is treated as fact. Despite this, the PBO's costings are sometimes challenged, to varying degrees of justification. Errors can occur. Across the 47th Parliament, fewer than 1% of its costings were reissued because of a PBO error²⁶.

However, most costing disputes and changes arise because of confusion surrounding the specification of the policy to be modelled, dispute over the assumptions, inaccuracy due to the high-level approach used, or updates required because of the emergence of new information. For the PBO's continued credibility, it is important to distinguish these different instances and the necessary actions required to address them. This includes genuine errors and the actions to correct these, which the PBO should acknowledge with the relevant parliamentarian.

Box 14 provides examples of some of these broader instances, comparing costings where there is a dispute over assumptions, inaccuracies have occurred, or new information has been received. These issues are more likely to arise around elections, in part due to the volume of costings underway at the time and in part due to the political nature of elections. The PBO has a range of quality assurance processes in place to minimise this risk.

Box 14: Costing disputes and changes

Costings can change over time for a range of reasons. Sometimes, there is a dispute over assumptions, or the original estimate is inaccurate. In other cases, the underlying information available to the PBO evolves.

- As detailed in Box 12, in the 2025 election the Coalition did not believe that the ASL staffing profile baseline assumed by the PBO was fair.
- During the 2022 election, several costings for the Australian Labor Party platform included departmental funding allocations that were later found to be materially understated and therefore inaccurate. Following the election, several departments raised concerns that the resources allocated to implement the commitments were significantly lower than required. In response, the PBO has since strengthened its engagement with departments to better understand the drivers of departmental costs and improve the robustness of future estimates. These changes aimed to ensure the PBO's costings are fit for purpose and reflect operational realities.
- In contrast, a costing prepared well ahead of the 2025 election for another request was later revised when the scope of the associated policy and proposed agency expanded significantly. The original estimate was based on specifications suggesting a relatively narrow role for the proposed agency. However, when the policy was publicly announced closer to the election, the agency's responsibilities had grown substantially. The PBO had to move to a set of assumptions that deviated from the original costing specification, resulting in a higher cost estimate. This was not an error, but rather a reflection of the evolving nature of policy development and that costs will change when there are changes to policy specifications.

²⁶ The US Congressional Budget Office uses a benchmark of fewer than 5 calculation errors per year, or less than 1% of cost estimates. CBO, [How CBO prepares cost estimates](#).

The PBO engages with parties across elections in a number of different ways. In the lead up to an election and ahead of the caretaker period, it typically costs a range of policies for non-government parties so they can refine what they wish to take to the election. When these decisions have been made by the requestor, it allows the party or individual to communicate the costs of the policies before the election.

Importantly, while government parliamentarians can have costings prepared by the PBO, they cannot seek to use both the Treasury/Department of Finance and the PBO to cost the same policy proposal.

Costings of all significant policy commitments by major parties are collated and published in the Election Commitments Report after the election. The Parliamentary Budget Officer classifies commitments only after consultation with parties. For government election policies where costings have been prepared by either the Treasury or the Department of Finance, the PBO reviews the costing models and approaches used, and extends the estimates out across the medium term. Where the PBO disagrees with the method used, they discuss their concerns with the relevant agency.

As the Review has noted, when costings are politically contested (such as with questions about methodological differences which may arise with Australian Government agencies), the PBO's credibility and reputation can be undermined. Stakeholders recognise that when the PBO's credibility is challenged, its role in democracy is undermined. A parliamentarian noted that:

'...maintaining a solid reputation is essential, you can't have political parties attacking it [the PBO]'.

Due to the large number of costings and the PBO's relatively limited resources, mistakes will sometimes occur as we have noted (Box 14).

When preparing policy costing responses, the PBO is required to communicate its approach to the costing, including method, assumptions and uncertainties, in a way that is clear, transparent and accessible to parliamentarians and their staff. Noting also that parliamentarians may elect to publicly release a costing, the PBO needs to take the broader public into account with its drafting. Each costing minute begins by summarising the policy specification provided by the requestor and then goes on to describe the key assumptions the PBO has adopted, aiming to make it clear exactly what has been costed.

The PBO aims to detail the key assumptions and methodology used, providing enough information for an informed reader to understand, and potentially replicate, the approach. Uncertainties are addressed explicitly, with qualitative statements tailored to the specific sources of uncertainty in each costing such as data quality, modelling assumptions, or potential behavioural responses. This is so that users can understand the confidence level and limitations associated with the estimates.

Stakeholders generally express appreciation for the clear layout and appropriate level of detail provided in costing minutes. However, some feedback suggests a desire for even greater neutrality in the presentation of information.

As one adviser commented:

'...I wouldn't wish to direct the PBO in terms of the language, about the policy impact of a certain proposal, but these are political documents, and I think what we would prefer is a kind of neutrality or [an over]... minimalism on things that are outside scope of the methodological assumptions, that are required for that output.'

While the Review understands the reasoning behind this sentiment, it is critically important that the PBO spells out the methodological assumptions in its costing responses, and that this be done in politically neutral language. It is important that costing responses are meaningful and relevant to the audience, whether parliamentarians and their staff or the general public, while maintaining the PBO's independence.

Recommendation 5: The PBO should introduce mechanisms to ensure there is early, open and ongoing engagement with requestors on their costing requests to ensure clarity of specifications and assumptions and improve understanding of results.

10 Enhancing transparency

The PBO's roles in promoting fiscal and election transparency and providing analysis and contributions to the fiscal debate are highly valued. To maximise the impact and awareness of its self-initiated work, the PBO should consider how best to engage the media.

Regarding the Election Commitments Report specifically, the PBO should engage stakeholders before considering a revised output and publication strategy. The PBO can also present information about Australia's fiscal risks more effectively, particularly over the medium term, including by highlighting the market assumption that the Australian Government is an implicit guarantor of state and other entity debt.

There is no need to extend the PBO's mandate into macroeconomic forecasts – or, indeed, the Intergenerational Report (IGR). The existing outputs of the Treasury are highly respected and can be easily contrasted with the forecasts of the operationally independent Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA).

10.1 Building the PBO's influence and impact

The PBO's self-initiated work plays a valuable role in informing and educating both parliamentarians and the public about Australia's fiscal and budgetary settings. Through analysis, explainers and self-help tools, the PBO seeks to demystify complex fiscal concepts and foster informed public discourse. Despite these efforts, public awareness of the PBO's work is at times limited, and key findings are often difficult to locate within the PBO's reports.

The PBO's mandate includes enhancing understanding of fiscal policy, yet its outputs do not always reach or resonate as effectively as they could with parliamentarians or the public. The agency's website and social media channels serve as primary dissemination platforms, but external engagement – particularly with the media and other influential intermediaries – has been limited.

A barrier to greater impact is the accessibility of the PBO's analysis. Stakeholders have noted that key analytical findings are sometimes buried in reports, making it challenging for readers – especially non-specialists and journalists – to quickly identify and communicate the most important insights. This reduces the likelihood that PBO research will be cited or discussed in public forums, further limiting its impact. In particular, as traditional models of journalism have been disrupted, it is unrealistic to expect journalists to be able to quickly discern and digest key results when they are hidden.

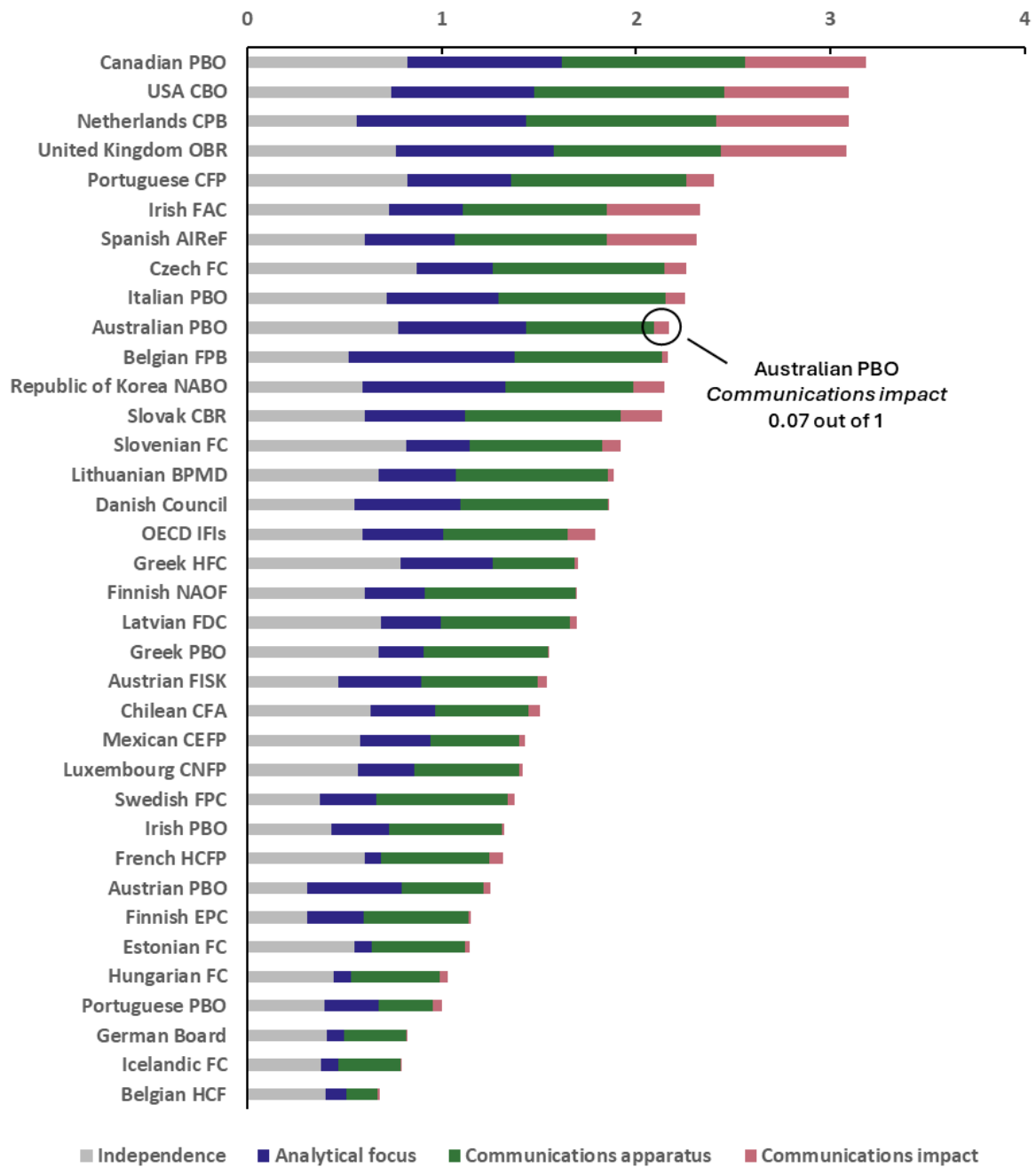
An individual interviewed for the Review reflected:

'...the PBO has developed a high level of trust, they are discreet, produce high quality work, work well on the hill, with departments and the system more broadly – don't want to jeopardise these things by becoming a policy house. [But] the PBO may not be taking maximum advantage to inform public debate – not using the media to bring it to prominence'.

Feedback from the PBO's Expert Panel suggests that the PBO's influence could be expanded by leveraging journalists, academics, and other economic stakeholders to amplify its insights. The

OECD’s 2024 Fiscal Advocacy Index highlights this challenge (see Figure 9 and Box 15). The Australian PBO scoring well below comparable institutions on communications impact, reflecting low national media coverage and limited public engagement²⁷.

Figure 9: OECD Fiscal Advocacy Index, 2024



Source: *Government at a glance 2025*, OECD.

²⁷ See the OECD’s *Government at a glance 2025* publication, page 133.

Box 15: Indicators of Independent Fiscal Institution (IFI) effectiveness

The OECD has developed a set of indicators – the Fiscal Advocacy Index – to assess the effectiveness of IFIs across member and partner countries. It is designed to capture how well IFIs promote fiscal policy through analysis, transparency and institutional strength. The index is built on 4 dimensions:

- **Independence:** this is the extent to which IFIs effectively provide impartial advice to policymakers and the public. Independence ensures credibility and trust in the IFI's assessments, especially when scrutinising politically sensitive decisions.
- **Analysis:** a strong analytical focus allows IFIs to provide comprehensive and forward-looking fiscal insights that inform policymaking.
- **Communications apparatus:** the ability of an IFI to communicate directly with the public and engage with the media separates it from other non-partisan research services. To do this effectively, IFIs should have robust tools in place to disseminate, promote and track the impact of their work.
- **Communications impact:** this dimension gauges the final impact an IFI has by considering its prevalence in media discussions and the public's interest in the institution.

As Figure 9 shows, the PBO scores relatively highly on the first 2 of the OECD dimensions but particularly poorly on communications impact.

The PBO's broader publication strategy is passive – it releases reports and waits to see if anyone uses them. This is inefficient and reduces the potential impact of its work. It should take a more active approach while recognising and protecting its impartiality. The PBO could do this by better explaining its product and giving journalists more time to digest the analysis.

In order for the PBO to ensure its work resonates with both parliamentarians and the broader public and it delivers on its mandate to enrich Australia's democracy through independent budget and fiscal analysis, the PBO should consider its messaging strategy at the outset of self-initiated project planning. It should have as an explicit objective to seek clear and impactful communication of findings and this should guide how its analysis is presented.

The PBO should give greater attention to the use of media channels and release strategies that maximise reach and comprehension. The PBO should consider providing embargoed copies of new self-initiated reports to journalists ahead of official release and conducting media background briefings.

The recent trial of the embargo approach with the 2025-26 release of the Medium-Term Budget Outlook (MTBO) demonstrated its potential to support more timely and accurate reporting. Journalists were able to prepare coverage under less time pressure and engage in clarification discussions with PBO staff. Embedding this embargo approach as standard practice would allow for more strategically timed media coverage, wider dissemination of PBO outputs, and improved accuracy in public reporting.

Recommendation 6: To ensure that its key findings have a significant impact, the PBO should highlight the important insights of its research more prominently, rather than burying them within reports.

Recommendation 7: The PBO should provide embargoed copies of new self-initiated reports to journalists and conduct media background briefings to enable journalists to provide more substantive coverage of PBO outputs.

10.2 Macroeconomic forecasts and the Intergenerational Report

Political interference in economic forecasts has been cited as an issue in other international jurisdictions (including in the United States and the United Kingdom, prior to the establishment of the independent CBO and the OBR respectively^{28,29}). However, there is little or no evidence of any political interference or bias in forecasts in Australia – the Treasury-prepared economic forecasts are highly trusted and the processes subject to review (although there has not been an independent review since 2015³⁰). Moreover, the forecasts can be compared against RBA forecasts as a cross-check, and private sector economic forecasts typically cluster around the government’s forecasts. Where there are differences between government and RBA forecasts, these often only relate to timing (the government’s forecasts are released with budget updates while RBA forecasts are released within the quarterly Statement on Monetary Policy)³¹.

Macroeconomic forecasting is a technical specialist skill in scarce supply in Australia. The official economic forecasters (the Treasury and the RBA) undertake constant analysis of the economy throughout the year. This combination of deep sectoral knowledge and constant monitoring of data underpins the capacity to develop forecasts. The Review believes it would be difficult to sustain this capacity if the PBO only turned its attention to economic analysis during twice-yearly budget updates or while producing the Intergenerational Report (IGR). As such, the Review does not support an extension of the PBO’s mandate into the preparation of macroeconomic or budget forecasts.

On occasion, the PBO publishes scenario analysis, on the sensitivity of budget estimates to changes in economic parameters. The PBO should continue to publish this sort of analysis to support public understanding of fiscal estimates.

The PBO currently produces fiscal sustainability assessments across the IGR’s 40-year time horizon in its MTBO publication, but the purpose and the methods are different. The IGR reflects a no-policy change scenario, while the MTBO considers that budget balances will remain similar to their past levels on average. Both add value to the public debate.

The Review does not believe there is value in changing current responsibilities around preparation of the IGR. However, given the time horizon it assesses, a mechanism for independent scrutiny of the IGR’s implications may have value. The JCPAA is well placed to undertake this with support of the PBO.

²⁸ [History | Congressional Budget Office](#) “The Congressional Budget Office to provide the Budget Committees and the Congress with objective, impartial information about budgetary and economic issues”

²⁹ [Trussonomics and the OBR - UK in a changing Europe](#); “The OBR itself was created...[to] improve fiscal scrutiny and responsibility, preventing political interference in the presentation of the fiscal position – for example, stopping Chancellors from adopting over-optimistic growth forecasts”

³⁰ [Review of Treasury’s Macroeconomic Forecasting Capabilities](#)

³¹ [Review of Treasury Macroeconomic and Revenue Forecasting](#)

Recommendation 8: To allow for independent scrutiny of the implications of the Intergenerational Report (IGR), upon each release of the Report the Parliamentary Budget Officer should write to the JCPAA offering to provide the Committee with sensitivity and other analyses.

10.3 Medium term fiscal risks

In Australia, fiscal reporting is undertaken by government agencies but generally issued by ministers. The Treasury and the Department of Finance jointly prepare budget papers. Like the economic forecasts, these outputs are broadly perceived as trusted, and the institutions, while obviously not independent of government, are regarded as having high integrity.

The PBO publishes its own independent assessment of Australia's fiscal outlook and sustainability in its annual MTBO report³². This report contains detailed independent fiscal projections across the medium-term period (the budget year and the following 10 years) and analyses the risks to these projections³³.

Some countries have adopted explicit fiscal frameworks and fiscal rules, which aim to hold incumbent governments to account. These are typically numerical constraints on government finances, like shares of spending, tax, or debt as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) (see Box 16).

Australia does not currently utilise such approaches. In lieu of fiscal rules, the budget typically contains statements describing the fiscal strategies of the current government. Some argue that this is insufficient and numerical fiscal rules should be in place^{34,35}. In its concluding statement to the recent Article IV Mission to Australia, the International Monetary Fund suggests that Australia should adopt fiscal rules to safeguard sustainability, such as by outlining medium-term fiscal anchors, suggesting the PBO (or Treasury) could have a role in overseeing them³⁶.

The Review believes there would be limited value in expanding the PBO's mandate to include a more explicit fiscal watchdog role. It would require additional resources to do this work with credibility and would inevitably make the PBO a participant in political debates that are rightly the role of elected representatives. However, there is scope for the PBO to lean further into its educative role around fiscal frameworks. It would be helpful for the PBO to prepare a budget explainer on fiscal rules as a theoretical concept. The explainer could discuss fiscal rules, including their merits and their use, both internationally and historically in Australia.

³² [2025-26 Medium-Term Budget Outlook: Beyond the Budget | pbo](#)

³³ While the PBO cannot prepare or use its own economic forecasts or projections, nor fiscal estimates in the forward estimates period, it is not prohibited from preparing fiscal projections (in the medium-term period).

³⁴ [Keeping Budgets on the Rails: Rules for Fiscal Responsibility - The Centre for Independent Studies](#)

³⁵ [No one holds the government to account on spending](#)

³⁶ [Australia: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2025 Article IV Mission](#)

Box 16: Fiscal rules and their use in Australia

Incumbent governments often increase debt levels in response to pressure to increase spending or lower taxes. To ensure fiscal sustainability in the longer term, fiscal rules are often imposed to maintain government fiscal discipline. These vary widely but can include:

- revenue rules (such as an upper limit on or the trajectory of the tax-to-GDP ratio)
- expenditure rules (on the spending-to-GDP ratio)
- budget balance rules (on the deficit level and its share of GDP)
- debt rules (on the debt-to-GDP ratio).

In Australia, fiscal rules were first introduced by the Labor Government in the 1985-86 Budget, where the government committed to the ‘trilogy components’ of:

- not raising tax revenue as a proportion of GDP
- not raising government expenditure as a proportion of GDP
- reducing the budget deficit in dollar terms.

After a period in which fiscal policy was used to support economic recovery out of the early 1990s recession, the 1993-94 Budget introduced a fiscal objective to reduce the budget deficit from an estimated 3.75% of GDP in 1993-94 to around 1% of GDP by 1996-97. The following Liberal-National Government formalised its approach to fiscal management, establishing the *Charter of Budget Honesty*. This included a medium-term fiscal strategy, with a primary objective to maintain the budget balance on average, over the course of the economic cycle. The Australian Labor Party government then continued this objective, while seeking to maintain sustainable levels of taxation and debt³⁷. The next Coalition government then continued the stated objective to balance the budget over the cycle, while capping tax receipts at 23.9% of GDP. However, these rules were suspended at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, where large deficits and rising debt were accepted as necessary to support the economy.

While the PBO typically focuses on federal fiscal issues, one of its annual publications is the *National Fiscal Outlook*³⁸. This consolidates forecasts from state and territory budgets with the federal budget to provide an aggregated, short-term, outlook for the national fiscal position. However, little information is provided about the risks to state and territory budgets, nor their relationship to the federal budget.

In recent years, there have been notable deteriorations in state and territory budgets. For example, the *Pre-Election Financial Outlook* ahead of the 2025 Tasmanian election stated that Tasmania’s ‘*structural (debt) problem will not be resolved through future economic growth*’³⁹. In Victoria, net debt is forecast to reach \$194 billion by 2028-29, or 25% of Gross State Product (GSP), a 19.4 percentage point of GSP increase in 10 years (see Figure 10).

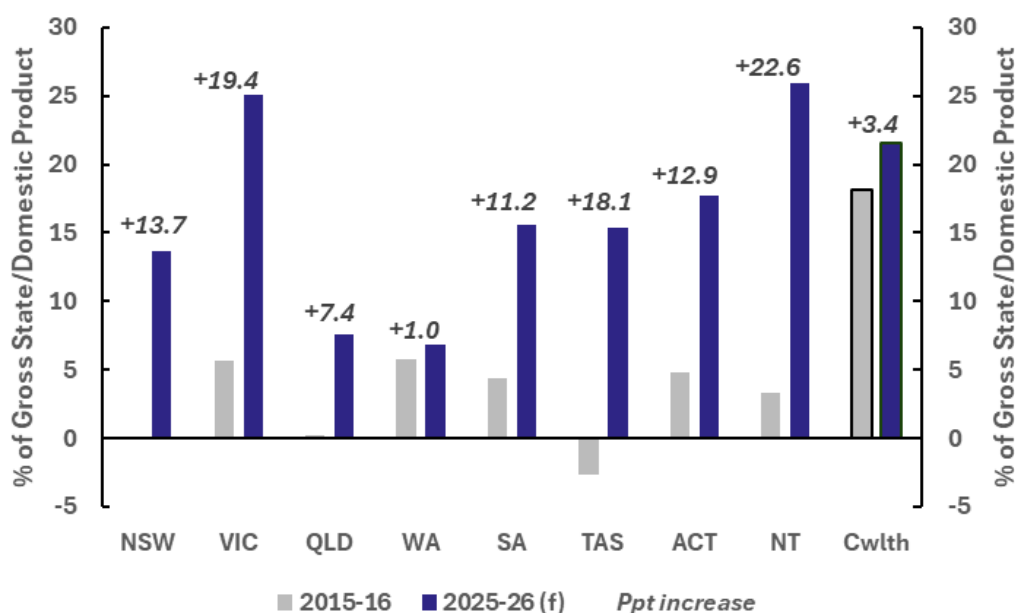
³⁷ [The Evolution of Fiscal Policy in Australia, Treasury Working Paper](#)

³⁸ [2024-25 National fiscal outlook | pbo](#)

³⁹ [Pre-Election Financial Outlook Report \(PEFO\) - June 2025](#)

During the Global Financial Crisis, the Australian Government provided an explicit debt guarantee for states and territories⁴⁰. While there is no current or ongoing explicit obligation for the Australian Government to act as a guarantor for state and territory debts, some financial market participants operate on the assumption that the Australian Government is providing an implicit guarantee to a whole series of entities (including Government Business Enterprises and universities) and to individual states. This is demonstrated by the historical spread between federal and states yields, which is only around 0.4 percentage points. The spread would likely be several percentage points if the financial market regarded individual states as having genuine default risk⁴¹.

Figure 10: Federal, state and territory net debt as a share of GSP/GDP, 2015-16 and 2025-26 (%)



Source: Appendix Table B1.

Note: Data labels indicate change from 2015-16 to 2025-26. (f) indicates forecast.

There is, therefore, value in federal parliamentarians being aware of state' and territory' fiscal positions and the risks they potentially pose to the federal budget. While federal debt-to-GDP is at similar levels to some of the higher levels of state debt-to-GSP (see Figure 10), states do not have as many avenues to independently reduce their debt levels. In its concluding statement to the Article IV Mission to Australia, the International Monetary Fund suggests the PBO (or Treasury) could have a role overseeing subnational fiscal positions, citing rising state and territory debt levels and the benefits of federal fiscal coordination⁴².

In addition to its current National Fiscal Outlook product, which aggregates state and territory fiscal positions and outlooks, the PBO could assist by outlining, and quantifying where possible, risks to these positions in the MTBO report. Highlighting the risks to state fiscal

⁴⁰ [Australian Government Guarantee of State and Territory Borrowing Scheme Rules](#)

⁴¹ [2024-25 National Fiscal Outlook - Technical appendix](#)

⁴² [Australia: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2025 Article IV Mission](#)

positions in the MTBO report would emphasise that excessive state debt levels are also collectively a risk to the Australian Government.

Recommendation 9: To enhance the quality of future public discussions on fiscal sustainability, the PBO should undertake research on fiscal frameworks and rules, including an explainer that describes those used in various jurisdictions internationally.

Recommendation 10: To support the JCPAA and the broader parliamentary community in identifying fiscal risks to the Australian Government, the PBO should consider publishing analysis and commentary on state and territory fiscal positions.

10.4 The impact of an Election Commitments Report released after an election

The Election Commitments Report (ECR) is integral to the PBO's role to improve the transparency of the fiscal impact of election commitments. Since the PBO's establishment, there is less public debate around election costings and a shift towards debate about policy intent and focus. As one official interlocutor noted:

'...[during an election] arguing about costs and economic models should not be where the public debate should be – this is a massive improvement'.

However, the legislative requirement for the PBO to release the ECR after an election presents challenges for its reach and impact.

Since the last independent review of the PBO, it has produced ECRs for the 2019 election (released 19 June 2019), the 2022 election (released 14 July 2022), and most recently the 2025 election (released 20 June 2025). The 2025 ECR, including costing minutes and attachments was a substantial body of work of over 2,525 pages (compared with 900 pages for the 2022 ECR). In addition to the main report, the PBO also released complementary products including interactive charts, comprehensive data tables and a guide to the ECR.

Despite the large volume of materials, the 2025 ECR received relatively little media and public attention. It had very limited impact on the public policy debate relative to the amount of effort put into its production (Figure 6).

The ECR has an important role in holding parties to account, but its nature and timing mean its broader impact is limited. While the report provides a comprehensive and independent assessment of the fiscal implications of parties' election commitments, its influence is shaped by the timing of its release and the extent to which parties and the public engage with its findings. In particular, with a returned government, which has utilised government agencies to develop its policies, the ECR is likely to be seen as 'yesterday's news'. As a result, its capacity to inform debate and support transparency is constrained, despite its place in the electoral process.

Any change to the timing of the release of the ECR would require a legislative change to the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*. Consultation views indicated that any proposal to change the timing would likely be contested. One adviser suggested that pre-election publication activities could impact political strategy:

'...being led by a PBO process rather than led by political strategy, probably doesn't make a lot of sense...'

The PBO confronts a dilemma. The ECR's existence brings significant integrity to the pre-election debates. Yet it absorbs substantial resources and appears to have limited impact post-election. The Review is of the view that the PBO needs to reconsider its approach to the ECR and reframe the product to deliver more impact or reduce the resources required in its production.

Recommendation 11: To enhance the impact of the Election Commitments Report (ECR), the PBO should conduct a readership analysis to identify which additions beyond what is required under legislation are valuable for inclusion.

10.5 Publishing election commitments ahead of polling day

The PBO tracks all election commitments made by major parties during the caretaker period. These commitments are costed and collated for the ECR. During the 2025 election, the PBO provided parties with weekly lists of tracked commitments. These lists were provisional, allowing for review and clarifications before final determination. The timing for the ECR is set in legislation, but there is no technical barrier to the PBO publishing commitment lists during the caretaker period. However, guidance and process to do so would need to be clarified in advance.

The Victorian PBO publishes weekly commitment lists during Victorian state elections⁴³. These are made available on its website, with the aim of supporting transparency and providing a public repository of announced commitments. The New South Wales PBO releases policy costings after notification from parliamentary leaders and provides budget impact statements before the election⁴⁴.

Should the PBO wish to explore publication of commitment lists during the caretaker period, there are a few issues worthy of consideration.

Publishing commitment lists could enhance transparency by providing a repository of party promises, and no legislative change would be required provided documents are clearly caveated as provisional. However, the process is resource intensive, as working through lists with parties to determine what is, and what is not, a commitment is time-consuming. In part this is because it can be difficult to delineate between an aspirational statement made by a candidate on the hustings and a party commitment. Engaging with party contacts is also more limited during the campaign as they often have other priorities and roles in the campaign. Public release may limit private engagement and negotiation, and could bring forward contentious discussions about what qualifies as a commitment. Commitments can also change throughout the campaign. Only the final list reflects the Parliamentary Budget Officer's determination. Early publication risks credibility if lists are perceived as incomplete or inaccurate.

Consultation highlighted the complexity and operational challenges. One adviser observed that identifying what is actually a commitment is challenging. They noted that during the 2025 campaign, it was a big project to meet with the PBO to confirm what exactly had been announced as commitments then there was a drawn-out process of confirming intent and reasonable interpretation.

⁴³ [Victorian Parliamentary Budget Office: 2022 Election Commitment Tracker](#)

⁴⁴ [New South Wales Parliamentary Budget Office: Historical material](#)

The Review believes there is merit in exploring whether it is practically and politically feasible to publish useful lists of election commitments during the caretaker period. However, it has not reached a firm conclusion about the most appropriate approach.

Recommendation 12: The PBO should explore publicly releasing lists of potential commitments weekly throughout the caretaker period, given that publishing the ECR prior to polling day is not currently feasible and may face political resistance.

11 Enhance service offering

Delivering high-quality, accessible services is fundamental to the PBO's ability to meet its mandate and support informed decision-making across the Parliament. A strong service offering ensures that parliamentarians and their staff can engage effectively with the PBO's work, whether seeking costings, exploring fiscal impacts, or accessing analytical tools. By continually improving how services are designed and delivered, the PBO can respond to evolving needs, maintain trust and provide timely, relevant insights that underpin robust policy debate. Enhancing service capability is not only about efficiency – it is about ensuring that the PBO remains a trusted, practical resource for all stakeholders.

11.1 Parliamentarian use of PBO self-service tools

The PBO has a suite of self-service tools, including *Build Your Own Budget (BYOB)*, the *Small Model of Australian Representative Taxpayers (SMART)*, and the *Public Debt Interest calculator*. These were developed to support parliamentarians and their staff in understanding fiscal settings and the impacts of policy changes.

Feedback from parliamentarians and their staff was largely positive, with many noting the value of these tools in honing their thinking before submitting formal requests. For example, one adviser commented:

'...Build Your Own Budget is [just] what I would use to do that and that tool is fantastic. . . I think the PBO does have a number of really good tools if Offices take the time to learn how to use them'.

However, while the PBO's self-service tools are valued, some users have found aspects of them challenging. For example, feedback indicated that BYOB, though powerful, can be intimidating and not always intuitive for new users. This suggests a need for further investment and iteration in these resources, such as ensuring the tools are accessible across the spectrum of stakeholders and building awareness of how they can be used.

11.2 The use of distributional analysis in policy costings

Distributional analysis can offer valuable insights into how policy impacts are spread across groups – by income, age, gender and more. Its use in PBO costings has grown, with recent stakeholder surveys showing a marked increase in awareness and use of such analysis. A comparison of the results of the PBO's 2021 and 2024 stakeholder surveys indicates a substantial increase in parliamentarians and their staff using and having awareness of the PBO's ability to undertake distributional analysis⁴⁵. Publicly released distributional analyses also having contributed to informed debate and transparency.

Despite these benefits, distributional analysis is not always appropriate as a default inclusion in costings. The process is resource intensive, requiring additional modelling, data preparation and review. For many proposals, especially those with narrow or technical fiscal impacts, distributional analysis may not be materially meaningful or even possible due to data limitations.

⁴⁵ Uncommon Knowledge, [Parliamentary Budget Office: stakeholder survey report 2021](#), PBO, June 2021; Uncommon Knowledge, [Parliamentary Budget Office: stakeholder survey report 2024](#), PBO, June 2024.

The OECD's guidance⁴⁶ is clear: distributional analysis should be included when it is a key assumption in estimating a policy's fiscal cost. Where additional data and modelling are required, the decision to include such analysis should rest with the independent fiscal institution, unless mandated. The PBO automatically including distributional analysis would risk slowing down the delivery of costings, which parliamentarians rely on for timely and reliable advice. It could also complicate interpretation, and in some cases, introduce political sensitivities by highlighting which groups would win or lose from a policy.

Recommendation 13: To ensure parliamentarians have relevant information about their costing requests, in consultation with requestors the PBO should include distributional analysis with costing responses where impacts across groups are material and where data and resources permit.

11.3 Estimating broader economic impacts

When a policy costing is produced, the PBO routinely estimates the direct (first-round) fiscal effect – that is, changes to receipts or expenditure resulting from the policy's impacts. However, many policies also produce broader economic (second-round) effects, such as changes to economic growth and employment, prices or wages (see Box 17). These broader economic impacts can, in turn, have additional fiscal impacts. Including these effects could materially alter the fiscal profile of policy costings.

Box 17: Example of a broader economic effect

Consider company tax reform as an example of a policy change with broader economic implications beyond the direct budget impact. A decrease in the nominal tax rate may alter the effective incidence of taxation in different ways across industries. Firms facing lower effective tax burdens may increase investment, while others may experience reduced competitiveness. These shifts can be partially offsetting and affect employment, wages, and ultimately household income distribution via complex mechanisms. Impacts that go beyond the direct fiscal cost would therefore not be included in the costing unless they are sufficiently specified, material, and quantifiable.

In this example, the indirect behavioural impacts are likely to be uncertain and difficult to quantify. Where the PBO considers the broader economic effects to be relevant but cannot reliably estimate them, it refers to them qualitatively in the costing write-up. This ensures transparency around potential economic implications while maintaining the integrity of the costing methodology. Inclusion of broader economic effects is determined on a case-by-case basis, consistent with the PBO's [published guidance](#). The guidance sets out how PBO costings use the same approaches and costing conventions as recommended in the [Charter of Budget Honesty Policy Costing Guidelines](#) which are used by Australian Government agencies.

The PBO generally presents only static (first-round) fiscal effects. Its approach to costing responses is to include a qualitative statement when a policy proposal could have material broader economic effects that may affect budget outcomes.

⁴⁶ [OECD Journal on Budgeting, Volume 2023 Issue 1 \(EN\)](#)

During the consultations for this review, several parliamentary stakeholders suggested that the PBO should include broader economic effects in policy costings. As one noted:

‘...the lack of second round effects creates a perverse consequence [from taking] forward pro-growth commitments to an election...’.

However, it was also recognised that the inclusion of such analysis would require significant macroeconomic resources currently unavailable to the PBO.

This Review does not recommend any change to the PBO’s current practice with respect to costing broader economic effects. As published by the PBO, there are 4 specific issues with estimating a proposal’s broader economic impacts on the budget:

“Timeframe: *broader economic impacts often take a considerable time to materialise and have little material impact over standard budgetary horizons.*

Uncertainty: *there are considerably higher levels of uncertainty in terms of the direction, size and timing of broader economic impacts, as these depend on the responses of, and interactions between, individuals and different sectors in the economy.*

Financing: *to accurately assess the broader economic impacts of a particular policy proposal it is critical to take into account how the proposed policy is to be funded. This is often not specified in a policy proposal.*

Risk of double counting: *the inclusion of broader economic impacts in individual costings risks double counting because the macroeconomic forecasts that form the basis of costings already include implicit assumptions about ongoing policy reform”⁴⁷.*

In addition to these challenges, as a small independent agency, the PBO is not well positioned to assess broader economic impacts. Such impacts are complex and uncertain, typically requiring analysis through sophisticated macroeconomic frameworks. Due to their uncertainties, the magnitude, timing and distributional impacts of broader economic effects are also more subjective. Avoiding these assessments lessens the risk of the PBO becoming a feature of the political debate.

11.4 Ready-reckoners to support policy discussion

Apart from election commitment costings (and requests completed for parliamentary committees), the PBO’s completes most of its costing and budget analysis work on a confidential basis for parliamentarians.

Many of the costings completed were in effect duplicates or a variation to an issue, some from the same requestor, but often from multiple requestors across the spectrum of parliamentary representation.

At the start of the 48th Parliament, the PBO has been making use of publicly available costings, including the 601 election costings prepared as part of the Election Commitments Report. This is to help requestors understand what has been costed already or know what to expect in response to a costing request.

⁴⁷ [Including broader economic effects in policy costings | pbo](#)

Given the PBO's costing expertise, it can readily pull together targeted costings that are relevant to business before Parliament or are issues in the public arena.

The *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* sets out the functions of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Publishing self-initiated costing ready-reckoners is consistent with section 64E(1)(e):

'...to conduct, on his or her own initiative...research on and analysis of the budget and fiscal policy settings.'

The PBO is currently trialling an approach to publishing costings of proposals based on topical interest under its own initiative. Subject to feedback from the trial, the PBO should consider the most efficient way to integrate these sorts of costing initiatives into its self-initiated publication work stream.

That said, the current trial increases the risk of the PBO jeopardising its independence. It also increases the chance of the PBO being seen as making political decisions or statements, especially relating to the costing topics progressed under this initiative. There was an overwhelming sense of caution from parliamentary stakeholders when this approach was tested with them. Some noted that the PBO is neither a policy advocate nor a think tank, and that the PBO would:

'...still need to be prepared to answer the question, why they're doing that, and who are they responding to?'

Other parliamentarians were concerned that this initiative could move resources away from the PBO's core work of responding to parliamentary costing requests.

Notwithstanding these concerns, parliamentarians saw value in the PBO producing a suite of costing ready-reckoners that could assist in better understanding the fiscal implications of policy under ongoing debate. As with the PBO's more general self-initiated work program, there may be value in the PBO seeking input from parliamentarians on what would constitute topics of interest.

More generally, while continuing to provide independent analysis around fiscal risks, the PBO's fiscal sustainability and broader self-initiated work need to continue to meet parliamentary expectations. The Parliamentary Library ensures its self-initiated work agenda does this quarterly by consulting with the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library. The PBO should also find a way to regularly seek parliamentarians' input on its work agenda.

Recommendation 14: The PBO should commence a program of costing ready-reckoners to support parliamentarians' collective understanding of the fiscal impacts of policies. The program should be supported by a framework setting out the criteria for topic selection, ensuring that they are apolitical, educative and relevant, and draw on input from parliamentarians.

Recommendation 15: To ensure the PBO's self-initiated work is meeting parliamentary expectations, it should consult with parliamentarians when preparing its self-initiated work plan.

12 Maximising impact for continued success

For the PBO to continue delivering high-quality, independent, and timely services to parliamentarians, it is essential that several key enablers are strengthened. As demand for the PBO's services grows and its operational environment evolves, these enablers – adequate resourcing, modern ICT frameworks, robust cyber defences, effective agency collaboration, and fit-for-purpose performance measurement – are fundamental to sustaining its success and fulfilling its mandate.

12.1 Re-baselining resources for the PBO

The demand for PBO costing services has continued to increase since its establishment. In combination with continued demand for its self-initiated research products and election duties, this has placed significant strain on the PBO's resources. Efficiencies, processes and strong relationships with Australian Government agencies have helped the PBO manage the lift in demand, but it is clear that the PBO will need a structural lift in its resources in order to manage this demand going forward.

As set out in Part B, section 8.4, the PBO's funding has been supplemented only twice in its lifetime outside election years – at the 2013-14 Budget and the 2019-20 Budget. It has now been 7 years since the last real increase in the PBO's resourcing. As a result, despite the efficiency gains noted in section 8.2, its resource base has come under significant pressure in the face of a sustained increase in demand for its services.

The PBO's financial pressures are compounded by its unique position as an independent parliamentary department without a minister to advocate for its resource needs in the budget process. While the JCPAA and the Presiding Officers have endorsed the PBO receiving additional funding, there is no clear mechanism for the PBO's requests to be championed within the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) process.

Indeed, there is a fundamental tension that is worth calling out.

Incumbent governments of either political persuasion have little incentive to appropriately resource such an independent institution. Yet those same parties, when in opposition, have an incentive to demand increased resourcing. The inability to resolve this tension will mean that parliamentarians face the prospect of reduced service levels if demand continues at current rates. While an effective and better-resourced PBO is not necessarily in the immediate interest of the government of the day, it is in the interest of all parties and results in better policy outcomes in the long run.

Stakeholders from across parliament and Australian Government agencies all recognise the ever-increasing demand for the PBO's services and support an increase to its resources. One senator recently wrote to the Minister for Finance advocating for additional resources for the PBO, noting:

'...given the PBO's important role and contribution to public debate, I think it is important that the PBO is adequately resourced to undertake its important work and contribute to public policy debate...[and I urge the Government] to increase funding for the PBO...'

A crossbench member noted that:

'...the PBO needs to be better resourced; they have a small number of people doing a very large job. To ensure we have got accountability and transparency in parliament they [the PBO] need the resources to do their job.'

Similarly, a departmental secretary said:

'...in the grand scheme of things, additional resources for the PBO would be a small ask.'

Recommendation 16: The PBO's resources should be rebased to ensure it can continue to effectively meet its legislative mandate and deliver high-quality and timely outputs including extending its service delivery in some of the ways recommended in this report (such as distributional analysis, more outreach, and additional fiscal analysis and reporting).

12.2 PBO's accessibility while located outside Australian Parliament House

Physical proximity matters for parliamentary engagement. The PBO's move to West Block (see Part B, section 8.4) risks reducing its visibility and accessibility for parliamentarians and their staff. While a small PBO presence is being maintained in Australian Parliament House (APH), most staff – including senior client relationship managers – are now located at West Block. Drop-in engagement, an increasing feature of PBO service, is constrained as a result of the move.

Stakeholder feedback is clear. Face-to-face engagement is critical for effective support and resolution of complex issues. The PBO's independence and non-partisan reputation are valued, and there is a genuine concern that physical separation may erode relationships and trust. In particular, parliamentarians may not have immediate access to the most appropriate staff member if the PBO is no longer housed in APH. One stakeholder noted that the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) must make a clear commitment that the PBO move back into APH. Another adviser indicated that the PBO remaining offsite would be:

'...a disaster for the relationship...'

A parliamentarian stated that they had a:

'...very strong view that there are lots of services in APH that don't strictly need to be in Parliament House, but a service which is designed to support parliamentarians in their policy development work is not one of them.'

One of the Presiding Officers acknowledged these concerns but noted that while:

'...they have to be in the building. . .we're caught between needing these works to get done and ensuring that PBO are here.'

Noting all of the above, there would be significant value in DPS providing the JCPAA, Presiding Officers and the PBO with a clear timeline and regular updates for the PBO's return to APH to ensure sufficient priority is given to the PBO's return.

It will be particularly important for the PBO to undertake ongoing promotional activities of its services to parliamentarians while it is located outside APH. This may need to include an

increase in the types of outreach or engagement activities it does (for instance, running more frequent and dedicated drop-in sessions and seminars in APH, potentially with the Parliamentary Library). In addition to any person-to-person activities, it will be important for the PBO to enhance its communication with parliamentarians and their staff.

Recommendation 17: As maintaining full physical presence within APH is essential for maximising visibility, accessibility, and effective engagement, the Presiding Officers should commit to moving the entire PBO back into APH as soon as possible. Further, the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) should provide the JCPAA, Presiding Officers and the PBO with a clear timeline for the PBO's return and 6-monthly updates on progress against this timeline.

Recommendation 18: The PBO should encourage an internal culture of engagement and greater outreach, to ensure that parliamentarians and their staff are aware of its service offerings, particularly while located outside APH.

12.3 A modern ICT framework

The PBO has undergone a significant transformation in its ICT and data environment, becoming the first parliamentary department to operate fully in the cloud, with no on-premises infrastructure remaining. This transition, initiated in late 2019 and completed in 2021, was driven by internal expertise and resourcefulness. Internal staff acquired advanced administrator rights and technical skills to build and manage the PBO's SharePoint environment when vendor support proved insufficient. The result is a cloud-based system that supports the PBO's unique operational needs.

Despite these advances, the PBO's ICT arrangements are shaped by a complex relationship with the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS). While DPS is responsible for procurement and capital budgets, product ownership and day-to-day engagement rests with the PBO, which manages its own application development and maintenance. This model has enabled agility and innovation, such as the development of bespoke workflow apps for the 47th and 48th Parliaments, but it also exposes gaps in governance and documentation. For example, there is no formal DPS record of the PBO's internal work in this space. The absence of a peer-to-peer governance mechanism means that technical service from DPS to the PBO is treated as a client service rather than a partnership. The peer-to-peer governance mechanism could be established as a service level agreement with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and prioritisation processes for ICT support, procurement and cyber risk management. This agreement should also be tailored to the PBO's specialised operational and technical needs and accountability for both service delivery and governance.

Cybersecurity is a critical responsibility for the PBO, prompting a shift from reliance on DPS to a more proactive approach in monitoring, governance, and risk management. Regular meetings with DPS address cyber concerns, but the need for a clear service level agreement specifying roles and responsibilities remains. The prioritisation of ICT needs by DPS does not always align with the PBO's operational priorities, underscoring the importance of formalising service arrangements.

The experience of building in-house solutions highlights the outsized ICT needs of the PBO relative to its size. As set out in Part B, sections 8.2 and 8.3, the PBO's technical requirements are substantial. It needs to collect large volumes of information from Australian Government agencies, maintain around 100 budget models, and maintain and rapidly create new models to respond to parliamentary requests. To sustain security and innovation, the PBO requires dedicated resourcing and a robust service agreement with DPS that reflects its specialised requirements and ensures accountability across all aspects of its ICT environment.

Recommendation 19: A formal service level agreement should be developed with DPS that clearly defines roles, responsibilities, and priorities for ICT support and cyber risk management. This agreement should reflect the PBO's specialised operational needs and ensure accountability for both service delivery and governance. Additionally, the Government should provide dedicated resourcing to the PBO to support core maintenance and security within its ICT and data environment, as well as ongoing innovation, recognising that the PBO's requirements are outsized relative to its size.

12.4 Collaborating across the Australian Government

Relationships between the PBO and Australian Government agencies are strong, and collaboration is effective under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2012. However, since the MOU's inception, machinery of government changes have reshaped some agency structures and responsibilities. The original signatories to the MOU are no longer in their roles. Application of the MOU to agencies established after 2012, such as the National Disability Insurance Agency, is managed informally via the portfolio department's original signature.

This Review does not recommend any change to the current MOU arrangement. The PBO operates effectively within this framework, negotiating successfully with agencies to secure key data and model inputs. Secretaries across the Australian Government reflected positively on the relationship and the way in which information exchange occurs, with one noting that there is:

'...good shared experience in the relationship. . .[and] PBO underpins relationships between Parliament and the public service.'

However, there can be high initial transaction costs associated with acquiring data from newly established agencies. These agencies may be less familiar with the MOU and related protocols governing information exchange with the PBO. As a result, additional time and effort are often required to clarify obligations, negotiate access, and ensure timely provision of required data. This can lead to delays and increased administrative workload for both the PBO and the agencies involved.

To support consistent and effective information sharing, the Review recommends that the PBO continues to engage directly with agencies on information requests. However, it should also work through the Secretaries Board to seek portfolio secretaries' agreement to formally notify their agencies of their obligations to cooperate with the PBO. This dual approach would reinforce agency accountability and ensure that all entities are aware of their responsibilities under the PBO's mandate. Where specific issues or delays arise in fulfilling requests, the PBO

should escalate these matters to the relevant portfolio secretary, providing a clear pathway for resolution and helping to maintain the integrity and timeliness of the PBO's work.

To reinforce agency awareness and accountability, the Review also recommends that the Parliamentary Budget Officer presents at the Secretaries Board twice per electoral cycle – once immediately after the election and again twelve months prior to the scheduled end of the Parliament. These presentations would provide a high-level opportunity to discuss the PBO's current work program (without undermining confidentiality) and highlight upcoming priorities. They could also remind portfolio secretaries and their agencies of their obligations to engage and cooperate with the PBO. Regular engagement at this senior level could help ensure that agencies remain informed about the PBO's mandate and expectations, reinforcing the existing culture of collaboration and timely information sharing.

Stakeholder consultations also indicate support for further collaboration and engagement between the PBO and the Parliamentary Library. Currently, the PBO request form includes a checkbox enabling clients to indicate their consent for the PBO to work with the Library. This engagement allows the PBO to leverage the Library's research expertise and resources when responding to complex requests.

Both organisations are highly regarded by parliamentary stakeholders. Given the joint client group, there are opportunities to strengthen the PBO's engagement and collaboration with the Library. For example, PBO staff could accompany the Library's outreach team on electorate visits (noting this would draw on already highly demanded staff resourcing time as well as travel costs). Other opportunities include the greater sharing of themes coming through requests from parliamentarians, and lessons on engagement with parliamentarians. The Parliamentary Librarian supports more joint efforts and collaboration with the PBO.

Recommendation 20: In order to support continued efficient collaboration with Australian Government agencies, portfolio secretaries should remind their portfolio agencies of their obligations to engage with the PBO. Where issues with specific requests are encountered and cannot be quickly resolved, the PBO should raise these directly with the portfolio secretary.

Recommendation 21: The Parliamentary Budget Officer should present at Secretaries Board twice per electoral cycle (immediately after an election and 12 months out from the formal end of a term of Parliament), to discuss the PBO's work and remind agencies of their obligations.

Recommendation 22: The PBO should consider greater opportunities for joint outreach, engagement and collaboration with the Parliamentary Library.

12.5 Measuring success

As a service provider to all parties in parliament, it can be challenging to measure the PBO's impact, or even to succinctly articulate the outcomes it aims to achieve. As the PBO was primarily established to provide policy costings to members of parliament, its credibility will always depend heavily on its ability to deliver costings in an accurate, timely, engaged and independent manner.

The PBO's current performance measures quantify the number of policy costings, budget analyses, and research reports, as well as the publication of the ECR within statutory

deadlines. Other metrics include stakeholder satisfaction, website demand, and the efficiency of its fiscal update publication.

The Review considers the interpretation and relevance of some metrics is becoming questionable as the PBO continues to mature and innovate its service offering. For instance, ever-increasing numbers of parliamentary requests is a metric. However, the PBO could effectively decrease the number of requests through automated costing requests for simple costings and availability of self-service tools. Reduced numbers in these cases would be a success, not a sign of reduced demand, and would not automatically result in resource savings.

A strong message arising from the Review consultations is that as the PBO's costing responses are perceived as high quality, parliamentary clients will measure the performance of the PBO on timeliness. As noted in Part B, section 4.3, the way this metric is currently calculated is adjusted to exclude days on-hold. A request could be put on-hold while the PBO is awaiting clarification on the specifications from the requestor, or if the PBO has negotiated with the requestor to deprioritise the request, or at the request of the requestor. The adjusted days approach may not meaningfully resonate with parliamentarians as it provides a distorted view on how long the PBO has had a request on the books. For example, during 2024-25, a parliamentarian had a request on the books for 108 business days. However when on-hold time was taken into account, the costing was completed in 7 business days.

The PBO should consider revising its performance measures to better focus on more appropriate indicators of service delivery and engagements across its stakeholders. This includes considering the use of explicit satisfaction measures such as CSAT (customer satisfaction) tools.

Recommendation 23: The PBO should review and revamp its performance metrics to place greater emphasis on meaningful service delivery and engagement indicators.

Part D: Conclusion

13 Sustaining excellence and meeting new demands

The PBO stands as a high-performing, trusted institution at the heart of Australia's parliamentary democracy. Over the past 13 years, the PBO has earned widespread respect for its independent, non-partisan analysis and rigorous approach to policy costings and self-initiated research. Parliamentarians and other stakeholders consistently praise the PBO's credibility, technical expertise, and the discipline it brings to public debate.

Yet, as this review has highlighted, even the most effective agencies must continually adapt to evolving demands and challenges. The PBO's mandate remains as relevant and vital today as at its inception, but the scale and complexity of requests, the expectations for transparency, and the need for impactful engagement have all grown substantially. The recommendations outlined throughout this report are designed to help the PBO build on its strengths – enhancing engagement, transparency, service quality, and impact – while safeguarding its independence and reputation.

However, the ability of the PBO to deliver on these recommendations and fully meet its legislative mandate is increasingly constrained by its current resource base. In particular, demand for costings continues to rise, stretching staff capacity and operational flexibility for other priorities. The PBO's position means that requests for additional resources must compete within broader budget processes, with severe disadvantage due to lack of ministerial advocacy. Without a structural uplift in funding and support, there is a growing risk that service levels will be compromised, and the PBO's capacity to innovate and respond to new challenges will be limited.

Stakeholders from across Parliament and government have recognised these pressures and expressed strong support for increased resourcing. To sustain the PBO's excellence and ensure it can continue to provide timely, high-quality outputs, it is essential that the recommendation to rebase its resources is prioritised and acted upon.

The PBO's contribution to Australia's democracy is profound. By supporting transparency around fiscal policy and outcomes, and informing the fiscal policy debate, the PBO's work benefits all Australians. Ensuring the PBO is appropriately resourced and empowered to fulfil its mandate is not just an operational necessity – it is an investment in the integrity and effectiveness of our democratic system.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Previous reviews into the Parliamentary Budget Office

Parliamentary Budget Office Review 2016-17

The final report of the independent Parliamentary Budget Office Review 2016-17 (the Review) had 16 recommendations, covering levelling the playing field for costings, accuracy of costings, transparency and public understanding of budget and fiscal policy setting and governance and resources.

All of these recommendations have been implemented, either in full or in part.

- **Recommendation 1:** The Review recommended that the PBO should replace the reliability rating in its costing response documents with a statement on the factors that can affect the uncertainty of the type of policy costing, in addition to expanding the existing qualitative comments on reliability to highlight particularly uncertain elements of the specific policy when that is appropriate.
 - Since March 2017, the PBO replaced the single word reliability rating in its costing response documents with a more detailed qualitative statement on the factors that affect uncertainty of a costing.
 - An information paper *Factors influencing the reliability of policy proposal costings*, was published to raise awareness of the factors influencing costings and how the PBO deals with them.
 - The paper was first released in September 2017 and updated in September 2022.
- **Recommendation 2:** The Review recommended that the PBO should further develop and publish principles and processes to help set priorities in relation to requests from parliamentarians for costings and budget analysis.
 - Following consultation with stakeholders, the PBO published an information paper *PBO costing processes, timeframes and prioritisation framework*, that provides details of the costing and budget analysis process, the facts that affect the time it takes for the PBO to respond to parliamentary requests, and the framework that the PBO applies to prioritise competing demands for costing and budget analysis resources. The paper provides additional transparency around the factors that affect how the PBO deploys its analytical resources.
 - The paper was first released in February 2017 and updated in September 2022.
- **Recommendation 3:** The Review recommended that the PBO should take action within its resource constraints to improve the quality and timeliness of its response to parliamentarians' requests for policy costings in peak periods including entering into secondment arrangements with Commonwealth agencies and exploring other mechanisms, such as using technology, to streamline the costing process.
 - In the lead up to and throughout the PBO's election work, technical analysts have been seconded into the PBO from central and line agencies to assist with election costings, as well as administrative support from Parliamentary chamber departments to support commitment tracking.

- The PBO has introduced electronic workflow management processes to streamline the monitoring and management of costing requests.
- **Recommendation 4:** The Review recommended that the PBO should establish a small, independent, expert advisory panel that it could consult on cross-cutting issues associated with policy costings and fiscal analysis.
 - In December 2017, the PBO established a panel of expert advisers to ensure that the work of the PBO is of the highest analytical quality and well considered. The panel comprises individuals who have experience across a broad range of policy areas and are available to be consulted on cross-cutting issues associated with policy costings and fiscal policy analysis (current [Terms of Reference](#)). The Panel last met in September 2025.
- **Recommendation 5:** The Review recommended that the JCPAA is provided with sufficient data to allow it to regularly monitor the provision of information to the PBO through the Memorandum of Understanding.
 - The PBO issues a comprehensive activity report to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee and the JCPAA three times a year, in advance of its appearance at Senate Estimates. These [Activity Reports](#) provide information on key PBO activities, the number of costing and budget analysis requests, its research program, external engagement and staffing. The report include data on the information requests made to Commonwealth agencies.
 - Further, the PBO has an open offer to the JCPAA to provide a briefing on the PBO’s performance, publications and activities at any time.
- **Recommendation 6:** The Review recommended the PBO should continue to work collaboratively with Government agencies on information requests and model development, consistent with maintaining the confidentiality of parliamentarians’ policy proposals, ensuring that requests include sufficient context to enable the provision of the most appropriate information in response.
 - The PBO has increasingly built effective, collaborative relations with Commonwealth agencies to ensure that information requests are efficiently responded to, and model developments are shared. The PBO has established an annual Commonwealth agencies forum to support a more strategic discussion about how information sharing arrangements with Commonwealth agencies can continue to be enhanced.
- **Recommendation 7:** The Review recommended that the PBO should periodically conduct an ex-post analysis of a limited selection of its costing estimates, to help identify areas for improvement in future costings, and report the results to the JCPAA.
 - The PBO developed an evaluation methodology and conducted ex-post analyses of policy costings estimates. The outcomes of these were reported in the PBOs Activity Reports. This activity ceased in late 2021 as the PBO pivoted to election readiness work.
 - Since the cessation of these reviews, the PBO undertakes an ongoing process of reviewing and refining key models and costing approaches, including through engagement with relevant government agencies to test their approaches.

- **Recommendation 8:** The Review recommended to improve the relevance of its self-initiated work the PBO should develop deeper and broader consultation with the JCPAA and other parliamentary committees, align more closely its self-initiated work with PBO costing work, and consider a possible evolution of its self-initiated work program.
 - In 20217-18 the PBO consulted with a range of Senate and House of Representatives committees to seek their comments on their proposed research program. This approach has been scaled back to seek comments only from the JCPAA (through the provision of its corporate plan) as well as the PBOs Expert Panel.
- **Recommendation 9:** The Review recommended that the PBO should more fully explain the methodology underlying the policy costing process, including in a non-technical fashion.
 - The PBO released a number of information papers aimed at explaining the concepts involved in estimating the fiscal cost of a policy proposal including *What is a Parliamentary Budget Office costing?* and *Including broader economic effects in policy costings*.
 - These papers were released in November 2017 and are pitched for a non-technical audience.
- **Recommendation 10:** The Review recommended that the PBO should publish regular data on the number of policy announcements made with reference to PBO costings, and whether or not, and when, the underlying PBO costing response document was released by the party of parliamentarian concerned.
 - The PBO issues a comprehensive activity to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee and the JCPAA three times a year, in advance of its appearance at Senate Estimates. These *Activity Reports* provide information on key PBO activities, the number of costing and budget analysis requests, its research program, external engagement and staffing. The report include data on the number of policy announcements made with reference to PBO costings.
 - Further, the PBO has an open offer to the JCPAA to provide a briefing on the PBO’s performance, publications and activities at any time.
- **Recommendation 11:** The Review recommended that the post-election report of election commitments should include the financial impact over the medium term of: the top 10 policy proposal by dollar value, any proposal with an impact of over \$1 billion in a year, proposals with a materially different impact beyond the forward estimates, and the overall election platform for each political party.
 - Since this recommendation, the PBO has incrementally increased the publication of medium term fiscal impacts in its post-election report of election commitments (now referred to as the Election Commitments Report).
 - In 2019 the report included for the first time the total combined medium term impact of each party’s election commitments on receipts, payments and the underlying cash balance, as a share of GDP.
 - The 2022 and 2025 reports included medium term impacts for all individual election commitments, in addition to the total combined impact over the medium term.

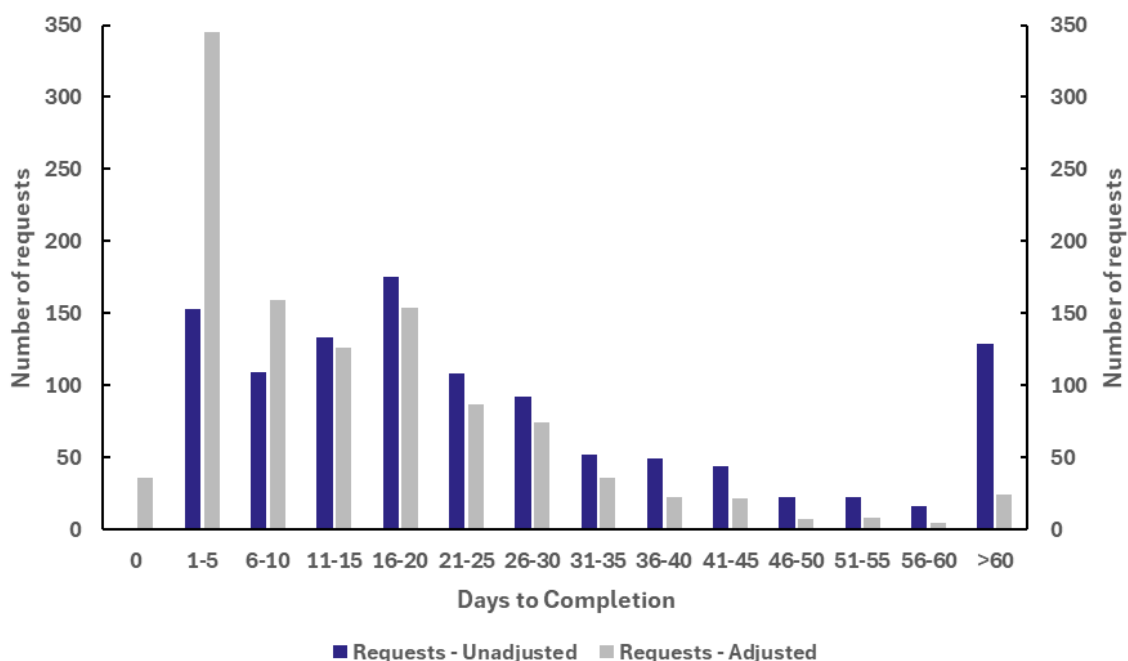
- **Recommendation 12:** The Review recommended that the timing of the publication post-election report of election commitments should be delayed to the later of the first sitting day of Parliament following a general election of 30 days after the return of the writs from a general election.
 - The *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* was amended in early 2019 to enable publishing of the post-election report within 30 days after caretaker or 7 days before sitting of the new Parliament.
- **Recommendation 13:** The Review recommended that the PBO should provide parliamentary political parties with fewer than five Members or Senators the option to have the financial impact of their election commitments included in the PBO's post-election report of election commitments.
 - On 27 April 2018, the PBO provided guidance to Members and Senators outlining how this recommendation would be implemented. This option has been available to independents and minor parties since the 2019 election, with an independent opting in to the 2022 and 2025 reports.
- **Recommendation 14:** The Review recommended that the PBO should consider the value of continuing to publish the chart pack following each fiscal update.
 - The PBO has refined its chart packs over time, shifting more recently to interactive charts.
- **Recommendation 15:** The Review recommended that the PBO should ensure that the JCPAA is regularly provided with sufficient information on the PBO's workload, resource requirements and efficiency, to enable the JCPAA to monitor their impact on the level and timeliness of the PBO's output.
 - The PBO issues a comprehensive activity to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee and the JCPAA 3 times a year, in advance of its appearance at Senate Estimates. These [Activity Reports](#) provide information on key PBO activities, the number of costing and budget analysis requests, its research program, external engagement and staffing.
 - The PBO also consults with the JCPAA on its Portfolio Budget Submission prior to its publication and appears before the committee to seek feedback and respond to questions.
 - Further, the PBO has an open offer to the JCPAA to provide a briefing on the PBO's performance, publications and activities at any time.
- **Recommendation 16:** The Review recommended that the PBO should conduct a survey once in each term of Parliament to get feedback on its performance from its stakeholders.
 - In March 2018, the PBO implemented its triennial stakeholder survey whereby stakeholders are surveyed once during each parliamentary cycle. Stakeholder groups include parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, government department staff, journalists, academics and economists. The most recent survey was conducted in [June 2024](#).

Review of the Operations of the Parliamentary Budget Office 2019-20

- **Recommendation 1:** The Committee recommended that the Australian Government amend section 64T(1) of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* to provide for an automatic referral process for independent review of the operations of the PBO, to be completed within 9 months after the end of the caretaker period for a general election.
 - The Australian Government did not amend the Act to address this recommendation.
- **Recommendation 2:** Consistent with the JCPAA role in monitoring the implementation of recommendations of independent reviews of the PBO, the Committee recommended that the PBO ensure the JCPAA is provided with sufficient data to enable it to continue to monitor matters addressed by recommendations 5, 7 and 15 of the Independent Review Panel, *Parliamentary Budget Office Review 2016-17*.
 - The PBO issues a comprehensive activity to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee and the JCPAA 3 times a year, in advance of its appearance at Senate Estimates. These [Activity Reports](#) provide information on key PBO activities, the number of costing and budget analysis requests, its research program, external engagement and staffing.
 - The PBO provides the JCPAA a copy of its draft corporate plan and annual workplan each year and appear before the committee. This meets the PBOs obligation under section 64Q of the *Parliamentary Services Act* and allows the committee to meet its obligation under section 64S.
 - Further, the PBO has an open offer to the JCPAA to provide briefings where confidential additional detail may be able to be discussed.
- **Recommendation 3:** The Committee recommended that the PBO give further consideration to the issue of gender distributional analysis and provide advice to the JCPAA regarding how this may be incorporated into existing costings.
 - The PBO has added further guidance to its costing request form by including distributional analysis as an example of supplementary analysis; updated the costing guidance document to provide additional information on requesting distributional analysis in a costing; and updated the frequently asked questions on its website.
- **Recommendation 4:** The Committee recommended that the Parliamentary Budget Officer acknowledge the intentions of the JCPAA, under section 64T of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, to include in its request concerning the scope of the next independent review of the PBO, consideration of the post-election report and the compulsory inclusion of minor parties and independents.
 - The Parliamentary Budget Officer noted the Committee’s intention outlined in this recommendation. Since the review, minor parties have been able to opt in to inclusion in the post-election report for three elections.

Appendix B – Supporting data

Figure B1: Request days to completion in 2024-25, adjusted and unadjusted days



Source: Analysis of the PBO Review

Table B1: Commonwealth, state and territory net debt as a share of GSP/GDP, 2015-16 and 2025-26 data (%)

	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	Cwlth
2015-16	-	5.7	0.2	5.8	4.4	-2.7	4.8	3.3	18.1
2025-26 (f)	13.7	25.1	7.6	6.8	15.6	15.4	17.7	25.9	21.5
Increase (ppt)	13.7	19.4	7.4	1.0	11.2	18.1	12.9	22.6	3.4

- Indicates nil.

(f) Indicates forecast.

Source: PBO 2025-26 National Fiscal Outlook chart data

Appendix C – Self-initiated research reports

Since the JCPAA review of 2019-20 was published in September 2020, the PBO has released 54 pieces of self-initiated research, focussing on:

- i. Fiscal projections and sustainability
- ii. Budget insights
- iii. Budget charts
- iv. Information papers
- v. Unlegislated measures
- vi. Interactive tools

i Fiscal projections and sustainability

Medium-Term Budget Outlook

This report provides independent projections of key budget outcomes including debt and budget balances over the next decade.

- [*2020-21 Medium-term fiscal projections*](#), 10 December 2020
- [*Fiscal sustainability*](#), 28 April 2021
- [*Beyond the budget 2021-22: Fiscal outlook and scenarios*](#), 21 September 2021
- [*Beyond the budget 2022-23: Fiscal outlook and scenarios*](#), 8 December 2022
- [*Beyond the budget 2023-24: Fiscal outlook and sustainability*](#), 28 June 2023
- [*Beyond the budget 2024-25: Fiscal outlook and sustainability*](#), 27 June 2024
- [*2025-26 Medium-Term Budget Outlook: Beyond the Budget*](#), 18 September 2025

National Fiscal Outlook

This report combines Commonwealth, state and territory budget data to examine the fiscal outlook across all levels of Australian government.

- [*2020-21 National fiscal outlook: At a glance*](#), 4 March 2021
- [*2021-22 National fiscal outlook: At a glance*](#), 2 December 2021
- [*2022-23 National fiscal outlook: At a glance*](#), 5 October 2022
- [*2023-24 National fiscal outlook*](#), 31 October 2023
- [*2024-25 National fiscal outlook*](#), 30 October 2024
- [*2025-26 National fiscal outlook*](#), 4 December 2025

ii Budget insights

Budget bites

[*Trends in personal income tax | pbo*](#), 18 November 2022.

This Budget bite analysed the role of personal income tax in the broader tax system over the past 70 years and explores likely changes in the future.

[*JobSeeker Payment: COVID-19, age & gender*](#), 12 February 2023.

This Budget bite analysed the short-term COVID-19 impact and the long-term trends in recipient demographics.

[*Why do costings change?*](#), 26 October 2023.

This Budget bite explained why costings for the same policy can change as a result of revised economic forecasts, or using different time periods.

Budget explainers

[*Structural trends in GST*](#), 4 September 2020.

This explainer examined trends in GST relative to the size of the economy over the previous twenty years.

[*JobSeeker payment*](#), 8 October 2020.

This explainer examined the JobSeeker payment as part of enhancing understanding of economic and policy trends affecting Commonwealth expenditure.

[*Bracket creep and its fiscal impact*](#), 29 September 2021.

This explainer examined the impact of bracket creep from the perspective of both individuals and government finances.

[*Fuel taxation in Australia*](#), 21 September 2022.

This explainer examined fuel taxation in Australia, its major components, how they work together and how the system is affected by government policies.

[*Indexation & the budget – an introduction*](#), 1 March 2023.

This explainer discussed the rationale, use and limitations of indexation in the Commonwealth budget and associated programs.

[*How is super taxed?*](#), 27 April 2023.

This explainer explored how super is taxed in Australia, and how Australia's system compares to similar schemes in other OECD countries.

[*Indexation & the budget – long-term impacts*](#), 2 May 2023.

This explainer discussed the impact of indexation arrangements on the budget, with a focus on analysing the long-term consequences.

[*The Contingency Reserve*](#), 24 April 2024.

This explainer examined the definition and use of the Contingency Reserve and its major components.

[*Dividend imputation and franking credits*](#), 13 June 2024.

This explainer provided an in-depth walk through of the dividend imputation part of the tax system, and the franking credits that underpin it.

[*Australia's tax mix*](#), 14 November 2024.

This budget explainer explored the roles played by different taxes and how they have changed over time.

iii Budget charts

PBO chart packs provide graphical summaries of information contained in each Budget and Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

- [*2020-21 Budget Snapshot*](#), 7 October 2020
- [*2020-21 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook Snapshot*](#), 18 December 2020
- [*2021-22 Budget at a glance*](#), 8 June 2021
- [*2021-22 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook Snapshot*](#), 16 December 2021
- [*2022-23 March Budget Snapshot*](#), 29 March 2022
- [*2022-23 October Budget Snapshot*](#), 25 October 2022
- [*2023-24 Budget Snapshot*](#), 9 May 2023
- [*2023-24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook \(MYEFO\) Snapshot*](#), 13 December 2023
- [*2024-25 Budget Snapshot*](#), 14 May 2024
- [*2024-25 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook \(MYEFO\) Snapshot*](#), 18 December 2024
- [*2025-26 Budget Snapshot*](#), 25 March 2025
- [*2025-26 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook \(MYEFO\) Snapshot*](#), 17 December 2025

iv Information papers

[*PBO costing processes, timeframes and prioritisation framework*](#), 2 September 2022.

This paper provides information on the costing process, the factors affecting the time it takes the PBO to respond to costing requests and the framework the PBO applies to prioritise competing demands for costing resources.

v Unlegislated measures

The PBO has compiled lists of unlegislated budget measures from information provided by relevant Commonwealth entities. The lists present Commonwealth budget measures with significant financial implications (over \$50 million) that have been published in previous budget updates, where full enabling legislation has not yet passed Parliament.

- [*Unlegislated measures carried forward in the budget estimates – August 2021*](#), 4 August 2021
- [*Unlegislated measures as at February 2024*](#), 1 February 2024
- [*Unlegislated measures as at August 2024*](#), 13 August 2024
- [*Unlegislated measures as at February 2025*](#), 19 February 2025
- [*Unlegislated measures as at August 2025*](#), 21 August 2025

vi Interactive tools

Fiscal Sustainability Dashboard

The interactive fiscal sustainability dashboard provides trajectories for gross debt using selected scenarios of key variables – economic growth, interest rates and the budget balance.

- [*PBO Fiscal Sustainability Dashboard 2021-22*](#)
- [*PBO Fiscal Sustainability Dashboard 2022-23*](#)

PDI Calculator

The PDI Calculator estimates the costs of servicing debt associated with hypothetical changes in the amount of Commonwealth Government borrowing compared to a baseline level of Commonwealth Government borrowing.

- [*Public Debt Interest \(PDI\) Calculator | pbo*](#), first released 16 October 2020, then updated for each Budget and MYEFO

Build Your Own Budget

Build Your Own Budget is an analysis tool that allows users to adjust various policy and economic parameters to test their impact on the Australian Government budget, and in some cases, on long term fiscal sustainability.

- [*Build your own budget consultation draft*](#), 16 December 2022
- [*Build your own budget 2023-24*](#), 28 June 2023
- [*Build your own budget 2023-24 MYEFO*](#), 26 March 2024
- [*Build your own budget 2024-25*](#), 27 June 2024
- [*Build your own budget 2024-25 MYEFO*](#), 17 January 2025
- [*Build your own budget 2025-26 \(interim\)*](#), 14 April 2025
- [*Build your own budget 2025-26*](#), 18 September 2025
- [*Build your own budget 2025-26 MYEFO*](#), 23 December 2025

Small Model of Australian Representative Taxpayers

The Small Model of Australian Representative Taxpayers (SMART) is an analytical tool that allows users to adjust various personal income tax policy settings. The model can be used to estimate the impact of changes to personal income tax settings on the Australian Government budget, as well the distributional impact across taxpayers.

- [*Small Model of Australian Representative Taxpayers \(SMART\)*](#), first released December 2023, then updated for each Budget and MYEFO

Appendix D – List of Consultations

Parliamentarians

Mr Josh Burns MP, Chair, Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for Finance

Dr Helen Haines MP, Independent Member for Indi

The Hon Julian Hill MP, Assistant Minister for Citizenship, Customs and Multicultural Affairs and Assistant Minister for International Education

Senator the Hon Jane Hume, Liberal Party of Australia

The Hon Sussan Ley MP, Leader of the Opposition

Senator the Hon Sue Lines, President of the Senate

The Hon Daniel Mulino MP, Assistant Treasurer

Mr Ted O'Brien MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Shadow Treasurer

Senator James Paterson, Shadow Minister for Finance, Liberal Party of Australia

Senator Barbara Pocock, Australian Greens

Ms Allegra Spender MP, Independent Member for Wentworth

Staff from the Office of the Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP, Treasurer

Staff from the Office of the Hon David Littleproud MP, Leader of the Nationals

Staff from the Office of Senator Larissa Waters, Leader of the Australian Greens

Commonwealth Government Departments and Agencies

Mr Blair Comley PSM, Secretary of the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Mr Simon Duggan, Deputy Secretary, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Mr David Hazlehurst, Chief Executive Officer, Services Australia

Dr Steven Kennedy PSM, Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Mr Michael Lye, Secretary of the Department of Social Services

Ms Jenny Wilkinson PSM, Secretary of the Treasury

External think tanks and other stakeholders

Professor Robert Breunig, PBO Expert Panel member, Director of the Tax and Transfer Policy Institute at the Crawford School of Public Policy

Mr Colin Brown, PBO Expert Panel member

Mr Robert Carling, PBO Expert Panel member, Senior Fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies

Mr Tom Crowley, ABC Federal Political Reporter

Mr Saul Eslake, PBO Expert Panel member, independent economist and Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellow at the University of Tasmania

Ms Jaala Hinchcliffe, Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services

Mr John Kehoe, Economics editor, Australian Financial Review

Former Senator Andrew Murray, PBO Expert Panel member

Ms Scherie Nicol, Public Management and Budgeting Division, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Mr Nigel Ray PSM, PBO Expert Panel member, Director of Housing Australia

Mr Xavier Rimmer, Victorian Parliamentary Budget Officer

Dr Leonora Risse, PBO Expert Panel member, Associate Professor in Economics at the University of Canberra

Dr Ana Gamarra Rondinel, PBO Expert Panel member, Melbourne Institute Applied Economics and Social Research

Dr Aruna Sathanapally, PBO Expert Panel member, CEO Grattan Institute

Distinguished Professor Deborah Schofield, PBO Expert Panel member, Vice President of the International Microsimulation Association

Ms Yvette Sims, Acting Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, Department of Parliamentary Services

Mr Shane Wright, PBO Expert Panel member, senior economic correspondent Nine Newspapers

Parliamentary Budget Office

Ms Kerrie Bremner, Acting Assistant Parliamentary Budget Officer

Dr John Clark, Assistant Parliamentary Budget Officer

Mr Lewis Conn, Assistant Parliamentary Budget Office

Ms Sam Reinhardt, Parliamentary Budget Officer

Mr Gareth Tunks, Chief Operating Officer

Ms Karen Whitham, former First Assistant Parliamentary Budget Officer