



24 March 2022

Parliamentary Budget Office Activity Report

Overview

This activity report provides an update on Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) activities since the last activity report of 7 February 2022. Due to the short time between activity reports and because full quarterly data for 1 January to 31 March 2022 is not yet available, this report is a more concise version. Our next activity report will provide a comprehensive overview of activities for the full quarter including a comparison of performance.

Requests from parliamentarians and parliamentary parties

In the period from 1 January to 28 February 2022, we received 337 requests for policy costings and requests for budget analysis. During the period, we responded to 400 requests, at an average turnaround time of 25 business days and a median time to completion of 27 business days (see Table 1). The completion performance over this shortened reporting period is an improvement on our December quarter (average turnaround time of 34 days), though still above our performance target of 15 business days.

Of requests flagged by our clients as being critical, 68 of these were completed at an average turnaround time of 13 days, a significant improvement on the year-to-date average of 22 days.

As noted in our last activity report we are aiming to reduce the average and median time taken for requests as we are concerned that the existing average timeframes may not sufficiently support the needs of our requestors. The results for January and February 2022 suggest that our efforts to improve completion times are having an effect.

In the period from 1 January to 28 February 2022, we received 85 responses from Commonwealth agencies to our information requests, with an average turnaround time of 12 business days (see Table 2).

Table 3 contains details of the responsiveness of Commonwealth agencies to information requests during this period.

From 1 July 2021 to 24 March 2022, 22 policy announcements that were made by parliamentarians or parliamentary parties included references to PBO policy costings and 6 of these costings were subsequently publicly released. Since 1 February 2022, 8 policy announcements referenced PBO costings, with 0 costings publicly released (refer to Table 4).

Evaluations

As flagged in the activity report of 7 February 2022, there has been no activity in relation to evaluations.

Self-initiated work program

The PBO has released one self-initiated publication since the last activity report of 7 February 2022: *Historical Fiscal Data*, a new database of historical time series in an easily accessible form. The database will be updated following the 2022-23 Budget.

Over the next few months, almost all of our public information resources will be redirected towards costing work in the lead-up to the general election and towards the preparation of the election commitments report.

General election preparation

Preparations for the 2022 Election Commitments Report are nearing completion, including the temporary expansion of our workforce required to complete the report by the statutory deadline.

Staffing

As at 31 December 2021, the PBO had 46.09 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff (headcount: 47). The PBO calculates this data on a quarterly basis and data as at 31 March 2022 will be included in the next activity report. In 2021-22, the PBO is estimating an average staffing level (ASL) of 48.

Response to COVID-19

The PBO continues to follow advice from ACT Health and the Presiding Officers relating to working arrangements in the context of COVID-19. Given the small size of the PBO, managing key person risk is a continued focus for the Executive.

Review into Parliamentary culture

Following the publication of the Jenkins review in November 2021, the PBO is carefully considering the inquiry's findings. The Australian Human Rights Commission provided a briefing on the report to all PBO staff on 2 March 2022.

The PBO is working closely with the other Parliamentary Departments to effectively coordinate responding to the Jenkins review and associated matters, including the Foster review and any recommendations from Comcare. This work is currently progressing via the Jenkins Review Implementation Group, chaired by Ms Kerri Hartland, in which the PBO participates.

Requests from parliamentarians and parliamentary parties for costings and budget analyses

Table 1: Completion of costing and budget analysis requests

	2018–19 Total	2019–20 Total	2020–21 Total	2021–22 Q1 ^(a)	2021–22 Q2	2021–22 Q3 ^(b)	2021–22 Total	Trend ^(c)
Requests received in period	3,019	332	1,253	458	603	337	1,398	-
Requests completed in period	2,970*	279	813	299	613	400	1,312	-
Average time to completion (business days)	18	27	31	33	34	25	31	↑
Median time to completion (business days)	12	25	25	36	34	27	32	↑

*Includes 429 costings and budget analyses prepared for the purposes of the Election Commitments Report.

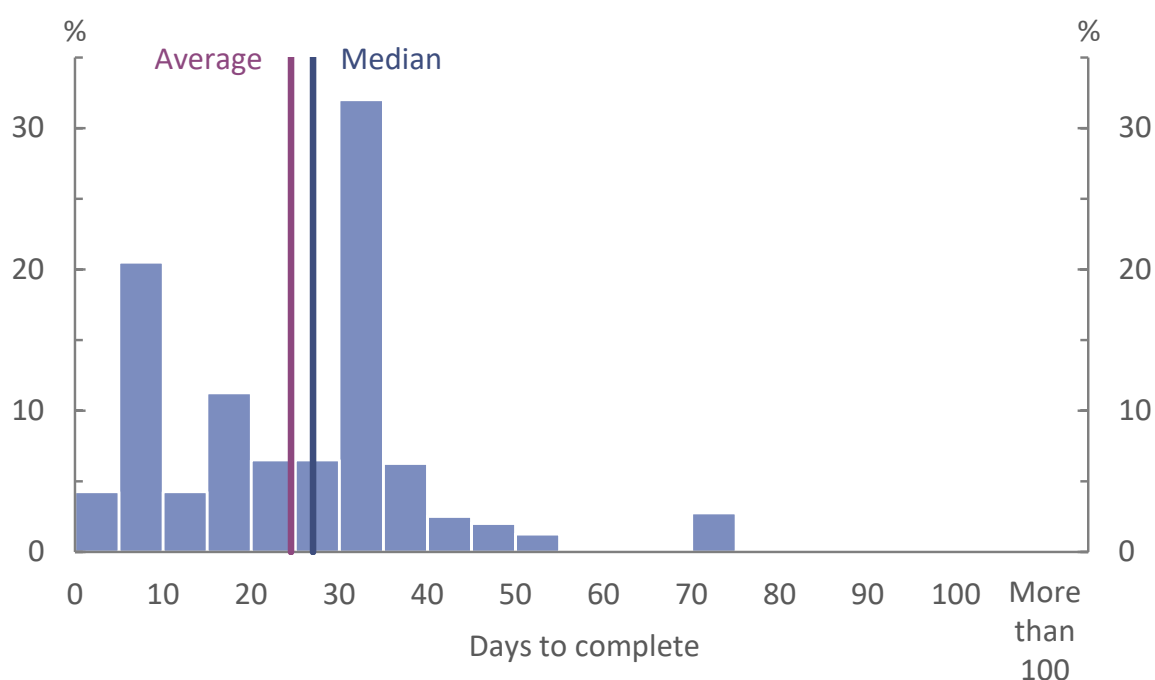
Note: The table identifies the number of ‘options’ received by the PBO, noting that a single request can contain multiple options.

(a) Since the publication of the 7 February 2022 Activity report, a further request has been assigned to the 2021-22 Q1 data, with a minor impact on requests submitted, requests completed and on the average time to completion.

(b) Includes results for January and February 2022 only.

(c) In comparison to the previous financial year.

Figure 1: PBO response times for requests completed in 2021–22 quarter three (1 January to 28 February 2022 only)



Requests by the PBO for information from agencies

Table 2: Responses to PBO information requests

	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2021–22	2021–22	2021–22
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3 ^(a)	Total
Responses received in period	429	549	175	523	32	108	85	225
Percentage received on time (%)	99	98	99	99%	100%	99%	99%	99%
Average response time (business days)	9	7	12	11	10	6	12	9

(a) Includes results for January and February 2022 only.

Table 3: Information request responsiveness by agencies in 2021–22 quarter three (1 January to 28 February 2022)

Department/Agency	Responses received in period	Average of Time taken to respond (business days)	Responses received after due date	Per cent late
Attorney-General's Department	1	5	0	0%
Australian Taxation Office	5	6	0	0%
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	1	7	0	0%
Department of Defence	3	15	0	0%
Department of Education, Skills and Employment	2	10	0	0%
Department of Finance	14	8	0	0%
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	1	5	0	0%
Department of Health	5	6	1 ^(a)	20%
Department of Home Affairs	7	15	0	0%
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources	4	9	0	0%
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	4	9	0	0%
Department of Social Services	21	19	0	0%
Department of the Treasury	3	17	0	0%
Department of Veterans Affairs	12	10	0	0%
National Indigenous Australians Agency	1	13	0	0%
Services Australia	1	5	0	0%
Total	85	12	1	1%

(a) The response was two days late.

Publicly referenced costings

Table 4 shows the PBO costings or budget analyses that have been publicly referenced by parliamentarians. The table captures a costing or analysis that is referenced in the public domain for the first time. This includes references to costings that have been publicly released (and subsequently published on the PBO website), and those that have not been publicly released by the requesting parliamentarian, where there is a first public reference to the PBO. Subsequent public references of PBO costings or budget analyses are excluded from the table below.

Table 4: Costings or budget analysis publicly referenced for the first time in 2021-22 (to 24 March 2022) – items added since the last report are italicised.

Description of policy announcement	Party or Parliamentarian announcing policy	Method of Announcement	Date of announcement	Date of release of costing minute on the PBO website
<i>Wiping Student Debt</i>	<i>Senator Mehreen Faruqi</i>	<i>Online media article</i>	<i>24 March 2022</i>	<i>Costing minute not released</i>
<i>Wiping Student Debt vs Stage 3 Tax Cuts</i>	<i>Senator Mehreen Faruqi</i>	<i>Online media article</i>	<i>24 March 2022</i>	<i>Costing minute not released</i>
<i>Guaranteed Liveable Income</i>	<i>Mr Adam Bandt MP</i>	<i>Online media article</i>	<i>20 March 2022</i>	<i>Costing minute not released</i>
<i>Reinstating Regional Doctor Incentives</i>	<i>Mr Mark Butler MP</i>	<i>Interview transcript</i>	<i>8 March 2022</i>	<i>Costing minute not released</i>
<i>Universal Childcare and Early Education</i>	<i>Senator Mehreen Faruqi</i>	<i>Online media article</i>	<i>6 March 2022</i>	<i>Costing minute not released</i>
<i>Looking After Coal Workers</i>	<i>Mr Adam Bandt MP</i>	<i>Online media article</i>	<i>25 February 2022</i>	<i>Costing minute not released</i>
<i>Repurposing Snowy Hydro into a not-for profit retailer and public generator</i>	<i>Mr Adam Bandt MP</i>	<i>Online media article</i>	<i>18 February 2022</i>	<i>Costing minute not released</i>
<i>Home Battery Incentive Scheme</i>	<i>Dr Helen Haines MP</i>	<i>House of Representatives Amendment Bill</i>	<i>14 February 2022</i>	<i>Costing minute not released</i>
Truth and Justice Commission	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	23 January 2022	Costing minute not released
Air Filters for Schools	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	23 January 2022	Costing minute not released
Funding for Tenants' Advocacy Services	Senator Mehreen Faruqi	Media release	24 November 2021	Costing minute not released
Ending Corporate Tax Avoidance	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	12 November 2021	17 November 2021
Horse Racing Transition Plan and Horse Betting Levy	Senator Mehreen Faruqi	Media release	2 November 2021	Costing minute not released

Description of policy announcement	Party or Parliamentarian announcing policy	Method of Announcement	Date of announcement	Date of release of costing minute on the PBO website
Make Functional Assessments a Medicare Benefits Schedule Item	Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme	Committee report	19 October 2021	20 October 2021
One Million Homes	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	17 October 2021	18 October 2021
Free and Unlimited Mental Health in Medicare	Senator Jordon Steele-John	Media release	20 September 2021	Costing minute not released
Mining Super Profits Tax	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Media release	6 September 2021	6 September 2021
Corporate Super Profits Tax	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Media release	6 September 2021	6 September 2021
Dentistry Vouchers for Older Australians	Rebekha Sharkie MP	Media release	16 August 2021	Costing minute not released
Distributional analysis of the stage 3 tax cuts	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Media release	28 July 2021	29 July 2021
JobKeeper	Dr Andrew Leigh MP	Online media article	23 July 2021	Costing minute not released
Aged Care Funding	Ms Clare O'Neil MP	Online media article	12 July 2021	Costing minute not released

Note: All costings published on the PBO's website are captured in the table above. While the PBO endeavours to capture all policy announcements that reference PBO costings, there may be announcements missing from the table above, for example, because the announcement was not reflected in any media monitored by the PBO.

Note: Since the publication of the last Activity Report, any new costings or budget analyses publicly referenced for the first time are presented in italics in the table above.