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The Hon Kelly O'Dwyer  
The Hon Kate Ellis  
Independent Reviewers  
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Dear Ms O'Dwyer and Ms Ellis

### **Review of PBR Act and IPEA Act**

Thank you for seeking the views of the Department of the House of Representatives ('the department') for the review of the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017* (PBR Act) and the *Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority Act 2017*.

The department provides Members with a number of services of relevance to your review and under the PBR Act. These resources include:

- stationery for use in Parliament House offices
- COMCAR shuttle access for sitting weeks in Canberra
- postage (allocation of up to \$1,800 per year for stamps from Members' office budgets)
- forwarding of mail delivered to Parliament House in non-sitting weeks to electorate offices
- limited newspapers to parliamentary office holders and shadow ministers in sitting weeks and to parliamentary office holders in non-sitting weeks and
- courier costs, particularly for office contents returned to home states for Members who retire or are defeated at election.

The department also provides payroll services for Members, including Members who are Ministers and Assistant Ministers. There are also cots, access to a nursing parents' room and a family room provided by the department for Members

One restriction the department is aware of which affects Members undertaking their duties on parliamentary committees is the arrangements that are made for committee charter travel.

The PBR Act does not currently recognise that parliamentarians on committees may need to travel together on charter transport in some circumstances, particularly when committees are visiting rural and regional areas. This leads to the travel costs of the group of committee travellers being allocated and reported for individuals, when the individual traveller has very

little control of the travel arrangements. As you would be aware, committees make decisions about the specific mode of charter transport rather than an individual member.

The department suggests that committee charter costs could be publicly reported against the committee rather than individual travellers. This would lead to increased transparency of the total charter costs, while satisfying the PBR Act principles of value for money, dominant purpose, public defensibility and conditions for making claims. Such a change would also notably streamline administrative processes for committees.

Should you wish to discuss this submission in further detail, I would be pleased to provide additional information.

Yours sincerely

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CLARESSA SURTEES

Clerk of the House

3 November 2021

