

COMMON PARLIAMENTARY WORKFLOW LANGUAGE – TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Version 1.0 - Approved by the Secretaries ICT Governance Board on 17 December 2009

Key points:

The aim of standardising Common Parliamentary Workflow Language Terms and Definitions is to:

- improve communication between agencies, Ministers Offices and citizens and enable standard approaches to parliamentary workflow; and
- provide a common frame of reference to build parliamentary workflow knowledge within government agencies.

Financial Management and Accountability (FMA) Act agencies are required to transition to the new Common Parliamentary Workflow Language Terms and Definitions, as systems are upgraded, enhanced or new agencies formed through machinery of government changes.

Action required:

FMA Act agencies are required to use the Common Parliamentary Workflow Language Terms and Definitions.

FMA Act agencies that are not able to implement the Common Parliamentary Workflow Language Terms and Definitions due to technical barriers may postpone implementation of the Terms and Definitions until the next system upgrade or replacement. From time to time, Finance may contact agencies to determine compliance and/or seek feedback on the Common Parliamentary Workflow Language Terms and Definitions.

At any time, a Minister may direct an agency to use an alternate term to those listed in the Common Parliamentary Workflow Language Terms and Definitions. In this event, FMA Act agencies are required to provide a copy of the Minister's direction to Finance.

Common Parliamentary Workflow Language – Terms and Definitions¹

Parliamentary Document Type	Definition
Cabinet Memorandum	Information for Cabinet consideration prepared in the relevant department's name often in response to requests by Cabinet for supplementary information or the development of options.
Cabinet Submission	Information for Cabinet consideration prepared in the relevant Minister's name that contains the Minister's recommended course of action.
Media Release	A publicity or news announcement prepared in a Minister's Office and/or agency and issued in the name of the Minister and/or the name of the agency depending on the subject matter.
Ministerial Brief	An agency response to a specific request from a Minister for information: on a policy, program or issue; prior to a proposed meeting between the Minister and an individual or group; prior to a function that the Minister is to attend; and/or to assist the Minister in preparing for a major program of activities such as a round of domestic or international visits.
Ministerial Correspondence	Mail, including email, addressed to Ministers from any source relating to portfolio issues. It does not include party political, personal or electorate matters.
Ministerial Submission	An agency-initiated document that: provides formal advice or information to a Minister; seeks the Minister's consideration and approval for a particular action; and/or seeks the Minister's signature on correspondence initiated within the portfolio.
Parliamentary Committee Submission	Verbal and/or written advice to a parliamentary committee addressing the committee's terms of reference or in response to a request from the committee for information on a particular subject matter.
Parliamentary Question on Notice (QoN)	Questions, often seeking detailed facts, directed to Ministers that are placed by Members and Senators on the Parliamentary Notice Papers. Responses to Parliamentary Questions on Notice are written responses prepared by agencies for a Minister's signature and tabling in Parliament.
Question Time Brief (QTB)	A brief statement of factual background to an issue that is often high profile, current and/or potentially contentious, as well as a series of talking points to allow direct response to questions that are likely to be raised in Parliament during Question Time.

¹ Adapted from definitions adopted by the Australian National Audit Office in *Managing Parliamentary Workflow – Better Practice Guide (2003)* and *Agency Management of Parliamentary Workflow – Better Practice Guide (2008)* except where otherwise indicated.

Senate Estimates Brief	Information prepared for a Minister and agency heads in preparation for appearance before a senate estimates standing committee (not from ANAO Guides).
Senate Estimates Questions on Notice	This falls within the Senate Estimates process and applies either when witnesses are unable to respond to a question from the standing committee, the question can be taken on notice and responded to in writing by a particular date; or when the committee is unable to complete its line of questioning during the hearing period, the remaining questions are provided after the hearing. Responses to the Senate Estimates Questions on Notice are written documents which must follow the formatting and timeliness requirements set out by Parliament. (not from ANAO Guides).

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