

7 March 2018

Ms Jenny Wilkinson
Parliamentary Budget Officer
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Dear Ms Wilkinson,

I provide this submission on behalf of the Liberal Democrats in response to your consultation paper on allowing minor parties to opt in to the PBO's post-election report of election commitments.

Consistent with the recommendations of the recent review of the PBO, your consultation paper only contemplates incumbent parliamentary parties and independents opting in to the post-election report. However non-parliamentary parties can influence election campaigns and win seats in parliament, as occurred with the Palmer United Party in 2013 and Pauline Hanson's One Nation in 2016. It should be possible for all federally registered non-parliamentary parties to opt in to the post-election report, so that any party that becomes a parliamentary party at the election can be included in the post-election report.

Your Proposition 1 states that minor parties seeking to be included in the post-election report will need to notify the PBO by COB on the first day of the caretaker period. This implies there will usually be just 24 hours between the announcement of an election and the requirement for notification. If the PBO were to allow non-parliamentary parties to opt in to the post-election report, the PBO should actively invite all parties to opt in to the post-election report by contacting the party's registered officer through various means. The PBO should also allow more than 24 hours for a response.

Proposition 5 is also of concern. You are currently required in your post-election report to provide the combined impact of a major party's election commitments, notwithstanding that in some instances there may be considerable uncertainty about such combined impacts. However, you propose the PBO have discretion to not provide the combined impact of the election commitments of a minor party that has opted in to the PBO's post-election report.

If you exercise your discretion to not provide this combined impact, then the post-election report will merely contain a list of stand-alone costings of the minor party's policies. Yet a minor party is already free to release stand-alone PBO costings of its policies. So in these circumstances the post-election report would provide no additional information compared to the information that can already be released with the minor party's permission. Any benefit of allowing minor parties to opt in to the post-election report would seem to be negated.

Moreover, if the PBO decided to provide the combined impact of the election commitments of some political parties, while deciding to not provide the combined impact of the election commitments of other political parties, this would provide assistance to some parties relative to

others. Comprehensive evidence would be provided for some parties to bolster and amplify their fiscal claims, while comprehensive evidence would be denied to others. The PBO should not facilitate some parties being assisted more than others.

Given these arguments, proposition 5 should be abandoned, and the PBO should be required to report on minor parties in the same way that it reports on major parties.

Yours sincerely,



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