



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

MEDIA RELEASE

INQUIRY INTO THE BUDGET PROCESS FOR INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT BODIES AND THE NSW PARLIAMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24 March 2020

The Public Accountability Committee released its first report today on the budget process for independent oversight bodies and the NSW Parliament (Department of the Legislative Council and Department of Parliamentary Services).

Committee Chair David Shoebridge MLC said, 'These institutions perform a vital role in maintaining the health of our democracy, by fighting corruption, ensuring fair elections, preventing abuses of Government power and holding the Government to account. To perform their functions each institution requires a high degree of independence from the Government of the day and adequate resourcing.'

'Funding for these critical institutions is currently determined via a process that is conducted by Government officials behind closed doors. This process has resulted in funding levels which are increasingly inadequate for the integrity institutions to perform their functions and for the Parliament to continue to properly perform its constitutional role.'

Mr Shoebridge continued, 'The public has a right to expect a high degree of openness and transparency in Government decision-making when it comes to the funding of core integrity institutions and the Parliament. Other jurisdictions have established budget processes for independent officers and the Parliament which provide much greater transparency and accountability than exist in NSW.'

The report therefore makes 8 recommendations for a range of reforms:

- review by parliamentary committees of the annual budget submissions of the oversight agencies and the two parliamentary departments considered in the report
- contingency funding for the integrity bodies to address any unforeseen financial demands
- funding oversight bodies through the Appropriation Act rather through the relevant minister
- the removal of the integrity bodies from the Government 'cluster' system
- further consideration of the future funding model for the Parliament based on the models in place in the UK or Canada.

The committee will produce a second report considering the budget process for the NSW Audit Office, once the Auditor-General has completed the audit requested by Special Minister of State.

The report and other inquiry documents, including submissions and hearing transcripts, are available on the committee's website at: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/publicaccountability.

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, Mr David Shoebridge, on 9230 3030