



Australian Government

Independent Parliamentary
Expenses Authority

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Assurance Strategy

Independent Parliamentary
Expenses Authority

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CEO's foreword

The Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) was established in 2017 to support parliamentarians in their use of publicly-funded work resources and to support their staff in their use of travel resources. In doing so, IPEA plays a vital role in maintaining public confidence that the use of those work resources for parliamentarians and travel resources for staff are consistent with the governing legislation and instruments.

IPEA's Assurance Strategy outlines how IPEA martials a range of functions across the agency in order to verify that public resources are being used appropriately. These functions cover four key pillars: advice, administration, transparency and specific assurance checking and reviews. All these functions together contribute to ensuring that parliamentarians and their staff understand their obligations and that they use work and travel resources appropriately.

I commend the Assurance Strategy and trust that it will be helpful in explaining IPEA's role and purpose to clients, stakeholders and the general public.

Christina Grant

Chief Executive Officer

1. Introduction

The purpose of this Assurance Strategy

This document sets out IPEA's approach to Assurance - that is, to ensuring that public resources within IPEA's range of responsibility under the *Independent Parliamentary Authority Act 2017* (the IPEA Act), are used appropriately.

This Assurance Strategy is intended to inform our main audiences:

- The Australian community, to let them know there is an active integrity agency overseeing the use of work resources by parliamentarians and travel resources by their staff.
- Parliamentarians and their staff, to help them by providing advice and making it clear how we undertake our functions and use our powers.
- Staff of IPEA, to support consistency in how we work and how we promote integrity and transparency.

This document outlines how IPEA combines four key areas of activity to provide public confidence that public resources are being used appropriately.

Who we are

IPEA was established on 1 July 2017 as an independent agency under the *Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority Act 2017* (IPEA Act). We are led by a Chief Executive Officer and Members of the Authority. The Members include a Chair, and up to four additional Members appointed by the Governor-General.

Our purpose is to foster trust in the use of public resources through independent advice, administration, reporting and assurance. The public resources we do this for are:

- The **work resources** provided to parliamentarians under the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017* (PBR Act), the *Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017* and associated Determinations (the PBR framework). This includes work resources relating to travel, which are parliamentary **travel resources**.¹
- The **travel entitlements** provided to parliamentary staff under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act) and associated instruments (the MOP(S) framework).²

References to work resources and travel resources throughout this document refer specifically to these types of public resources.³

What we do

IPEA's functions are described in section 12 of the IPEA Act and include:

- **Education and Advice:** We provide clear, timely and accurate education and advice to parliamentarians and their staff on matters relating to their travel resources. This includes offering regular education sessions, providing general educational resources and the provision of personal advice to individuals on particular circumstances relating to travel resources.

¹ Parliamentarians' 'work resources' within the remit of IPEA are defined in s 4 of the IPEA Act under 'MP work resource' and include their travel resources which are defined in the same section as 'MP travel resource'.

² MOP(S) Act staff 'travel resources' within IPEA's remit are defined in s 4 of the IPEA Act under 'MOPS Act resource'.

³ The Department of Finance administers the use of parliamentary work expenses that are not travel-related. While IPEA's main role is focused on travel resources, IPEA is also responsible for reporting and assurance activities related to the use of parliamentarians' work expenses. IPEA does not administer these expenses. [* as of 2025]

- **Administration:** We administer claims for travel resources by parliamentarians and their staff. This includes responsibility for processing and payment of travel-related claims on behalf of the Commonwealth.
- **Transparency:** We prepare and publish regular reports on the use of parliamentary work resources including parliamentarians work expenses and travel resources and MOP(S) Act staff travel resources.
- **Assurance:** We monitor the use of parliamentary work and travel resources by parliamentarians and travel resources by parliamentarians' staff and conduct audit and assurance activities where there may be evidence of possible misuse. If resources use is inconsistent with the parliamentary business resources framework and the entitlements of MoPS Act staff, we act to recover those payments for the Commonwealth.

Our legislative mandate

Our legislative mandate is outlined in the IPEA Act, PBR framework, and the MOP(S) framework. Details of these are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 | IPEA's legislative framework

Element	Instruments
IPEA legislation Establishes IPEA as an independent statutory authority and sets out its functions and powers.	Primary legislation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority Act 2017</i>
The PBR framework Establishes a principles-based framework covering parliamentarians' work expenses, requiring that for any expense claimed, the dominant purpose be parliamentary business and that it represents value for money for the Commonwealth.	Primary legislation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017 (PBR Act)</i> Regulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017</i> Other determinations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Remuneration Tribunal (Members of Parliament) Determination 2024</i> • <i>Parliamentary Business Resources (Parliamentary Business) Determination 2025</i>
MOP(S) framework Sets out the conditions of employment for staff employed by parliamentarians, including in relation to their travel arrangements.	Primary legislation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 (MOP(S) Act)</i> Other instruments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Commonwealth Members of Parliament (Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2024-27</i> • <i>Members of Parliament (Staff) (Employee Direction) Determination 2025</i> • <i>Members of Parliament (Staff) Employment Arrangements Determination 2025</i>

Further guidance on travel entitlements can be found on IPEA's website at [Travel | Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority](#) and the website of the Department of Finance [Travel: staff | Ministerial and Parliamentary Services](#).

Parliamentarians: The PBR framework

The PBR framework is a *principles-based* framework that governs the appropriate use of parliamentarians' work resources (including travel resources). Under the PBR framework, parliamentarians must ensure that resources claimed for parliamentary business are consistent with the obligations under the PBR Act. The obligations are:

- **Dominant purpose:** A parliamentarian must ensure that any resources used are for the 'dominant purpose' of conducting their parliamentary business.
- **Value for money:** A parliamentarian must use public resources for parliamentary business in a way that achieves value for money.
- **Conditions:** A parliamentarian must not make a claim, or incur an expense, in relation to a public resource if they have not met all of the conditions for its provision.
- **Good faith:** A parliamentarian must act ethically and in good faith when using, or accounting for the use of, public resources.
- **Personal responsibility and accountability:** A parliamentarian is personally responsible and accountable for their use of public resources and must be prepared to publicly defend their use.

IPEA is responsible for monitoring the appropriate use of parliamentarians' work and travel resources under the PBR framework.

Parliamentarians' responsibilities extend to responsibility for the use of resources by their parliamentary staff, employed under the MOP(S) Act.

Parliamentarians' staff: MOP(S) Act Employees

IPEA also monitors the use of parliamentary resources by MOP(S) Act staff to ensure they comply with their entitlements under their Commonwealth Members of Parliament Staff Enterprise Agreement for the relevant period and under Determinations made by the Special Minister of State relating to MoP(S) Act staff travel entitlements. MOP(S) Act staff use of travel is rule-based, and includes the requirements that:

- Staff may only travel as directed by their employing parliamentarian within Australia on official business.
- Electorate staff travel is subject to available funds in the parliamentarian's electorate support budget.
- Staff may only travel by the most efficient direct route available.
- Staff must not travel at Commonwealth expense for their personal benefit.

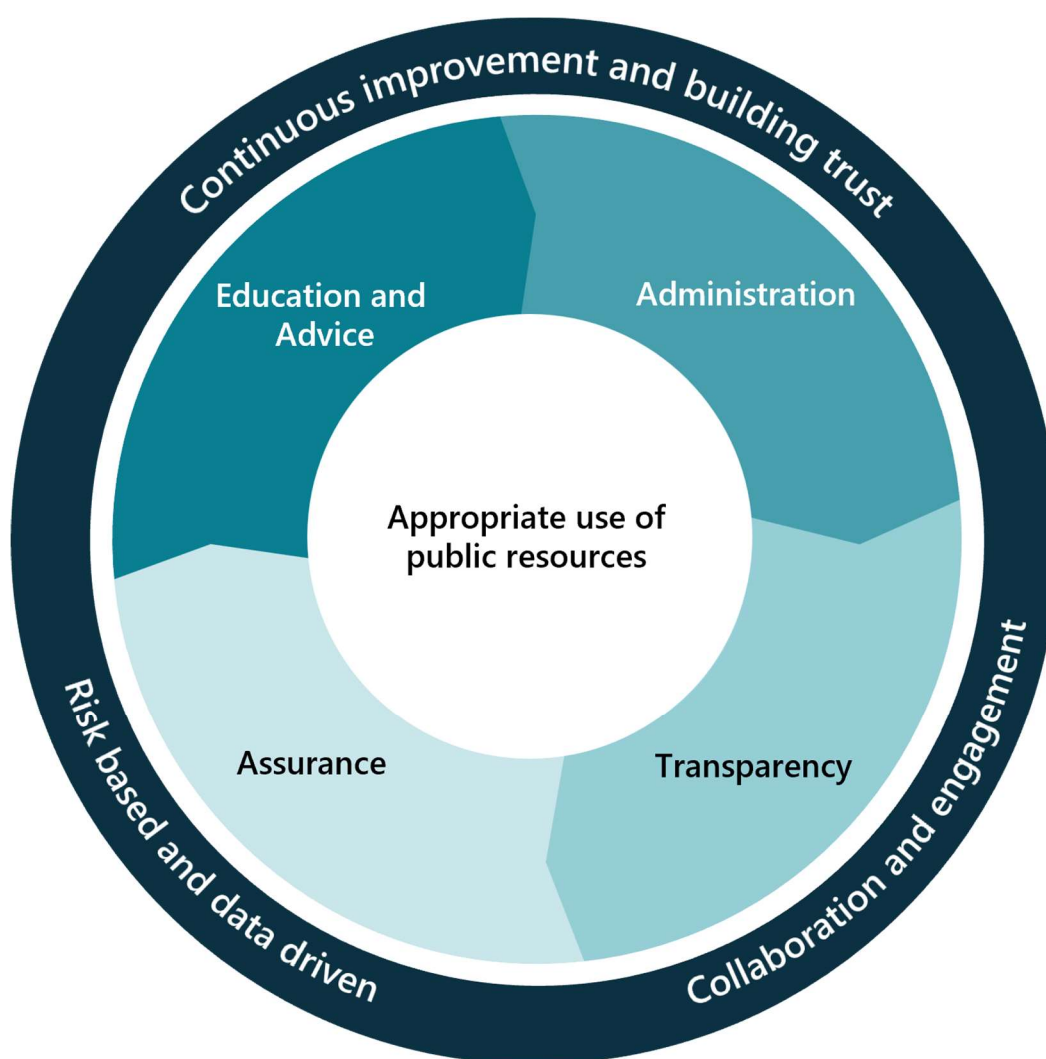
2. Our approach to Assurance

IPEA's approach to Assurance aims to foster public trust that parliamentarians and their staff are using public resources appropriately by helping them to do so. It is based on our understanding that parliamentarians and their staff want to do the right thing and intend to use public resources appropriately and lawfully. The focus of our work in education, advice and administration is to help parliamentarians and their staff understand how to use public resources for travel appropriately and to support them to claim expenses in line with the PBR and MoP(S) frameworks.

Our transparency and specific assurance activities are focused on providing public information on the use of parliamentary resources, on identifying use that is inconsistent with the frameworks, and recovering expenses where appropriate. We find that parliamentarians and their staff are quick to respond to our requests for information and clarify their responsibilities and learn for the future.

The delivery of our assurance activities and overall approach is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1 | IPEA's approach to Assurance



Education and Advice

Education

We provide tailored education sessions for parliamentarians and their staff. Our engagement with parliamentarians starts at the commencement of their term with a formal introduction session that outlines their obligations under the PBR Framework and provides them guidance as to how to claim Commonwealth resources in accordance with the legislative framework. We offer parliamentarians and their staff regular opportunities to access education throughout their tenure and our sessions focus on supporting them on their use of public resources for travel and how to claim resources appropriately.

Our education sessions are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are focussed on the needs of parliamentarians and their staff and each session is tailored to cover any emerging issues or trends that we can see. We deliver approximately 100 education events every year (and more in an election year) across Australia, at both the Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices or at a parliamentarian's electorate office. We also provide a range of material and guidance on our website.

Personal advice

Providing tailored personal advice to parliamentarians and their staff about their use of travel resources is one of our key functions. We actively encourage our clients to seek personal advice on planned travel scenarios to ensure that it meets the relevant legislative framework. The advice we provide is clear and definitive, and where a parliamentarian travels in reliance of our advice, they are provided 'safe harbour' under the PBR Act. Our advice is also exempt from disclosure under the *Freedom of Information Act 1981*, which allows parliamentarians and their staff to provide us with all the details of their travel so that we can provide the most accurate advice to them. We ensure our advice is consistent with the PBR framework and keep records of the advice we provide.

Personal advice is available on the phone (02 6215 3000), by email (enquiries@ipea.gov.au) or can be provided in person.

Administration

In accordance with the IPEA Act, we administer and pay travel claims for parliamentarians and their staff. This includes claims for travel expenses, as well as travel allowances. Travel claims can be lodged using the Parliamentary Expenses Management System (PEMS) or can be submitted manually using a paper form. All claims are checked and verified by IPEA before they are paid.

All travel claims are processed through PEMS. This supports the assurance process as all claims must be individually checked to ensure the travel aligns with the PBR and MOPS frameworks before they are paid. These inbuilt controls assist parliamentarians and their staff to make correct claims.

Transparency

The public reporting of claims is one of IPEA's key transparency mechanisms, maintaining public trust in the appropriate use of public resources by parliamentarians and their staff. IPEA fulfills this function through published expenditure reporting, in which we produce data on the specific use of work resources and travel resources by parliamentarians.

As part of the reporting process, parliamentarians are asked to certify that the resources contained in their report were used for the dominant purpose of conducting their parliamentary business.

As IPEA's published reports include details of payments made, invoices raised and repayments received, they offer a key opportunity for parliamentarians to self-monitor their compliance and ensure they are accessing resources appropriately.

Assurance

IPEA's assurance activities include monitoring our regulatory landscape and conducting preliminary assessments, assurance reviews, and audits focused on thematic issues such as the use of family travel, or on individuals' use of resources where data indicates that there is an unusual pattern of use.

In conducting these assessments and reviews, IPEA adheres to the principles of natural justice. We inform parliamentarians and staff who may be the subject of a post-payment check, assurance review or audit that IPEA is examining their use of particular resources and provide them with the opportunity to respond to any IPEA concerns or to provide any information which may resolve the concerns, before any finding of use inconsistent with the framework is made.

Risk-based monitoring

We monitor the use of work resources by parliamentarians and travel resources by their staff to detect possible use that may be inconsistent with the frameworks and identify trends and potential issues as they emerge. We use data to inform a rolling program of post-payment checks and assurance activities.

IPEA's rolling program of post-payment checks is focused on resources that we know from our experience are most likely to be used in a way that is inconsistent with the frameworks. This program involves checking the use of:

- Parliamentarians' use of unscheduled commercial ground transport
- Checks on claimed travel allowances (accommodation receipts "available on request")
- Parliamentarians' and staff use of Cabcharge
- Staff use of self-drive hire cars
- Staff use of travel allowance accommodation adjustments
- Non-senior staff use of business class travel.

We also use internal data scans and monitor media sources and other information to alert us to possible use of resources that may be inconsistent with the frameworks and commence further investigations where appropriate.

Assurance

Preliminary assessment

Where warranted by our data or risk analysis, post-payment checks or other information, IPEA will undertake a preliminary assessment as a first step to investigate the alleged use of any resource. We use the information held by or accessible to us to determine whether a resource has been used and whether that use appears to require further examination through an assurance review.

Assurance review

Following a preliminary assessment of individual or thematic assurance activities, an assurance review is a deeper analysis of the circumstances of use of a parliamentary resource. We assess the use of the public resource against the relevant legislative framework to identify whether use inconsistent with the framework has occurred. IPEA takes administrative action to recover any use of resources that is inconsistent with the legislative framework.

IPEA publishes its Assurance Reviews on its website.

Audit

An audit is a more detailed review. Audits may be initiated where information and data indicate serious or systemic misuse. An audit is a comprehensive examination of the use of parliamentary work resources by a parliamentarian or travel resources of their staff in specific cases. The decision to undertake an audit is made by the CEO in consultation with the IPEA Members. The Members also decide whether to publish audit findings. As with assurance reviews, IPEA takes administrative action to recover any use of resources that is inconsistent with the legislative framework. We may

also refer a matter to the Australian Federal Police or the National Anti-Corruption Commission in line with our Protocol – dealing with allegations of misuse of parliamentary work expenses.

Rulings

IPEA may give a written ruling under s 37 of the PBR Act determining whether a parliamentarian has contravened their obligations under the PBR framework. A ruling may be initiated by IPEA or on application by the person to whom the ruling applies. The Members of IPEA may decide to publish a ruling.