



Part 1

Overviews

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Clerk's review

Overview

As is typical of the middle year of the parliamentary cycle, 2017–18 has been a busy year, with all areas of the department managing high levels of activity. It has also been a year characterised by a number of exceptional events, which has seen departmental staff working in a rapidly changing political landscape.

One of the most significant aspects of the year relates to section 44(i) of the Australian Constitution, with questions arising around dual citizenship and the eligibility of certain members to sit. During the reporting period, seven members of the House either resigned or were found to be ineligible to sit because of dual citizenship issues. One other member of the House resigned during the year, for reasons unrelated to section 44.

The implications for staff of this unprecedented number of vacancies have been many and varied. A direct consequence was that staff were involved in providing procedural advice and administrative support for the Speaker; for example, issuing writs for the by-elections, and making arrangements for the swearing in of newly elected or returning members.

This series of vacancies and by-elections also had far reaching effects, with an unusually high number of changes to membership of the Speaker's panel, and of House and joint parliamentary committees. With some members who were assuming parliamentary roles having less experience than might have been the case in the past, staff have been called on to provide significant levels of administrative, procedural and logistical support, as newly appointed office holders familiarise themselves with their roles.

The postponement of the penultimate sitting week in 2017 at relatively short notice was another event that had implications for departmental staff, with some areas of the department having to reschedule business so that it could be concluded before the summer recess, but with one less sitting week. Staff effectively managed this circumstance, demonstrating a high degree of professionalism and commitment.

Supporting the work of the House and members

Notwithstanding the exceptional events outlined above, the department continued to support a multitude of business-as-usual activities. During 2017–18, the Table Office supported the introduction of 222 bills, as well as providing advisory support for members, programming business for the Chamber and Federation Chamber during sitting weeks, maintaining records of proceedings, and receiving and processing documents presented to the House.

The commitment to supporting the work of the House is well illustrated by the high levels of administrative and advisory support provided in association with the passage of the Marriage Amendment (Definitions and Religious Freedoms) Bill 2017 in December 2017. Debate on the bill required the sittings hours of the House to be extended twice, with chamber support staff called on to provide advice and services for the extended sittings. In addition, with significant public and media interest, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office played a crucial role in managing the public galleries, which were full to capacity, while the Parliamentary and

Business Information Services Office kept interested parties informed through a variety of channels, including social media.

As with the chamber support areas, 2017–18 has been busy for committees. Over the year the Committee Office has supported a record number of House and joint committees, with a significant inquiry workload, including several inquiries that have attracted high levels of interest from the media and the general public. One example is the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry into the operation of section 44 of the Australian Constitution. Also worthy of note with regard to committees is the significant level of support provided to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for its inquiries into a series of bills aimed at strengthening Australia's national security, which have also been the subject of intense interest.

A priority for 2017–18 was the focus on enhancing procedural capability and technical knowledge for members, members' staff and departmental staff. During the year, the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) Office, with assistance from the Chamber Research Office, updated several key procedural resources, including the popular *Guide to Procedures*. In addition, the office produced a range of new products, with content and format tailored to specific target audiences including ministers, the Deputy Speakers and members of the Speaker's panel. In May 2018, an independent review of the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) Office, which was initially established for a period of 18 months, found that the Procedure Office had met a recognised and critical need to strengthen procedural capability of members and departmental staff. I have implemented the review's recommendation that the Procedure Office continue.

Maintaining national and international links with other parliaments, parliamentary bodies and organisations is an important aspect of the department's activities. Operating a full program of incoming and outgoing delegations throughout the year has seen the department's International and Parliamentary Relations Office being highly active. A notable event this year was the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) annual conference, held in Bangladesh in November 2017, which saw the Commonwealth of Australia branch of the CPA being readmitted with effect from 1 January 2018 after a five-year absence. Early in the new year the branch was re-established, and a constitution for the branch was confirmed.

Through the Parliamentary Skills Centre, the department has maintained its strong commitment to parliamentary capacity-building activities. During the year, departmental staff have been actively involved in capacity-building activities with the parliaments of Fiji, Myanmar and Samoa. Another highlight of the year was the staff Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, which was held in June 2018. The program brought together 17 participants, with delegates being senior parliamentary staff representing 16 countries, to learn more about the procedures and practices of the Australian Parliament, and to share knowledge, ideas and experiences of parliamentary processes and administration. This followed a similar program for Deputy Speakers in 2017.

Collaboration

Collaboration among staff from different offices across the department, and continued good relationships between the four parliamentary departments, are fundamental to achieving our goals.

During 2017–18, the House citizenship register was published, and the class A records of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry established to inquire into the conduct of the late High Court judge Justice Lionel Murphy were released. The processes associated with these events demonstrated the readiness of staff to work collaboratively. In both cases, the preparation of documents for publication was a significant task, with processing of the House citizenship declarations involving a contingent of staff from across the department, and processing for the records of the Commission of Inquiry also involving staff from the Department of the Senate.

The department continues to work productively with the Department of Parliamentary Services. The most significant areas of collaboration relate to information and communications technology support and services, and ongoing upgrades to security of the building and precincts.

Staffing

With its knowledge, experience and expertise, the department's workforce is its main asset. I was therefore pleased that, after a period of negotiation, a new enterprise agreement was voted on and accepted by a significant majority of staff towards the end of 2017, allowing pay increases to be implemented in December 2017.

In November 2017 the department held its annual planning day, comprising a series of workshops addressing key themes including communication, leadership and culture. The planning day provided an opportunity for all staff to share their views on departmental objectives and plans. As a result, the department has implemented a range of initiatives to enhance communication, continue to strengthen its focus on leadership awareness and development, and respond more effectively to changing service-delivery needs and expectations.

The trend for a higher than usual staff turnover continued, including the departure of two long-serving staff members from the corporate areas: the Chief Finance Officer and the Director of People Strategies. Ongoing recruitment during 2017–18, overseen by the People Strategies Office, has provided a range of opportunities for experienced staff from within the department, and for the engagement of new staff.

Lastly in relation to staffing, following on from the success of last year's inaugural program, in 2017–18 the department welcomed three Indigenous graduates from the Indigenous Australian Government Development Program. The program is an important part of the department's commitment to supporting the career progression and professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Corporate reporting and accountability

During 2017–18, the department continued to work towards strengthening its corporate reporting and accountability framework. The online survey of members continues to be an important means of assessing satisfaction with the support and services provided by the department. The survey is supplemented by more in-depth interviews with a selected cohort of members; this year's cohort comprised members of the Speaker's panel, whips and non-aligned members.

During the year, the department appointed an external chair to its Audit Committee, which brings the department into line with better practice. The department also appointed a designated executive support officer, initially for a period of 18 months, to provide secretariat support for the Audit Committee, and to undertake a range of responsibilities around strategic planning, performance reporting and risk management.

I anticipate that these initiatives will increase the capacity of the Audit Committee to provide objective assurance to me in relation to the effectiveness of the department's governance framework, as well as its risk oversight and management.

The year ahead

Looking to the year ahead, 2018–19 is likely to be an eventful one, with a general election probable during the reporting period. Although there will necessarily be an element of planning for the anticipated election and its aftermath, the immediate focus continues to be supporting the work of the House for the remainder of the Forty-fifth Parliament.

A priority for the department in the year ahead will be the consolidation of our procedural capacity. In addition to publishing the next edition of *House of Representatives Practice*—the definitive guide to matters of procedure and practice for the House—the focus for the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and the wider office will be the implementation of a cohesive and structured program of procedural assistance for members (particularly for parliamentary office holders) and training for departmental staff. Also to be progressed during the year is the development, in collaboration with the Australian National University, of a biographical publication of key House of Representatives office holders, covering Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks.

In 2018–19 the department will also seek reaccreditation against the Investors in People standard. This standard is an internationally recognised measure of good practice that focuses on how well an employer creates an environment to lead, support and develop its people. The department has held Investors in People accreditation since 2001, and considers it an important benchmark of performance and a valuable means to support continuous improvement.

In terms of maintaining its capacity and capability, in 2017–18 the department commenced a major workforce planning exercise. The exercise involves consideration of internal and external factors that are likely to affect the department's workforce supply, retention and productivity. The development of a workforce plan will be completed in 2018–19, to be followed by an implementation phase in subsequent years. With its reliance on a professional and experienced workforce, the plan will ensure that the department is well positioned to respond to future opportunities and challenges as they arise.

Departmental overview

Purpose

The department's purpose as set out in its 2017–18 Corporate Plan is:

To support the House of Representatives, and the wider parliament, in the role of a representative and legislative body primarily by providing advice and services, and through engaging with the community and other parliaments.

Role and functions

The *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* provides for a non-partisan parliamentary service to serve the Australian Parliament. The Department of the House of Representatives is established by and operates under the Act, together with three other parliamentary departments: the Department of the Senate, the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Parliamentary Budget Office.

During 2017–18, the department continued in its role as a service department for the parliament, supporting the work of the House of Representatives, its members and committees, and some joint committees (comprising members of the House and the Senate).

The department continued to provide services to increase public knowledge and awareness of the work of the House and the Australian Parliament, and to encourage interaction. The department also assisted the House and the parliament in maintaining institutional relationships with their state, territory and international counterparts.

Departmental structure

The department is managed by its Executive: the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Clerk Assistant (Table), Clerk Assistant (Procedure), Clerk Assistant (Committees) and Serjeant-at-Arms.

There were no changes to the department's structure during the year. In May 2018 an independent review was conducted of the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) Office, which was established in January 2017 for an initial 18-month period. The review recommended the continuation of the Procedure Office and the associated SES Band 1 position of Clerk Assistant (Procedure). The Clerk has agreed to the recommendations.

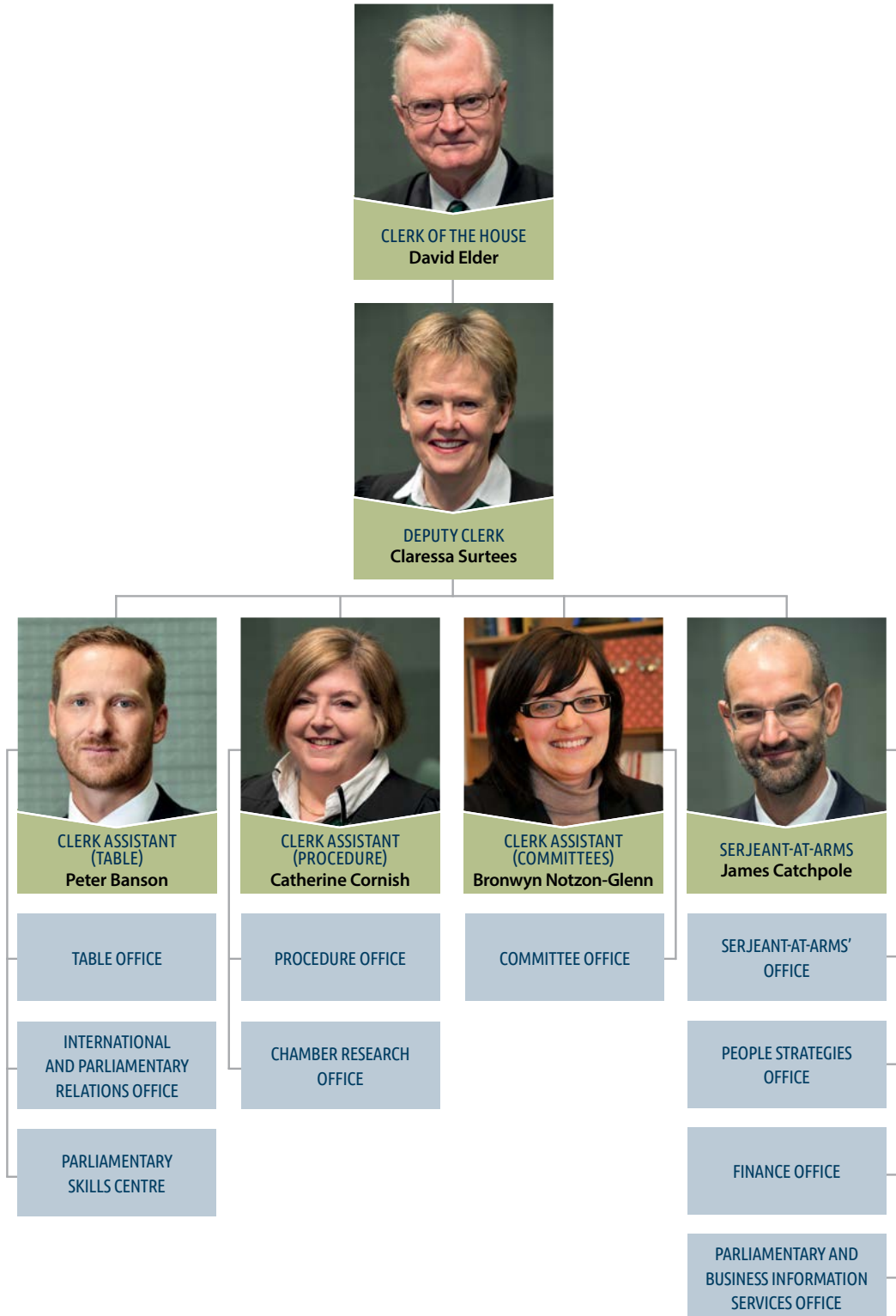
Figure 1 shows the department's organisational structure at 30 June 2018.

Roles and responsibilities of the Executive

Clerk

The Clerk is the most senior official of the department. The Clerk is the principal adviser to the Speaker, and is responsible for leading approximately 176 departmental staff members who provide administrative and procedural advice and services to the House and parliamentary committees, and support the parliament's international and domestic engagement.

Figure 1 Departmental structure at 30 June 2018



Deputy Clerk

The Deputy Clerk is the second most senior official of the department. The Deputy Clerk is responsible for advising and assisting members, their staff and departmental staff on matters of parliamentary practice and law, and for overseeing the drafting of private members' bills and amendments. The Deputy Clerk assists the Clerk in managing the department, and during the Clerk's absence performs the duties of Clerk.

Clerk Assistant (Table)

The Clerk Assistant (Table) is responsible for the areas of the department that provide programming, procedural and legislative support to the Chamber and Federation Chamber of the House. The Clerk Assistant (Table) is also responsible for the areas of the department that support the parliament's program of international delegations and parliamentary strengthening.

Clerk Assistant (Procedure)

The Clerk Assistant (Procedure) is responsible for the Procedure Office and the Chamber Research Office. Those offices provide procedural research, publications and services explaining the work of the House and its institutional role. The Clerk Assistant (Procedure) also contributes to the House's parliamentary strengthening activities related to parliamentary procedure.

Clerk Assistant (Committees)

The Clerk Assistant (Committees) is responsible for the Committee Office, which provides a range of support services—including procedural, research, analytical, drafting and administrative support—to House committees and to some joint committees.

Serjeant-at-Arms

The Serjeant-at-Arms is responsible for the corporate areas of the department, which provide support and a range of services for members and for departmental staff. The Serjeant-at-Arms has a key role in managing ceremonial and security matters relating to the House.

Outcome and program structure

The department's outcome and program structure for the year is set out in the 2017–18 Portfolio Budget Statements.

The department has one outcome:

Advisory and administrative services support the House of Representatives to fulfil its representative and legislative role.

The department has two programs:

- » Program 1: Departmental—supports five activities
- » Program 2: Administered—supports one activity.

Figure 2 shows the department's outcome and program structure, and the activities under each program.

Figure 2 Outcome and program structure, 2017–18

OUTCOME 1	PROGRAM 1: DEPARTMENTAL
Advisory and administrative services support the House of Representatives to fulfil its representative and legislative role	Activity 1: Chamber and Federation Chamber
The department provides facilities, support, advice and information to ensure that:	Advice and services to support the effective operation of the House of Representatives Chamber and Federation Chamber. This includes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the House of Representatives Chamber and Federation Chamber operate effectively » the community has access to information and educational resources that help it to understand, and interact with, the work of the House of Representatives and the Australian Parliament » parliamentary committees operate effectively » relationships with international and regional parliaments, parliamentary bodies and organisations are maintained » members receive appropriate services to fulfil their parliamentary duties » the corporate offices fulfil their responsibilities for the management of people, finances and office services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » processing and drafting bills » creating and processing the records and documents of the House » collecting, analysing and publishing procedural and statistical information » providing services and advice to the Speaker, members and others.
	Activity 2: Community awareness
	Services to increase public knowledge and awareness of, and interaction with, the work of the House of Representatives and the Australian Parliament.
	Activity 3: Committee support
	Procedural, research, analytical, drafting and administrative support for House of Representatives committees and some joint committees in fulfilling their role in the parliamentary consideration of policy, legislation and the scrutiny of government.
	Activity 4: Inter-parliamentary relations and capacity-building
	Advice and support to facilitate and maintain the parliament's relationships with international and regional parliaments, parliamentary bodies and organisations.
	Activity 5: Members' and corporate support
	Advice, services and support to members in Parliament House and the department. This includes:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » advice and services relating to members' salaries and allowances » advice and services to members relating to accommodation and office services » advice and services to the department relating to financial and human resource management and office services.
	PROGRAM 2: ADMINISTERED
	Activity 6: Schools hospitality
	Resources supporting bookings and the provision of hospitality to school groups visiting Parliament House.

Financial performance

The department ended the 2017–18 financial year reporting a surplus of \$2.491 million (before depreciation). This varied from the breakeven position forecast in the department's Portfolio Budget Statements. A major contributing factor to the variance was lower than forecast expenditure on employee benefits. This underspend was a result of the following factors:

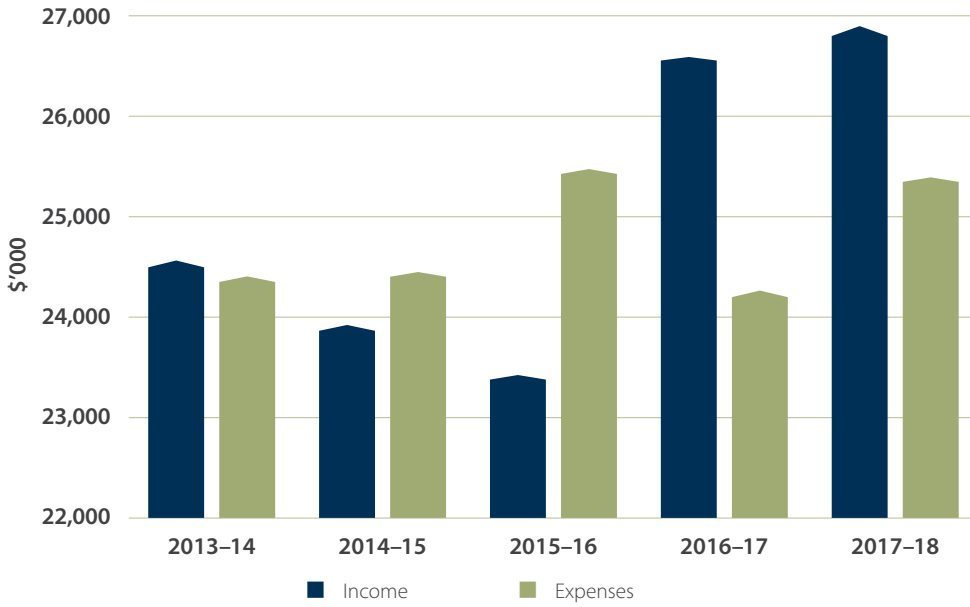
- » The budget forecast was based on the assumption that a new enterprise agreement and the resultant pay rise would come into effect prior to the commencement of the 2017–18 financial year; however, the agreement was not enacted until December 2017.
- » A number of positions remained vacant throughout the reporting period due to unexpected delays in recruitment processes. This resulted in a lower average staffing level (ASL) than was budgeted.

In July 2017, the department invested \$2.546 million in a 12 month term deposit. The source of the deposit was the former Inter-parliamentary Relations Special Account which was subject to a sun-setting provision on 1 April 2017. Interest is earned on the deposit and retained by the department to spend on equipment and development and training for Pacific parliaments.

The department's financial position has remained strong, with appropriation receivable totalling \$15.903 million and cash and cash equivalents of \$0.410 million. The department engaged a valuation specialist to conduct a desktop review of its carrying value of the property, plant and equipment asset class. The independent valuer's report concluded that there was no material difference between the fair value and the carrying value of this asset class. Asset additions during the year related to the upgrade of the department's in-house print room equipment and the continuation of the furniture replacement project. The furniture replacement project will conclude in July 2018. During the year the department transferred assets to the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) as part of the consolidation of information and communications technology services across the parliamentary departments. The assets were transferred to the DPS for no consideration, and were recognised as a distribution resulting in a reduction in equity of \$1.165 million.

The estimates for 2018–19 indicate that the department has sufficient resources to continue to support members, the House and committees.

Figure 3 Financial performance, 2013-14 to 2017-18



Entity resource statement

Entity resource statement 2017–18

	Actual available appropriation for 2017–18 \$'000	Payments made 2017–18 \$'000	Balance remaining 2017–18 \$'000
	(a)	(b)	(a) – (b)
Departmental¹			
Annual appropriation ²	43,157	26,844	16,313
Total	43,157	26,844	16,313
Administered expenses³			
Outcome 1	320	312	8
Total	320	312	8
Total available annual appropriations	43,777	27,156	16,321
Total resourcing and payments for the Department of the House of Representatives	43,777	27,156	

1. *Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No. 1) 2017–18*, prior year departmental appropriation and section 74 retained revenue receipts.

2. Includes an amount of \$0.640 million in 2017–18 for the departmental capital budget. For accounting purposes, this amount has been designated as 'contributions by owners'. Excludes \$0.080 million subject to administrative quarantine by Finance or withheld under section 51 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

3. *Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No. 1) 2017–18*.

Third-party drawdowns from and on behalf of other entities

	\$'000
Payments made on behalf of the Department of Finance (disclosed in the respective entity's resource statement)	27,948
Payments made on behalf of the Australian Public Service Commission (disclosed in the respective entity's resource statement)	19,637