



Part 3

Management and accountability

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Corporate governance

The department is responsible for the provision of procedural, information and administrative services to members. As Presiding Officer of the House of Representatives, the Speaker's role is in some ways analogous to that of a minister of state in relation to an executive government department. The *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* restates the principles that the legislative arm of government is separate from the executive arm, and that its staff are responsible to the Australian Parliament rather than to the government of the day. The Speaker oversees administration of the department and is accountable to the House in respect of that role. The Clerk, who is responsible under the *Parliamentary Service Act* for leading the department and its day-to-day management, reports to and advises the Speaker on departmental matters.

The department's corporate functions and staff provide critical support that enables the department to deliver programs and services. The department's corporate area is focused on providing quality, timely services, and on being responsive to the changing policy and operational needs of the department. This section discusses our governance structure and support services, which provide a framework to ensure accountability and the overall effectiveness of the department.

Governance structure

Legislation

The *Parliamentary Service Act* established the Australian Parliamentary Service, which includes the Department of the House of Representatives as one of the four parliamentary departments. The Act also provided for the independence of the Clerk in that person's advisory functions; it created an office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives and conferred responsibility for managing the department on the Clerk, under the Speaker.

The department's operations are governed by the *Parliamentary Service Act* and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). Other legislation, including the *Fair Work Act 2009*, also applies to the operations of the department. Together, these Acts set out the Clerk's formal responsibilities for managing the department.

Executive and senior management

During the reporting period there was an independent review of the non-ongoing SES Band 1 position of Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and Procedure Office that had been established for an initial 18-month period. The department supported the review's conclusion that the creation of the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) position has strengthened the procedural support to members and departmental staff, and affirmed that making the role ongoing was justified.

As at 30 June 2018, the department's Executive comprised the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and four SES Band 1 staff: the Clerk Assistant (Table), Clerk Assistant (Procedure), Clerk Assistant (Committees) and the Serjeant-at-Arms. Each SES Band 1 member is responsible for one or more of the department's offices (see Figure 1 on page 7). The roles and responsibilities of the Executive are described on page 6.

The senior management of the department comprises the Executive and managers at the Executive Band 2 level.

Departmental management committees

Executive

In 2017–18, the department's Executive held 13 formal meetings to consider a range of departmental management and administrative matters. As well as standing items on finance and people strategies, during the year, the Executive discussed:

- » the 30th anniversary of the opening of Parliament House
- » the department's organisational structure
- » asset management
- » security and other building works
- » a proposed biographical dictionary of the House of Representatives.

Audit Committee

The department's Audit Committee provides independent assurance to the Clerk on the department's risk, control and compliance framework, and its external accountability responsibilities, with specific reference to the Clerk's position of accountable authority under the PGPA Act.

During 2017–18, the position of chair of the Audit Committee was transferred from the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) to an independent chair, Mr Paul Groenewegen. The appointment by the Clerk of an independent chair demonstrates the department's commitment to strengthening the committee's actual and perceived independence. In addition to the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and the independent chair, membership of the committee included another SES Band 1 officer—the Clerk Assistant (Table)—and two other independent members, ensuring a majority of independent members.

At 30 June 2018, the independent members were Mr Tim Courtney of the Australian Electoral Commission and Mr Dermot Walsh of the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The independent members contributed a valuable mix of skills, expertise and experience, complemented by an enhanced understanding, over time, of the department's operations and its operating environment. Guided by the Audit Committee's charter, the members of the Audit Committee play an essential role in ensuring the integrity and transparency of the department's reporting.

The committee met four times in 2017–18. It recommended to the Clerk that he sign the financial statements and management response letter and include the annual performance statement in the annual report. In addition, the committee reviewed the:

- » Audit Committee charter
- » Audit Committee work plan
- » internal audit charter
- » Audit Committee annual report.

The Serjeant-at-Arms—who manages the department’s corporate functions—attends committee meetings as an adviser, together with representatives of the Australian National Audit Office, the department’s internal audit team and the Chief Finance Officer.

During the reporting period, the department’s internal auditors, Bellchambers Barrett Pty Ltd, conducted the following:

- » a review of asset management
- » a review of travel arrangements
- » a review of financial budgeting processes
- » the development of a strategic internal audit plan for 2018–21.

As at 30 June 2018, a strategic internal audit plan for 2018–21 was in preparation. The plan will be provided to the Audit Committee for review.

Other departmental committees

Consultative Committee

The Consultative Committee is an important mechanism for communicating and consulting with staff on workplace issues. Chaired by the Deputy Clerk, the committee has four departmental representatives, two elected staff representatives and two union-nominated representatives. The committee met five times during 2017–18. Standing agenda items for the meetings are:

- » implementation and monitoring of the enterprise agreement
- » proposals for change and developments affecting staff
- » reviews of implemented changes
- » reports on departmental activities.

Other matters discussed in the reporting period included:

- » changes to security arrangements
- » proposed internal policies, including policies on rehabilitation management and conflict of interest
- » proposed content in the staff survey
- » updated terms of reference for the Consultative Committee, which were adopted.

Knowledge Management Steering Committee

The Knowledge Management Steering Committee is a forum to discuss issues in information and knowledge management, and advocate for the sharing of departmental knowledge and skills. The committee has an advisory and monitoring role, and it may also make recommendations to the Executive for decision and undertake roles as requested by the Executive. The committee serves as the department’s Information Governance Committee under the National Archives’ Digital Continuity 2020 Policy.

The committee is chaired by the Clerk Assistant (Table), and includes representatives from all areas of the department. In 2017–18 it met four times and discussed matters such as:

- » protective marking guidelines and the information security policy
- » finalisation of a project management toolkit
- » the department's response to the National Archives' Digital Continuity 2020 Policy
- » the introduction of a Chief Information Governance Officer
- » redaction protocols
- » the establishment of a policy register.

Inter-parliamentary departmental collaboration

Meetings of heads of parliamentary departments

In 2017–18, the Clerk, the Clerk of the Senate, the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) and the Parliamentary Budget Officer held four formal meetings. Matters discussed included:

- » the Parliamentary Service Determination
- » Parliament House Open Day and the 30th anniversary of Parliament House
- » future directions for parliamentary information and communications technology (ICT)
- » archiving and classification matters
- » security capital works.

The parliamentary departments continue to work together under the Australian Parliament's *Strategic plan for parliamentary administration*, which brings together the key priorities across the whole of the parliamentary administration, identifying shared goals and formalising a collaborative approach to achieving optimal outcomes in providing support and services for the parliament.

Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group

In 2017–18, the Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group met four times to discuss matters of common interest across the parliamentary departments. Membership comprises the Serjeant-at-Arms, the Usher of the Black Rod, an Assistant Secretary of DPS, and the Assistant Parliamentary Budget Officer of the Corporate Strategy Branch of the Parliamentary Budget Office. Responsibility for chairing the group rotates annually.

Matters discussed over the reporting period included:

- » work health and safety policies across the four parliamentary departments
- » Parliament House building works
- » proposed amendments to the Parliamentary Services Classification Rules
- » management of parliamentary records
- » access to building-wide policies.

Other inter-parliamentary department forums

In 2017–18, the department was active in a number of other inter-parliamentary department forums that considered matters of common interest, particularly ICT and security.

Departmental representatives participated in meetings of the following groups:

- » Parliamentary ICT Strategic Initiatives Steering Group—this group brings the parliamentary departments together to make decisions in relation to ICT strategic initiatives for the parliament. The group is chaired by the Chief Information Officer of DPS, and the department is represented by the Deputy Clerk.
- » Joint Management Committee—this committee is responsible for oversight of ICT service delivery in accordance with formal agreements between the parliamentary departments. Responsibility for chairing the committee rotates on an annual basis, and the department is represented by the Serjeant-at-Arms.
- » Joint Management Group—this group considers security-related matters. It is chaired by a senior representative from the Australian Federal Police, and the department is represented by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.
- » Incident Planning and Response Committee—this committee manages security and emergency incident planning and response operations. The committee is chaired by a senior representative from the Australian Federal Police, and the department is represented by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.

Departmental planning

The department recognises the importance of strengthening its corporate planning and performance reporting, to both comply with its statutory obligations and improve performance, transparency and accountability.

The corporate plan is the department's primary planning document. As required under the PGPA Act, the department's corporate plan for 2017–18 was published in August 2017. It covered 2017–18 and three forward years to 2020–21. The corporate plan sets out the department's purpose, the activities undertaken to achieve that purpose, and the measures for assessing the department's performance. It also describes the environment in which the department operates and the department's risk management and oversight systems, and recognises the inter-relationships between these.

The department fosters a collegiate approach to preparing the corporate plan, with program areas and individual offices in the department invited to consider whether they would benefit from developing their own business plans with a more operational focus, to complement the corporate plan.

The department seeks to embed the corporate plan through its comprehensive work performance management framework that applies to all staff. On an annual basis, each staff member, together with their supervisor, identifies objectives for the next 12 months. The work objectives reflect not only the individual's role in their work area, but also relate to any applicable program area or office business plan and, ultimately, to the corporate plan. Staff regularly report to supervisors against their identified objectives.

Departmental accountability and reporting

The department's main formal external accountability mechanisms are the Portfolio Budget Statements and the annual report, prepared pursuant to section 65 of the Parliamentary Service Act. The annual report for 2016–17 provided an assessment of the department's performance against the targets set in the 2016–17 Portfolio Budget Statements and the corporate plan, and presented the department's financial statements.

The department's annual report and Portfolio Budget Statements were provided to all members and published on the Parliament of Australia website.

Managing risk

Risk assessment and management

The department's approach to risk and management of risk is underpinned by its *Risk management policy and framework (2017)* and *Risk management plan 2017–19*.

The risk management policy and framework details the department's commitment to embedding systematic risk management into governance, management and planning processes. It outlines the department's risk appetite and tolerance, and allocates responsibility for aspects of planning, mitigation, oversight and reporting to identified staff at various levels. The accompanying plan identifies the key strategic risks for the department and the treatments to be applied.

The policy and plan are available to all staff via the departmental intranet. The department has a monitoring and reporting framework that requires regular reporting on risk and risk treatment to the Executive, and annual reporting to the Audit Committee.

Comcover benchmarking

In 2018, the department completed the Comcover risk management benchmarking program survey. The survey assessed risk management capability using a six-state maturity model. Results from the 2018 survey indicate that the department achieved a risk maturity of 'systematic', which is consistent with the previous year's level.

Business continuity

A departmental business continuity plan was in force throughout the reporting year, complemented by office-level business resumption plans. The plan is managed by the Serjeant-at-Arms and endorsed by the Clerk. The business continuity network, with representation from across the department, is responsible for business continuity governance and oversight.

The plan requires scenario-based exercises designed to test aspects of the department's business continuity capability, with a new exercise developed each year. During 2017–18, the department's scenario-based exercise involved the Committee Office. The exercise was facilitated and reviewed by the department's internal auditors, who concluded that the Committee Office demonstrated an appropriate understanding of the department's business continuity plan and an ability to adapt and apply the plan to a challenging scenario.

Preventing fraud

The department is committed to compliance with the provisions of section 10 of the PGPA Rule relating to preventing, detecting and dealing with fraud.

The department's *Fraud control plan 2017–19* outlines strategies and processes for preventing and detecting fraud, and for investigating and reporting instances of fraud should they occur. The plan is available to all staff on the department's intranet, and all new staff are required to complete online training on financial management responsibilities and fraud control. The department's monitoring and reporting framework requires regular reporting to the Executive and the Audit Committee. No losses of public money and no instances of fraud were identified during the year.

The internal auditors prepared the department's fraud risk assessment 2017–19. It provides details of the approach and methodology used in assessing fraud risks within the department. It also details a range of processes and activities in terms of their potential fraud risks, and the controls in place that prevent, detect or deter the risks. This assessment was updated through a process of consultation with the departmental Executive and senior management, in which fraud risks were identified and assessed.

Statement of significant non-compliance with the finance law

The department did not identify any instances of significant non-compliance with the finance law during 2017–18. The finance law incorporates the PGPA Act, any rules and instruments created under the PGPA Act, and appropriation and supply Acts.

Ethical standards and behaviour

The Parliamentary Service Values and Code of Conduct, which are set out in the Parliamentary Service Act, provide staff with a framework for ethical conduct. The department promotes sound ethical behaviour.

During induction, all new staff are advised about what it means to work in a values-based environment, and how ethical standards apply to their day-to-day work.

Public interest disclosure

The Clerk, as the principal officer of the department for the purposes of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*, has established procedures and appointed authorised officers for facilitating and dealing with public interest disclosures relating to the department, in accordance with that Act.

During 2017–18, the department continued to ensure that information on public interest disclosure procedures was available to all staff, and in 2017 an information session on the Act presented by the Commonwealth Ombudsman was open to all staff. During the year, four authorised officers were approved to handle public interest disclosures.

Privacy

While not an entity to which the *Privacy Act 1988* applies, the department abides by the principles of the legislation in its dealings with employees and the handling of their records. It has adopted a departmental privacy policy which is consistent with the Act.

Ecologically sustainable development and environmental reporting

DPS is responsible for managing Parliament House and the parliamentary precincts. The department reports in accordance with section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* in its annual report, which is available from the Parliament of Australia website.



Members in the House of Representatives Chamber. Image: David Foote, Auspic/DPS.

External scrutiny

The department's operations are primarily administrative and are therefore not usually subject to formal external scrutiny.

Reports by the Auditor-General, the Commonwealth Ombudsman or parliamentary committees

In 2017–18, the Auditor-General did not table any reports directly relating to the administration of the department or its operations. The Australian National Audit Office provided an unqualified audit report on the department's 2016–17 financial statements.

There were no investigations by the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2017–18 that involved the department.

During the reporting year, the Clerk contributed, made submissions or provided evidence to:

- » the Attorney-General's Department's Sunsetting Review Committee's review of the Sunsetting Framework under the *Legislation Act 2003*
- » the New South Wales Legislative Council's Privileges Committee's inquiry into procedural fairness for inquiry participants
- » the Department of Finance's independent review of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*
- » the review by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security of the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Bill 2017
- » the House of Commons of the United Kingdom's Procedure Committee's inquiry into proxy voting and parental absence
- » the New South Wales Legislative Council's Public Accountability Committee's inquiry into the scrutiny of public accountability in New South Wales.

The department continued to support the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration's consideration of the department's funding requirements and budget position. During 2017–18, the committee met three times and tabled two reports: *Report no. 14: Annual report 2016–17* and *Report no. 15: Budget estimates 2018–19*.

In its budget estimates report, the committee noted that the supplementary funding of \$12.4 million provided over four years, starting from 2016–17, was being used to good effect, to strengthen the department's procedural capacity and provide additional support for the parliamentary committees administered by the department.

Judicial and administrative decisions

During 2017–18, no judicial decisions or decisions of administrative tribunals or the Australian Information Commissioner had, or are anticipated to have, a significant effect on the operations of the department.

Freedom of information

The department is excluded from the application of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, under section 68A of the Parliamentary Service Act.

Disability reporting mechanisms

Disability reporting now sits within the framework of the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020, which sets out a 10-year national policy to improve the lives of people with disability, promote participation and create a more inclusive society. A high-level two-yearly report will track progress against each of the six outcome areas of the strategy, and present a picture of how people with disability are faring. The first National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 *Progress report to the Council of Australian Governments 2014* can be found on the Department of Social Services website.



House of Representatives Chamber. Image: Penny Bradfield, Auspic/DPS.

Management of people

Workforce profile

At 30 June 2018, the department had 176 employees—129 ongoing, 14 non-ongoing and 33 casual.

The department's workforce is 60 per cent female, 49 per cent under 45 years old and 1.7 per cent identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Employee classification and gender statistics

Table 9 Classification and gender at 30 June 2017

	Ongoing			Non-ongoing			Casual			Total			
	Male	Female	Indeterminate/ intersex/ unspecified	Male	Female	Indeterminate/ intersex/ unspecified	Male	Female	Indeterminate/ intersex/ unspecified	Male	Female	Indeterminate/ intersex/ unspecified	Total
SES 3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	1
SES 2	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
SES 1	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	1	–	4
EB 2	10	13	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	10	14	–	24
EB 1	24	15	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	24	18	–	42
PSL 6	7	16	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	8	16	–	24
PSL 5	1	6	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	7	–	8
PSL 4	3	17	–	1	5	–	1	1	–	5	23	–	28
PSL 3	2	2	–	–	2	–	1	1	–	3	5	–	8
PSL 2	2	1	–	–	1	–	16	14	–	18	16	–	34
PSL 1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	53	72	–	2	13	–	18	16	–	73	101	–	174

Table 10 Classification and gender at 30 June 2018

	Ongoing			Non-ongoing			Casual			Total			
	Male	Female	Indeterminate/ intersex/ unspecified	Male	Female	Indeterminate/ intersex/ unspecified	Male	Female	Indeterminate/ intersex/ unspecified	Male	Female	Indeterminate/ intersex/ unspecified	Total
SES 3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	1
SES 2	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
SES 1	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	–	4
EB 2	9	11	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	9	12	–	21
EB 1	24	21	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	24	23	–	47
PSL 6	8	16	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	9	17	–	26
PSL 5	1	3	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	4	–	5
PSL 4	3	20	–	2	5	–	–	1	–	5	26	–	31
PSL 3	2	2	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	3	2	–	5
PSL 2	2	1	–	–	1	–	17	14	–	19	16	–	35
PSL 1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	52	77	–	3	11	–	18	15	–	73	103	–	176

Table 11 Employment type by full-time and part-time status, 2016–17 and 2017–18

	at 30 June 2017					at 30 June 2018				
	Ongoing		Non-ongoing		Total	Ongoing		Non-ongoing		Total
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time		Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	
SES 3	1	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	1
SES 2	1	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	1
SES 1	4	–	–	–	4	4	–	–	–	4
EB 2	23	–	1	–	24	20	–	1	–	21
EB 1	38	1	2	1	42	40	5	2	–	47
PSL 6	21	2	1	–	24	20	4	–	2	26
PSL 5	7	–	1	–	8	4	–	1	–	5
PSL 4	18	2	4	4	28	21	2	8	–	31
PSL 3	4	–	2	2	8	4	–	1	–	5
PSL 2	3	–	1	30	34	3	–	32	–	35
PSL 1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	120	5	12	37	174	118	11	45	2	176

Table 12 Employment type by location

	at 30 June 2017				at 30 June 2018			
	Ongoing	Non-ongoing	Casual	Total	Ongoing	Non-ongoing	Casual	Total
Office								
Executive	9	–	–	9	8	1	–	9
Executive support/ project staff	5	–	–	5	4	–	–	4
Table Office	12	–	1	13	10	–	1	11
Chamber Research Office	7	1	–	8	8	–	–	8
International and Parliamentary Relations Office	6	–	–	6	8	1	–	9
Committee Office	53	7	–	60	58	7	–	65
Serjeant-at-Arms' Office	9	3	31	43	10	2	31	43
People Strategies Office	6	3	1	10	7	1	–	8
Parliamentary and Business Information Services Office	10	1	1	12	10	2	1	13
Finance Office	6	–	–	6	5	–	–	5
Parliamentary Skills Centre	2	–	–	2	1	–	–	1
State								
ACT	125	15	34	174	129	14	33	176

Table 13 Indigenous employee staffing

	at 30 June 2017	at 30 June 2018
Ongoing	–	–
Non-ongoing	4	3
Casual	–	–
Total	4	3

Employee engagement

Investors in People standard

The Investors in People standard is an internationally recognised mark of good practice that focuses on how well an employer creates an environment to lead, support and develop its people. The department has held accreditation against the Investors in People standard since 2002, and was awarded 'Investors in People Silver' in 2015. Since the last assessment in 2015 Investors in People has introduced an improved framework. The new framework's performance model provides a clear pathway to map the strategies of continuous improvement and high-performance working practices.

The Investors in People standard provides a structure for high performance to help every person be the best they can be. The achievement of the standard recognises the strong

commitment of departmental employees to ensure the highest possible standards of service. One of the requirements for retaining accreditation is to be reassessed against the standard every three years by an independent assessor. The next accreditation process has commenced.

Staff survey

In May 2018, the department conducted its annual staff survey to measure employee engagement, quality of leadership and views about the broader working environment.

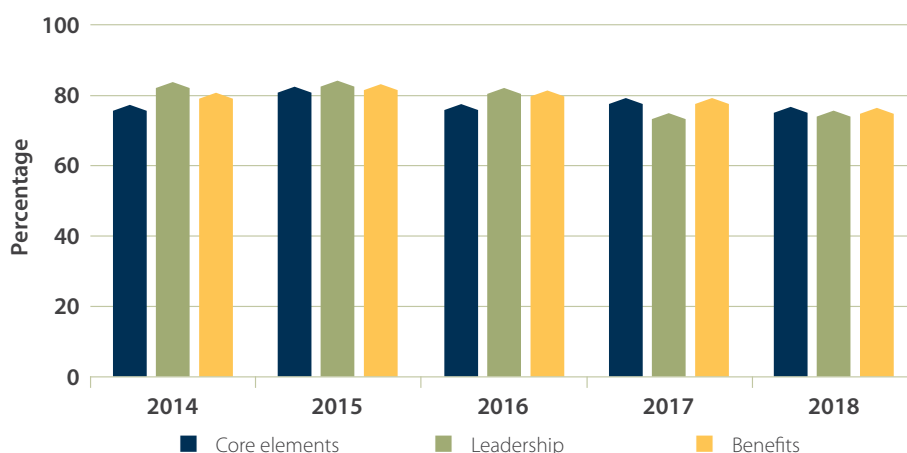
The results of the survey are used to inform improvement initiatives and to develop solutions to optimise the culture of the department. Ideas and feedback from employees are critical to enable sustainable change across the department and to sustain a high-performance culture.

The department has established three internal benchmarks based on the results of the survey. These benchmarks, or index scores, correspond to the total percentage of staff selecting 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' in response to specific sets of questions. The three benchmarks are as follows:

- » The 'core elements' satisfaction index measures the extent to which the department provided the core elements needed to attract, focus and keep the most talented staff (satisfaction rate of 80.4 per cent in 2018 and an average of 82.2 per cent over the past five years).
- » The 'leadership' satisfaction index measures the level of satisfaction of staff with their managers against the department's leadership statement (satisfaction rate of 79.3 per cent in 2018 and an average of 83.8 per cent over the past five years).
- » The 'benefits' satisfaction index measures the level of staff satisfaction with pay and working conditions (satisfaction rate of 80.1 per cent in 2018 and an average of 84 per cent over the past five years).

Figure 7 shows the performance of the satisfaction elements in the past five years. A satisfaction rating of 80 per cent or above is considered high.

Figure 7 Staff survey satisfaction elements, 2014–18



People strategies: planning and delivery

Recruitment

The department advertised to fill 30 ongoing vacancies during 2017–18 (compared with 23 in 2016–17), of which 16 were filled by external applicants.

Retention

Twelve ongoing and 18 non-ongoing staff left the department in 2017–18. The turnover rate was 7.8 per cent for ongoing staff (compared with 8.5 per cent in 2016–17).

Exit interviews with staff leaving the department continued to be conducted by Senior Executive Service (SES) managers. Nine such interviews were conducted during the year.

Alumni

The department formed an alumni association of former staff in 2008. On 30 June 2018, it had 220 members. The association issued two newsletters during the year, and its board met once. On 14 November 2017, the association held its annual general meeting and two co-chairs were elected.

Graduate program

The department administers the Parliament of Australia Graduate Program, in conjunction with the Department of the Senate, DPS and the Parliamentary Budget Office. The purpose of the program is to expose graduates working in Australian public service departments and agencies to how their home department or agency interacts with the parliamentary departments in their support of the parliament.

The program assists graduates to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to make a significant contribution to the department and broader parliamentary service. It continued to draw a high level of interest from graduates from a range of agencies. Eight graduates undertook placements in the department in 2017–18.

Positive feedback was received from the graduates, indicating they had all had valuable experiences with the department and will take their learnings back to their home agency.

Learning and development

In 2017–18 the department delivered 109 face-to-face training and development sessions to employees, based around the core themes of critical thinking, writing skills, management capability and fostering high performance. Priority skills training focused on leadership development, and the department has engaged a range of external providers to deliver specialised training to staff.

Table 14 compares the attendance of staff at training courses in 2016–17 and 2017–18. It also shows the average staffing level and total number of training days attended in 2017–18 for each classification.

Table 14 Staff attendance at training courses

Classification	Headcount		Training days attended	
	2017–18	2017–18	2016–17	2017–18
Senior Executive Service	6	22	4.7	3.7
Executive Band 2	21	125	2.2	5.9
Executive Band 1	47	246	2.2	5.2
Parliamentary Service Level 6	26	95	1.6	3.7
Parliamentary Service Level 5	5	19	2.1	3.8
Parliamentary Service Level 4	31	178	3.1	5.7
Parliamentary Service Level 3	5	14	2.9	2.8
Parliamentary Service Level 2	35	42	1.8	1.2
Not specified	–	99	–	–
Total	176	840	3.1	4.8



2017–18 Graduate Program participants James Mohun, Erin Corkill, Alex Rae and Sarah Grant. Image: Penny Bradfield, Auspic/DPS.

Studies assistance

The department's study assistance scheme allows employees to complete relevant tertiary study to improve their professional skills and knowledge. Seven employees accessed studies assistance during the year (compared with seven in 2016–17). Collectively, financial assistance of \$22,595 was administered (compared with \$29,115 in 2016–17), along with a total of 36.67 days of study leave on full pay.

Performance assessment

All eligible staff participated in the annual work performance assessment cycle, which was completed on 31 October 2017. The cycle consists of setting individual work objectives, conducting performance assessments, preparing individual development plans and providing feedback to supervisors. Information from the individual development plans is used to formulate the training program for the next calendar year.

Diversity and inclusion

The department is committed to actively building a diverse and inclusive workplace that promotes gender equality and harnesses the skills and experiences of people from all backgrounds. The department's diversity and inclusion program has a significant focus on increasing workforce participation rates across all diversity groups.

The department supported the commitments outlined in the Australian Parliament's *Reconciliation action plan 2016–18*.



2017–18 Indigenous secondees Ben Vea Vea, Michael Ohrin and Elizabeth Olive. Image: Penny Bradfield, Auspic/DPS.

In 2016–17, the department developed an Indigenous Secondment Program. This program provides opportunities for graduates from the Indigenous Australian Government Development Program to participate in three-month placements with the department. It is a significant part of the department's commitment to provide opportunities for the career progression and professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. At the completion of the program, participants return to their home departments with valuable experiences of parliamentary operations.

The Indigenous Secondment Program attracted a high level of interest from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from a range of Commonwealth agencies, and three placements were undertaken in 2017–18.

Employment arrangements

In December 2017, employees voted in a new enterprise agreement. A total of 85 per cent of eligible employees participated in the vote, of whom 82 per cent voted 'yes' to the agreement. The *Department of the House of Representatives Enterprise Agreement 2017–20* covers all employees except SES employees, who are covered by determinations made under section 24(1) of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*.

There is no provision in the enterprise agreement to remunerate staff based on performance. The Clerk did not make a determination under section 24(1) of the Act in 2017–18 to pay staff a monetary bonus.

Salary scales under the 2017–20 agreement are summarised in Table 15.

Table 15 Salary scales of staff covered by the 2017–20 enterprise agreement

Classification	Salary scale (\$)
Executive Band 2	136,586–144,724
Executive Band 1	105,531–117,711
Parliamentary Service Level 6	85,047–96,520
Parliamentary Service Level 5	78,610–83,181
Parliamentary Service Level 4	69,498–75,191
Parliamentary Service Level 3	62,875–67,543
Parliamentary Service Level 2	55,877–61,012
Parliamentary Service Level 1	49,394–54,047

Salaries expenditure

In 2017–18, departmental salaries and allowances totalled \$19.410 million (compared with \$18.762 million in 2016–17).

Work health and safety

The department maintains a strong commitment to the health and wellbeing of all employees and visitors. During the reporting period, all reasonably practicable measures were taken to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees while at work, in line with the department's work health and safety policies. The department is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act), the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*.

In 2017–18, the department continued to apply an evidence-based risk management approach, after implementing the work health and safety management system in the previous year. The department aims to deliver high-quality and timely outcomes, providing leadership, direction, capability and governance, to nurture a safety culture. Through the Rehabilitation Management System the department enhances positive early intervention outcomes that have supported injured or ill workers to achieve an early, safe and sustainable return to work. There has been a strong focus in providing and fostering a flexible workplace to take account of employees' health and wellbeing.

The department's Comcare premium rate for 2017–18 was 0.27 per cent of payroll, a decrease from 2016–17 of 0.43 per cent.

No workers compensation claims were lodged during the reporting period.

During the year, there were no dangerous occurrences requiring notification under section 37 of the WHS Act, no investigations were carried out, and no directions or notices were received by the department under section 191 of the Act.

Management of financial resources

Asset management

The department's asset management strategy focuses on efficient asset utilisation and allows the department to identify underperforming assets. The department operates within a controlled environment at Parliament House and the risk of loss for the majority of assets is minimal.

A stocktake of furniture and portable and attractive assets was completed during 2017–18. During the stocktake process a visual assessment for impairment was undertaken by Finance Office staff. The verification of impairment testing was undertaken in conjunction with asset counting.

During the year the department transferred assets to DPS as part of the consolidation of ICT services across the parliamentary departments. The assets were transferred to DPS for no consideration and had a carrying value at the date of transfer of \$1.165 million.

The furniture replacement project continued during 2017–18. This project consists of replacing the office furniture located in the staff area of members' offices. As at 30 June 2018, installation of all suites except one had been completed. The project is due for completion in July 2018. A combination of cash reserves and departmental capital budget funding has been used to replace these furniture items.

The department also replaced its print room equipment to ensure it continues to operate an efficient and cost-effective print service. The value of equipment and associated software was \$0.326 million.

Other minor asset purchases included replacement of TVs, fridges and audio visual equipment. The department adopts a 'break-fix' replacement policy for these items.

A review of the intangible assets category was conducted to verify assets in use. All software items were found to be in use. There was no indication that any departmental assets were impaired to any extent approaching materiality.

Purchasing

The department has in place policies and procedures it considers appropriate to assist staff to comply with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. The department encourages use of established panels and continues to access Whole of Australian Government contracts for the provision of travel and related services. Purchases of stationery and office supplies were made through the Whole of Australian Government contract with Winc.

During the reporting period the department entered into 79 contracts above the reporting threshold, 65 of which were reported on AusTender within the prescribed period. No other identified instances of non-compliance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules have been identified.

Consultants

The department engages consultants when we lack specialist expertise or when independent research, review or assessment is required. Consultants are typically engaged to investigate or diagnose a defined issue or problem; carry out defined reviews or evaluations; or provide independent advice, information or creative solutions to assist in the department's decision-making.

Before engaging consultants, the department takes into account the skills and resources required for the task, the skills available internally, and the cost-effectiveness of engaging external expertise. The decision to engage a consultant is made in accordance with PGPA Act and PGPA Rules, including the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and relevant internal policies.

During 2017–18, seven new consultancy contracts were entered into involving total expenditure of \$0.054 million. In addition, three ongoing consultancy contracts were active in 2017–18, involving total expenditure of \$0.091 million.

Annual reports contain information about actual expenditure on contracts for consultancies. Information on the value of contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website (www.tenders.gov.au).

Competitive tendering and contracting

There were no instances during 2017–18 when contracts were let that did not provide for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor's premises, or where the accountable authority exempted a contract from being published on AusTender.

Procurement initiatives to support small business

The department supports small business participation in the Commonwealth Government procurement market. Small and medium enterprise (SME) and small enterprise participation statistics are available on the Department of Finance's website (<http://www.finance.gov.au/procurement/statistics-on-commonwealth-purchasing-contracts/>).

Consistent with paragraph 5.4 of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, the department's procurement practices support SMEs by utilising the following practices:

- » the Commonwealth Contracting Suite for low-risk procurements valued under \$200,000
- » on-time payments made to SMEs by electronic funds transfer or by the use of payment cards.

Advertising and market research

During 2017–18, the department did not conduct any advertising campaigns.

Legal services expenditure

Schedule 1, Part 1, paragraph 11.1(ba) of the Legal Services Directions 2017 requires the department to publicly disclose its legal services expenditure. During 2017–18, external legal expenditure was \$195,502 (\$61,062 in 2016–17). The department did not incur any internal legal expenses during 2017–18 (nil in 2016–17).