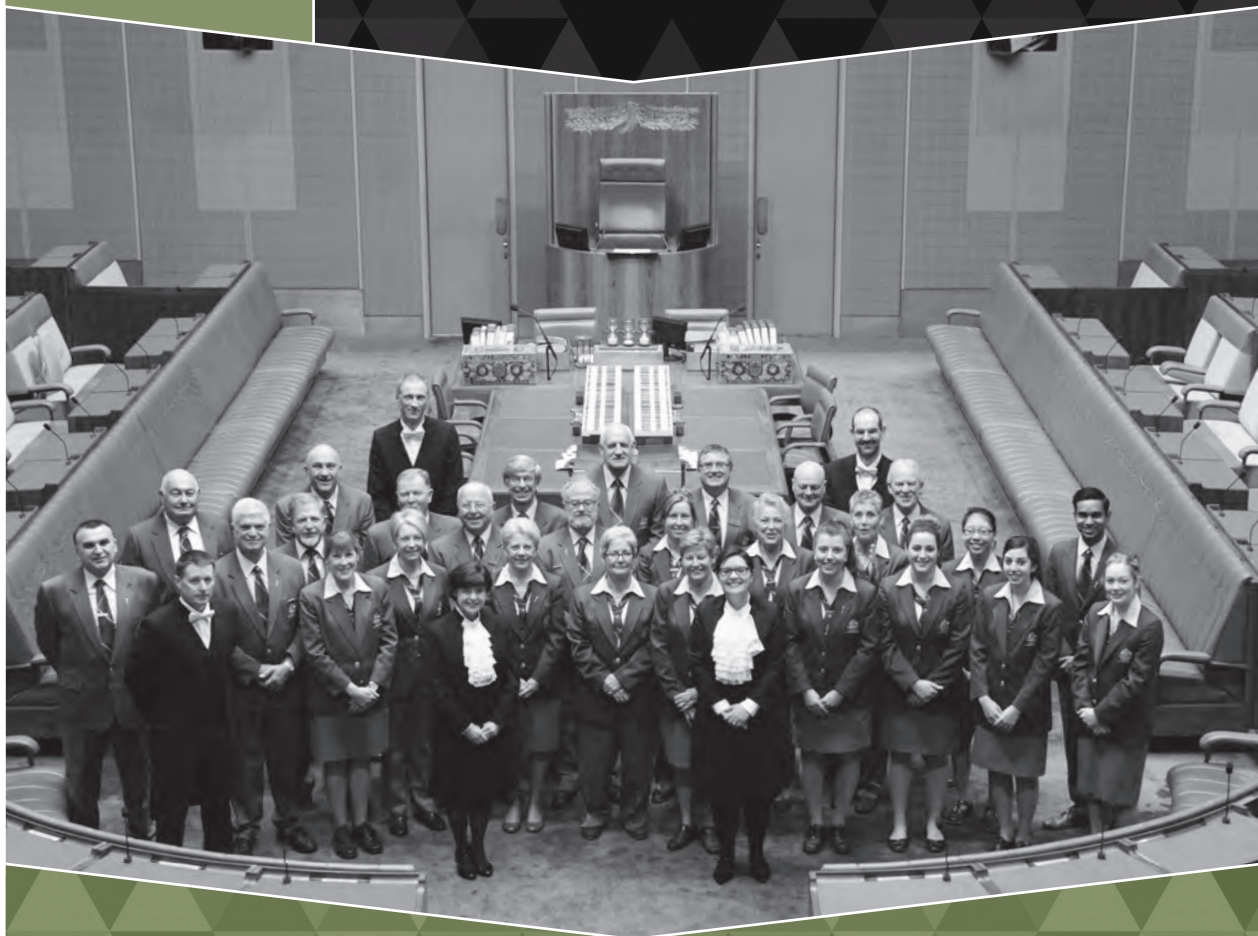


PART 2

PERFORMANCE



Chamber and Federation Chamber

Community relations and awareness

Committee services

Inter-parliamentary relations

Members' services and corporate support

Schools hospitality

Staff of the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office.

*Photo: David Foote
AUSPIC/DPS.*

Chamber and Federation Chamber

Supporting the operations of the Chamber and Federation Chamber is a key focus of the work of the department. The Clerk's Office, Table Office and Chamber Research Office work together to support the day-to-day operations of the chambers, with other areas contributing as necessary.

This reporting period comprises the first full year of the Forty-fourth Parliament, during which the changes made following a return to majority government were consolidated. We continued to:

- advise the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives
- advise on programming of House business and provide procedural support
- process and draft bills
- prepare and publish the record of proceedings of the House
- process, provide access to and manage the custody of the documents and records of the House
- undertake procedural and parliamentary research
- produce information and publications on House practice and procedure
- maintain procedural and statistical records on the work of the House
- provide secretariat support to several domestic committees.

In 2014–15, the budget allocation for the component was \$3.232 million and expenditure was \$3.360 million. Progress against the deliverables and key performance indicators for the component is summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

Performance summary

The program component's work is focused on supporting the sittings of the House of Representatives Chamber and meetings of the Federation Chamber. Performance is measured in two ways—qualitatively, through the annual survey of members; and quantitatively, through information on the sittings of the House, the meetings of the Federation Chamber and the business conducted in the Chamber and Federation Chamber.

The annual survey of members (see Appendix 3) showed a continuing high level of satisfaction with the department's support for the Chamber and Federation Chamber. All respondents were satisfied with our advice and support. Respondents were 'extremely satisfied' or 'highly satisfied' with the following areas:

- advice and services received from the Clerks-at-the-Table in the Chamber and Federation Chamber—90 per cent (100 per cent in 2013–14)
- advice and services received from other staff in relation to Chamber and Federation Chamber duties—82 per cent (100 per cent in 2013–14)
- quality and availability of procedural and statistical publications and support in obtaining such information—62 per cent (81 per cent in 2013–14).

Statistical information on the sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber in 2014–15 and the two preceding years is shown in Table 1.

In 2014–15, sitting days totalled 77. This figure represents an increase of 24 days, or 31 per cent, on 2013–14, which was an election year. There was a corresponding increase in the total number of sitting hours. In 2014–15, the House sat for 203 more hours than in the previous year (28 per cent more time) and the Federation Chamber met for 56 more hours than in the previous year (27 per cent more time). Legislative activity continued at a relatively high level during the period, with 203 bills introduced (182 in 2013–14) and 168 bills passed by both Houses and assented to (94 in 2013–14).

Detailed information on the business of the House and the Federation Chamber is in Appendix 4 and in the department's publication *Work of the Session* (available on the Parliament of Australia website).

Table 1 Performance summary, Chamber and Federation Chamber, 2010–11 to 2014–15

Aspect of performance	2010–11 ^a	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^a	2014–15
Number of sittings of the House	52	68	59	53	77
Number of meetings of the Federation Chamber	46	59	55	40	57
Hours of sittings of the House ^b	511	691	602	523	726
Hours of meetings of the Federation Chamber ^b	248	306	256	152	208
Number of bills introduced	186	256	241	182	203
Number of bills that passed both Houses and were assented to ^c	116	221	228	94	168

a Election year.

b Excludes suspensions; rounded to the nearest hour.

c Includes bills that passed both Houses in the financial year but were assented to in the following financial year.

Advice on practice and procedure

The Clerk, Deputy Clerk and other staff members provided advice to the Speaker, members and others on the practice and procedure of the House.

We provided immediate advice and support to the Speaker, ministers, shadow ministers, members and others during proceedings. We also provided detailed written advice. Subjects addressed in our advices included the application of the standing orders and the practice of the House; the content of questions without notice; procedures for private members' business; delegated legislation and the disallowance process; the requirements of the Constitution and standing orders with respect to financial legislation; privilege matters; and requirements of the House for the registration of members' interests.

Programming and coordination of business

During the year, we continued to provide advice and services to facilitate sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber, including:

- offering programming and procedural advice to ministers, shadow ministers, party whips, other members, their staff and others
- preparing and publishing each sitting day:
 - ▶ the *Notice Paper*—a document listing all unresolved business before the House in the proposed order of consideration
 - ▶ the *Daily Program* (also known as 'the Blue')—an informal agenda for the day
 - ▶ procedural scripts for all items of business for use in the Chamber and Federation Chamber
- providing staff from the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office to support sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber, to oversee ceremonial and security arrangements, and to ensure the availability of chamber papers

- processing members' questions in writing to ministers, including editing them for compliance with the standing orders and publishing them in the *Notice Paper* for the next sitting day, and managing answers to questions
- providing a captioning service for the televised and webcast proceedings of the House and Federation Chamber
- publishing *This Week in the House*, a weekly online forecast of expected business for the House, and its counterpart, *Last Week in the House*.

Table 2 provides details of the number of questions in writing to ministers dealt with by the House in the five years from 2010–11 to 2014–15.

Table 2 Questions in writing to ministers and answers to questions in writing, 2010–11 to 2014–15

	2010–11 ^a	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^a	2014–15
Questions in writing ^b	441	678	411	201	633
Questions answered ^c	335	491	374	126	623

a Election year.

b Excludes questions withdrawn.

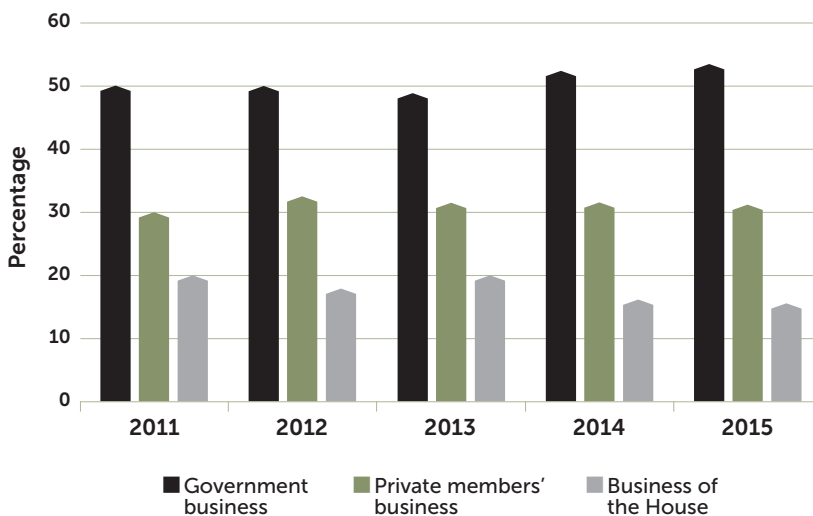
c The responsibility for responding to questions in writing rests with the individual ministers to whom the questions are put.

All sittings required the coordination of people, documents and actions, and the programming of the following categories of business:

- government business (for example, government legislation)
- private members' business (motions and bills proposed by private members)
- House business (matters potentially involving all members—for example, question time, debate on committee reports or matters of privilege).

A longitudinal view of the amount of time the House (Chamber and Federation Chamber inclusive) devoted to each of these types of business is shown in Figure 4. In 2014–15, the proportion of time allocated to government business returned to a level typical of majority government, following a decline in the Forty-third Parliament.

Figure 4 Government and private members' business and business of the House (Chamber and Federation Chamber), 2011 to 2015



Note: Private members' business includes consideration of private members' motions and bills and other opportunities for private members, such as adjournment debates and discussion of matters of public importance.

Processing and drafting of bills

Legislation

Support for the legislative process in 2014–15 included our traditional responsibilities of:

- receiving bills from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and keeping them in custody under embargo before their introduction in the House
- providing bills to ministers for introduction, and to all members in the Chamber after introduction
- uploading bills, explanatory memorandums and proposed amendments to the Parliament of Australia website, and providing an over-the-counter inquiry service for access to hard copies of bills and associated material
- processing all bills and amendments to bills—from introduction to assent for bills initiated in the House, and from introduction in the House until passage by the House for bills initiated in the Senate
- providing a legislative drafting service for private members
- preparing and delivering messages to the Senate—we prepared 209 messages relating to the passage of bills in 2014–15 (162 in 2013–14) and 21 other messages (24 in 2013–14)
- preparing and issuing each sitting day a Daily Bills List, which provides cumulative information on the status of all bills before the parliament or assented to in the current calendar year.

Chamber staff of both Houses continued to work with the developer of the bills system to maintain optimal levels of technical support. The Bills System Advisory Group continued its role in advising the Bills System Advisory Board on system enhancements and satisfying business requirements.

Queries of the bills and legislation collection on the website totalled 23.6 million during the year, an increase of 8.8 per cent from the previous year (21.7 million in 2013–14). This total represented 22.0 per cent of the queries made through ParlInfo Search. Work to include bills from earlier parliaments back to 1998 in the electronic storage system was completed during the reporting period.



The Speaker presiding over a division in the House of Representatives. Photo: David Foote AUSPIC/DPS.

Legislative workload

During the year, 203 bills were introduced (182 in 2013–14), an increase of 10.3 per cent from the previous year. Of these, 192 were initiated in the House of Representatives and 11 were received from the Senate. A total of 168 bills passed both Houses (94 in 2013–14), of which 158 were initiated in the House of Representatives (92 in 2013–14) and 10 in the Senate (two in 2013–14). Table 3 shows the number of bills introduced and assented to in the five years from 2010–11 to 2014–15.

In 2014–15, the House passed 185 bills (154 in 2013–14). This represented 2.4 bills on average for each sitting, compared with 2.9 bills on average in the previous year.

The House amended 17 (9.2 per cent) of the bills it passed (six (3.9 per cent) in 2013–14). The Table Office incorporated the amendments into the text of the bills and arranged for their reprinting (as third-reading prints) before transmittal to the Senate. The House also agreed to Senate amendments, made amendments requested by the Senate, or both, to 23 House bills (six in 2013–14). After further processing by the Table Office, the bills were presented to the Governor-General for assent.

The number of amendments moved during consideration in detail rose sharply, from 66 in 2013–14 to 303 in 2014–15. Of the amendments moved, 219 were passed, of which four were private members' amendments. The House did not amend any bills initiated in the Senate in 2014–15, or in the previous year.

The Table Office prepared 17 third-reading prints (six in 2013–14) and 158 assent prints (92 in 2013–14). All documents accurately reflected the decisions of both Houses.

Table 3 Number of bills introduced in the House, and number of bills assented to, 2010–11 to 2014–15

	2010–11 ^a	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^a	2014–15
Bills introduced	186	256	241	182	203
Bills assented to ^b	116	221	228	94	168

^a Election year.

^b Includes bills that passed both Houses in the financial year but were assented to in the following financial year.

Legislative drafting

The department drafts bills, amendments and second-reading (in-principle) amendments for private members, and ensures that these documents comply with the Constitution and the standing orders. The department also prepares bills and amendments in correct form and arranges copies for circulation.

In 2014–15, 12 private members' bills were introduced. Of the 303 amendments moved during consideration in detail, 88 were private members' amendments, four of which were agreed to. Table 4 provides chamber statistics for private members' legislation. The table does not reflect all of the department's work in this area, as some drafted material is not introduced into the House.

Since 2010, the department has had an arrangement with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) whereby a senior OPC drafter is seconded to the department. This arrangement continues to provide mutual benefits for the department and the OPC.

Table 4 Private members' bills introduced and amendments moved (Chamber and Federation Chamber), 2010–11 to 2014–15

	2010–11 ^a	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^a	2014–15
Bills introduced	17	25	30	7	12
Second-reading amendments moved	14	17	9	36	22
Consideration in detail amendments moved ^b	292	732	923	66	303

^a Election year.

^b Includes government amendments.

Record of proceedings and House documents

Votes and Proceedings

The *Votes and Proceedings* continued to provide an accurate, comprehensive and concise record of proceedings. The draft document for each sitting day is published on the Parliament of Australia website, usually within an hour of the adjournment of the House.

The *Votes and Proceedings* is prepared from the *Votes Officer's Minutes*, an electronic draft record of the proceedings of the House and the Federation Chamber. The *Votes Officer's Minutes* (also known as the *Live Minutes*) are more detailed than the *Votes and Proceedings* and are compiled progressively throughout a sitting day. The *Votes Officer's Minutes* enable anyone with access to the internet to follow events in the House and Federation Chamber as they occur. Internal and external clients continued to rely on this service and to provide positive feedback.

Table Offices Production System

Development of the Table Offices Production System continued during the year. It is replacing an old document production system, and is designed to produce the *Notice Paper*, *Daily Program*, *Votes and Proceedings* and *Live Minutes* and, to a lesser degree, procedural texts used by members in the Chamber and Federation Chamber.

The system is a joint project with the Department of the Senate and was put into partial production in May 2014. Since then, staff have had a sustained period of testing and working with the system and have begun to realise the benefits of some efficiencies. Almost all areas of the Table Office now rely solely on the system.

The implementation of the system has been important for recording and reporting on documents presented to the parliament and linking them to the *Votes and Proceedings*, and, as anticipated, these processes have been simplified, although there are still some improvements to be made. Use of the system to manage documents continues to require constant liaison with our Senate counterparts to ensure that the shared database is appropriately managed.

Some of the technical issues arising from the complexity of the design and changed business processes have continued to place additional demands on staff and in some cases have required additional hours on already long sitting days. Sustained efforts were made by staff during the reporting period to improve the system's performance to meet the needs of the Table Office.

A change in priorities—and cause for delay in finalisation of the project—occurred towards the end of the reporting period. In the short term, the focus will be on developing enhancements to the system so that it can generate data for use beyond the Table Offices and the department and Department of the Senate.

Documents

During the year, we processed all documents presented to the House and recorded their details in the *Votes and Proceedings* and the *Index to Papers Presented to Parliament*. We made copies available on request to members and their staff and others, principally in Parliament House. The original documents were added to the records of the House, which we continued to maintain. We also continued to review our requirements for tabling stock in light of the online availability of documents and declining demand for hard copies.

In 2014–15, documents presented to the House numbered 3,308, a decrease of 30 per cent compared to the previous year (4,253 in 2013–14).

Each sitting day the Table Office prepares and issues a Disallowable Instruments List in both electronic and hard-copy form. The list provides details of all instruments presented to the House that are subject to disallowance, by the number of sitting days remaining in which a notice of disallowance can be lodged.

Parliamentary Papers Series

The Parliamentary Papers Series consists of documents of a substantial nature presented to the parliament since 1901. An electronic repository for the series, instituted in 2013, enables centralised electronic access to the documents through the ParlInfo Tabled Papers Register. The documents section of the Table Offices Production System has helped to streamline the process of uploading parliamentary papers to the repository.

The department is responsible for the custody and preservation of, and the provision of access to, the official records of the House, including Acts, bills, the *Votes and Proceedings* and all documents presented to the House dating from 1901. The records are stored in an archive in the basement at Parliament House. We continue to monitor the suitability of the archive environment.

Petitions

The House petitioning process continues to enable Australians to raise issues with the House that are of interest to them. Table 5 shows the number of petitions presented to the House, and the number of signatories, for the past five years.

In 2014–15, 101 petitions were presented, compared to 75 in 2013–14. The number of signatures dropped to 250,369 in 2014–15 from nearly 1.4 million the previous year. The wide disparity is mainly due to the presentation in 2013–14 of the largest petition on record, regarding funding support for community pharmacies, which was signed by more than 1.2 million petitioners (signatures were first recorded in 1988). In addition, many of the petitions received in 2014–15 focused on localised issues, such as access to telecommunications infrastructure, or were organised by local organisations, and therefore contained a relatively small number of signatures.

Table 5 Petitions and signatories to petitions, 2010–11 to 2014–15

	2010–11 ^a	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^a	2014–15
Number of petitions presented	129	183	125	75	101
Number of signatories	445,921	446,619	325,360	1,365,151	250,369

^a Election year.

Research

The Chamber Research Office continued in its principal function of collecting, analysing and publishing procedural and statistical information on the work of the House and its committees.

In 2014–15, the office provided:

- advice, and assistance with advice, to the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and members on the application of the standing orders and House practices
- secretariat services to the Standing Committee on Procedure and the Standing Committee on Petitions (in October 2014, the Petitions Committee secretariat was moved to the Committee Office, but the Chamber Research Office continued to provide some administrative support during the year)
- advice about and publications on House statistics, practices and procedure
- information to the public, the media and other parliaments on the operations of the House.

The services of the office continued to be in high demand, reflecting sustained high levels of interest in the procedures and operations of the House.

Publications

The office continued to produce regular publications outlining significant procedural events and popular statistics, catering to the wide variety of readers interested in the work of the House by varying the complexity and style of its publications. The *Procedural Digest*, an online subject-based record of proceedings; the *Procedural Extracts*, a technical document; and the *Statistical Digest*, a statistical record of the work of the House, were published after each sitting fortnight. *Work of the Session*, a comprehensive six-monthly overview of the business of the House and committees, was published in August 2014 and January 2015. Some infosheets in the series of 22 infosheets on the work of the House were updated in August 2014. Together, these publications provide a current and concise record of the work of the House and the more significant aspects of that work. The department's publications, including the infosheet series, are listed in Appendix 7.

The Chamber Research Office maintains, publishes and distributes the standing orders of the House. The standing orders were reprinted as at 26 March 2015, incorporating a number of amendments made by the House on 13 February 2014, 19 March 2014 and 26 March 2015.

Collaboration with the Department of the Senate

The office continued its longstanding collaboration with colleagues in the Department of the Senate, including through participation in orientation seminars for the Australian National Internship Program and the Australian Defence Force parliamentary exchange program (discussed in more detail on page 23), as well as on preparation of a virtual tour of the House and the Senate.

Collaboration with other parliaments

Staff members are frequently asked to share their experiences and knowledge with counterparts from other parliaments. The office continued to collaborate with colleagues and members from other parliaments by participating in study programs, meetings during delegation visits, and capacity-building work. Colleagues from other parliaments continue to be particularly interested in the longstanding practices of the office in recording, analysing and publishing information on the procedural work of the House.

Parliamentary committees

The department continued to provide effective secretariat and advisory support to a number of House committees, and to one joint committee dealing with the powers and procedures of the House (see Table 6).

In 2014–15, these committees held a total of 78 meetings (55 in 2013–14) and produced 35 reports (17 in 2013–14). Details of meetings and reports are set out in Appendixes 5 and 6.

Table 6 Committees supported by the Chamber and Federation Chamber component, 2014–15

House committees
Selection Committee
Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration
Standing Committee on Petitions ^a
Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests
Standing Committee on Procedure
Standing Committee on Publications
Joint committee
Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings

^a In October 2014, the Petitions Committee secretariat was moved to the Committee Office, but the Chamber Research Office continued to provide some administrative support during the reporting period.

Selection Committee

The standing orders require the Selection Committee to fulfil three important roles:

- selecting and programming private members' business and committee and delegation business
- setting speaking times for second-reading debates (the committee has not as yet exercised this role)
- considering all bills introduced and determining whether to refer bills directly to House or joint committees for inquiry.

The committee has 11 members: the Speaker (as chair), the chief whips of the three parties, four government members and three non-government members. The committee met 18 times during the reporting period. It is supported by Table Office staff.

Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration

The Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration considers, among other things, estimates of the funding required for the operation of the department each year. When conferring with its counterpart Senate committee—the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing—the House committee may consider estimates of the funding required for the operation of the Department of Parliamentary Services each year.

The committee has nine members: the Speaker (as chair), four government members and four non-government members. It is supported by the Clerk, the Serjeant-at-Arms and other officers of the department. During the year the committee met four times and presented three reports.

Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests

The Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests met five times during the reporting period and presented one report to the House on a right of reply matter. The committee's inquiry referred by the House in February 2014 into whether the former Member for Dobell (Mr Craig Thomson) deliberately misled the House in the course of his statement to the House and having regard to the findings of the Melbourne Magistrates' Court on 18 February 2014, is ongoing.

In March 2015, the committee reported on its operations in connection with the registration and declaration of members' interests in 2014, and it presented four sets of alterations of interests during the period.

Standing Committee on Petitions

The Standing Committee on Petitions continued to assess petitions for compliance with relevant House standing orders and to enable the presentation of petitions found to be in order and of ministerial responses to petitions presented previously. The committee and secretariat continued to interact with principal petitioners about petitions being prepared for collection of signatures and about completed petitions received by the committee.

On sitting Mondays, the chair of the committee presented in-order petitions that other members had not elected to present, and also presented written responses from ministers to petitions presented earlier on which the committee had sought comment. The 'terms' (the stated reasons for the petition and the action requested) of petitions presented and the corresponding ministerial responses were published in Hansard and on the Parliament of Australia website in accordance with standing orders.

During the year, 101 petitions were presented with a total of 250,369 signatures (see page 16 for trend information). A total of 71 ministerial letters were presented responding to 79 petitions (in some cases, a single letter may respond to similar requests made in multiple petitions). Responses from ministers explain the government's policies and programs on the subject matter of petitions.

The committee may hold public roundtable hearings with principal petitioners and representatives of relevant government agencies to explore issues with petitioners and to allow public servants to explain the relevant legislation, policy, programs or administration. Four roundtable hearings were conducted in 2014–15, as well as a school visit.

In October 2014, the secretariat of the Petitions Committee was moved to the Committee Office, but the Chamber Research Office continued to provide some administrative support to the committee during the year.

Standing Committee on Procedure

The Standing Committee on Procedure usually meets once each sitting week to carry out its responsibilities: 'to inquire into and report on the practices and procedures of the House and its committees'. In June 2015, the committee reported on its inquiry into the role and operations of the Federation Chamber and adopted an inquiry into the consideration in detail of the main appropriation bill. It continues with its regular inquiry into the maintenance of the Standing and Sessional Orders.

Standing Committee on Publications

The House Publications Committee held one meeting in 2014–15, and met with the Senate Publications Committee on nine other occasions. The committee presented 10 reports containing recommendations on which documents presented to parliament should be included in the Parliamentary Papers Series. All recommended documents were agreed for inclusion.

Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings

The *Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946* requires ABC radio and, in some circumstances, ABC television to broadcast the proceedings of parliament. It is the statutory role of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings to advise parliament on general principles for the allocation of radio broadcasting time between the House and the Senate chambers and to determine a more detailed schedule of broadcasting allocations.

Under the *Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act*, the committee has nine members, including the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. By tradition, the Speaker is chair and the President is vice-chair. The committee, which is supported by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, did not meet during the reporting period.

Procedural training

The department continued to use a range of measures to support its staff to develop the necessary specialised knowledge and skills in the application of parliamentary law, practice and procedure. These included:

- sitting debriefs following each sitting week or fortnight, focusing on matters of procedural interest
- regular parliamentary briefings delivered by senior departmental staff
- training programs run by senior departmental staff
- shadowing opportunities, enabling staff to learn specialist skills such as the preparation of House procedures, the *Notice Paper* and the *Votes and Proceedings*. With sufficient experience, the use of shadowing allows chamber support staff to finish work earlier on some sitting nights and provides a backup in the event of staffing absences or turnover
- opportunities for participation in the annual Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table (ANZACATT) professional development seminar
- participation in the Graduate Certificate in Parliamentary Law and Practice, currently taught by the University of Tasmania under the auspices of ANZACATT.

Improving performance

With a return to majority government, many of the procedural challenges experienced during the Forty-third Parliament have lessened. However, as the House settled into the first full year of the Forty-fourth Parliament, our advisory services continued to be called on as new members became familiar with using the procedural opportunities available to them. Procedural training and development continued to be a priority during the year.

Outlook

In 2014–15, considerable time and resources were invested in the transition to the Table Offices Production System. Improvements have been made to the system and associated workflows, and some efficiencies have been realised, although they are not as significant, at this stage, as had been hoped. Implementation of some enhancements has been delayed, and it is now likely that the system will not be finalised until mid-2016. As staff become increasingly familiar with the system, further efficiencies will be realised.

During the year there was a return to the long-term pattern of Chamber and Federation Chamber support activity, although the time available for meetings of the Federation Chamber was not fully used.

The focus in 2015–16 will continue to be on providing high-quality services to meet the needs of members and other clients. The department's budgetary situation will remain tight, but within those constraints the department will continue to ensure that staff are well trained and equipped to deal with challenges that might arise.



Two of the department's 2015 graduate program participants, Michael Currie and Georgina Alsop. Photo: David Foote AUSPIC/DPS.

Community relations and awareness

The community relations and awareness component aims to demonstrate the value of the department's work by promoting its activities, engaging the community with key issues, and educating the public in the work and procedure of the House and its committees.

In 2014–15, the budget allocation for the component was \$1.211 million and expenditure was \$0.893 million. Progress against the deliverable and key performance indicator for the component is summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

Performance summary

In 2014–15, the department continued to promote the work of the House and its committees by developing engaging programs, activities and media, in accordance with its Community Outreach Strategy 2013–16.

The department met its target of 20,000 Twitter followers by December 2014, and received consistently positive feedback from participants in its face-to-face seminars. We contributed to the education of school-aged children by supporting the Parliamentary Education Office and school tours of Parliament House. We continued to engage younger audiences through the Speaker's University Challenge and My First Speech competitions, and to raise awareness of the work of the House and parliament through various internship and exchange programs.

Electronic media

The department continued to engage with the community through social media platforms. The department's Twitter handle, *@AboutTheHouse*, achieved sustained growth and recently reached 30,000 followers. Given its real-time nature, the platform continues to be a useful tool to engage with the public and the media. The department's Facebook following doubled in 2014–15 and the platform is proving to be a valuable tool for publishing longer articles about the work of the House and its committees.

The About the House YouTube channel, which broadcasts committee inquiry information and highlights from House, more than doubled its subscription in 2014. These videos were viewed more than 130,000 times on either YouTube or the Parliament of Australia website. We also continued to produce the successful *Parliament Diary* series, which has been broadcast on Sky News and the Australian Public Affairs Channel early on House sitting days.

The department's *About the House* magazine became a digital publication in 2015 after 17 years in print form. This transition will allow the magazine to reach new online audiences through the department's website, social media platforms and mobile application.

Seminars

The department continued to use its seminar program to raise awareness of its work, particularly among staff in government departments. Nine seminars were held in 2014–15, more than double the number of the previous year, attracting 325 participants. Formal evaluation of the seminar program continues to garner positive feedback.

Competitions

The department continued to engage with younger audiences through two competitions—the Speaker’s University Challenge and My First Speech.

Speaker’s University Challenge

The Speaker’s University Challenge aims to raise awareness of the House among young Australians by encouraging students to voice their opinions on a topic chosen by the Speaker. In the 2014 competition, entrants were challenged to create a three-minute video exploring the topic ‘Freedom of speech in a modern-day democracy’. The videos were judged based on the quality of the arguments and ideas presented, the use of research and their overall structure.

The competition was won by Patrisha Kay, who is studying for a Bachelor of Laws/Commerce at Griffith University. Ms Kay met the Speaker, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP, and the Speaker of the UK House of Commons, the Rt Hon John Bercow MP, at Parliament House when she received her trophy.

My First Speech

The My First Speech competition provides upper high school students with an opportunity to submit the speech that they would give as a newly elected member of the House of Representatives.

Rockhampton High School student Chay Conaglen took out first prize in the 2014 competition. In his speech, Chay spoke passionately about Australia’s democracy, climate change and the country’s relationships with international powerhouses China and India. He presented his speech live to the Speaker and numerous members at Parliament House in December.

Parliamentary assistants program

In 2014–15 the parliamentary assistants program, run by the Serjeant-at-Arms’ Office, entered its fifteenth year. The program offers university students part-time employment in the House of Representatives in order to promote understanding of and engagement with the work of the parliament. (For further details see page 43.)



Prime Minister the Hon Tony Abbott MP with the winners of the 2014 My First Speech competition. Left to right: Courtney Sinclair, Zachary August and Chay Conaglen.

Parliamentary internship program

The Australian National Internship Program has operated since 1993 under an agreement between the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University and the Australian Parliament's Presiding Officers. Australian and international students enrolled at the university under the program undertake an internship placement of about 10 weeks as part of their formal course of undergraduate study.

In the second semester of 2014, 17 of the 53 students enrolled in the program were placed with a member or senator. In the first semester of 2015, another 53 interns were in the program, of whom 22 were placed with a member or senator.

The departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as the Parliamentary Library, assist the program. The House and Senate departments provide an orientation seminar for all students before they take up their placements at Parliament House and elsewhere.

During the placement, each student completes a research project on a subject agreed with their host. The report is assessed by the university and counts towards the student's degree.

The program has continued to provide students from around Australia and from other countries with an opportunity to extend and complement their academic studies by studying and working in the parliamentary environment.

Parliamentary exchange program for the Australian Defence Force

Each year, a small number of Australian Defence Force representatives spend a week at Parliament House, hosted by a member or senator. This arrangement began in 2003 as an expansion of a program begun in 2001, under which members and senators took up a short placement with Defence personnel and participated in their working lives. Arrangements for participation by members and senators are made through the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence in conjunction with the Department of Defence.

The program was run in September 2014, with members and senators hosting 15 Defence Force representatives.

The departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate collaborate to support the exchange program and provide orientation seminars on the work of the chambers and committees.

Public visits to the House

In 2014–15, public interest in the sittings of the House continued to be high. Over the 73 sitting days, 67,195 people attended the galleries, and visitor numbers peaked at more than 1,000 per day on 24 occasions.

The high level of interest partly reflected a number of high-profile parliamentary events during the year. On budget day (13 May 2015), 1,410 people visited the chamber, slightly down from 1,432 in 2014, and 1,403 people visited on budget reply night, down from 1,720 in 2014.

These events required close coordination between the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, the Australian Federal Police and the Parliamentary Security Service.

Parliamentary Education Office

Administered by the Department of the Senate, the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) is a joint office and receives part funding from the department. Its mission is to provide parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students. It also provides parliamentary education support services to members and senators.

The two departments liaise closely on the PEO's strategic direction and the content of its teaching, educational material and online resources through the PEO Advisory Committee, jointly chaired by the Deputy Speaker and Deputy President. The committee may also advise the Presiding Officers on the support needs of members and senators in relation to parliamentary education. The committee met in November 2014 and June 2015. The Clerk Assistant (Table) attended as an observer.

Programs at Parliament House

In 2014–15, 90,132 students from around Australia participated in the PEO's experiential role-play program at Parliament House, compared with 87,657 students in 2013–14. This represents an increase of 2.8 per cent, and signals a return to normal class demand after a slight reduction in 2013–14. Attendance figures reflect the program's continued popularity. The cumulative total of students who have participated in role-play programs since the Parliament House building opened in 1988 is more than 1.89 million. The PEO also conducted a number of specially targeted activities at Parliament House involving students, trainee and qualified teachers, parliamentary visitors and Indigenous groups. These activities included overseeing the long-running Rotary Adventure in Citizenship program in budget week and supporting several National Youth Science Forums in January.

Minor changes were made to the PEO's operating procedures for school groups to ensure compliance with the enhanced security requirements at Parliament House.

The parliamentary Venue Management System, which includes school tour bookings, continues to undergo refinement. When fully functional, the system will provide improved information and services to schools and tour operators booking student programs at Parliament House. A welcome feature of the new system is the provision of more comprehensive information for members and senators on visiting school groups.

Outreach activities

The PEO continues to invest in a comprehensive range of outreach strategies to ensure it is able to provide parliamentary education services to a broad student population, not just those able to travel to Canberra.

The PEO website (www.peo.gov.au) remains a highly effective and popular vehicle for disseminating parliamentary education material and resources to teachers and students located around Australia. PEO website patronage increased in 2014–15 to 907,523 visitor sessions. When compared to the 719,124 visitor sessions in 2013–14, this represents an increase of 26 per cent. The increase may reflect the addition of considerable new content and improved functionality, which has broadened audience appeal and allows the site to better support the draft national curriculum in civics and citizenship. The introduction of rolling advertisements on the homepage for web content is also likely to have expanded the website's appeal.

During the year, the PEO continued to revise and update web content and developed significant new content, including new videos, expanded resources supporting the national curriculum and a new feature, 'Your questions on notice', which allows students to ask questions of parliamentary educators. To commemorate the significant anniversaries of the sealing of Magna Carta and World War I, new educational resources focusing on these important historical events were developed and posted online. The PEO also continued to develop and field information about current parliamentary events and the achievements and statistics of the Forty-fourth Parliament.

In recognition of its national responsibilities, the PEO continues to explore the potential of new technology for the remote delivery of PEO programs and resources, including interactive video conferencing, which was trialled successfully during the year.

School visit program

The PEO continued its work with members and senators on a limited scale through a targeted school visit program called Parliament Alive. In 2014–15, visits took place to schools in regional eastern Victoria, suburban Adelaide and north-central regional New South Wales. These activities provided participating students with an invaluable opportunity to learn firsthand about the role and work of their federal member or senator.

Educational resources

The PEO continued to produce a wide range of educational resources, both in print and online, including several new educational videos for students and teachers. A series of lesson plans for teachers, based on the draft national curriculum in civics and citizenship, were also developed. Demand for PEO publications and resources from both teachers and parliamentarians continued to be strong over the course of the year.

A new personalised resource for members and senators, 'Representing you', was developed to support member and senator interaction with students in their electorates and states and territories. PEO publications and resources were regularly reviewed and updated to ensure their currency, accuracy and ongoing relevance.

Improving performance

The department's Community Outreach Strategy 2013–16 outlines a clear strategic direction to enhance the department's multimedia products and services, particularly through the use of digital platforms.

The continued expansion of the department's social media reach, mainly through Twitter, is steadily improving our ability to direct our audiences to information about the work of the House. We will continue to explore ways of leveraging this platform to draw attention to the work of the House.

An administrative restructure occurred in 2014, bringing together the department's community outreach team with its knowledge management and publishing team. This union of our traditional information and knowledge services with our public-facing outreach activities has already strengthened the overall outcomes that both teams deliver for the department.

Outlook

The department will continue to enhance its community engagement in 2015–16, through a revised community outreach strategy. The department is seeking to direct its growing digital subscriber base to its core web content, to improve community awareness and understanding of the work of the House and parliament more generally. We will also work to improve the profile of committee activities by investigating more effective ways of engaging with the media and the community, and developing tailored communication strategies.

The department will build on its popular seminar program by investigating the introduction of more topics and different approaches to delivery. We will continue to encourage youth engagement with the House through activities such as the My First Speech competition and the Speaker's University Challenge.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office will continue to meet regularly and work with colleagues in the PEO and Visitor Services, as well as the wider community, to provide the best possible service to the variety of people who visit Parliament House.

Committee services

The work in this program component is primarily performed by the Committee Office. The office supports House committees and certain joint committees in fulfilling their roles in parliamentary consideration of policy and legislation and scrutiny of the executive government. The support provided to committees in the conduct of inquiries and in other activities includes:

- providing procedural and inquiry-related advice to committee chairs and members
- undertaking research and analysing evidence received by committees
- arranging, and providing secretariat support to, committee meetings and public hearings
- assisting witnesses and the general public to participate in committee inquiries
- promoting the work of committees
- drafting committee reports.

Expenditure on these services in 2014–15 was \$7.546 million, which was \$0.747 million below the budget allocation of \$8.293 million. Progress against the deliverable and key performance indicator for the component is summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

Performance summary

Performance is measured through the department's annual survey of members and through statistical information on committee activity.

A key indicator for the Committee Office is the level of satisfaction with committee advice and services reported by members in the annual survey. In 2014–15, 100 per cent of members stated that they were extremely satisfied, highly satisfied or satisfied with the provision of procedural advice, research, analytical, report drafting and administrative support. The level of member satisfaction has been consistently high over the years. (See Appendix 3 for more detail on the survey results.)



Members of the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia during a visit to a Broome pearl farm as part of the inquiry into opportunities to expand the aquaculture industry in Northern Australia.

During 2014–15, committee activity returned to a level that is typical for a non-election year (see Table 7). The number of committees supported by the Committee Office increased from 18 at the start of the year to 20 at year end. The increase reflected the establishment of an additional joint select committee (the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth) and the transfer of the secretariat for the Standing Committee on Petitions from the Chamber Research Office to the Committee Office in October 2014. The Chamber Research Office continued to provide some administrative support to the committee during the year.

The number of reports in 2014–15 is consistent with trend levels. The higher level of reporting in 2011–12 and 2012–13 reflected the unusually large number of bills inquiries conducted in the Forty-third Parliament.

Table 7 Performance summary, Committee Office, 2010–11 to 2014–15

Indicator	2010–11 ^a	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^b	2014–15
Members' satisfaction rates (%) ^c	100	95	100	95	100
Number of committees	21	18	20	18	20
Number of meetings	406	641	606	327	574
Hours of meetings	915	1,070	944	619	1,018
Number of reports ^d	42	90 (11)	104 (12)	21 (1)	70
Staff numbers, Committee Office ^e	63	63	64	65	60

a 2010–11 was an election year. Committees ceased to exist upon dissolution of the House (July to September 2010).

b 2013–14 was an election year. Committees ceased to exist upon dissolution of the House (August to November 2013).

c Members' satisfaction rates represent the proportion of members who stated they were 'satisfied', 'highly satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied' with committee services.

d Oral reports (shown in parentheses) may be given in discharge of a reference from the Selection Committee.

e Staff numbers as at 30 June each year.

The Clerk Assistant (Committees) met individually with all committee chairs during the final quarter of 2014, and received positive feedback on the performance of committee secretaries and other secretariat staff. The Committee Office consistently met support standards for providing briefing material and draft reports to committees. Secretariats generally provided timely, accurate and clear advice to chairs and committee members, and arranged public hearings and supported meetings of committees effectively and efficiently.

Comments from members acknowledging the work of secretariats in 2014–15

Comments made in the House by members when bills are being debated, or when committee reports are tabled, regularly acknowledge the work of secretariats. Following are some examples of the comments made during the reporting year.

I also thank the secretariat for their outstanding organisational ability and excellent efforts through this inquiry.

I thank the secretariat for their great support, whether it be in the hot desert near Woomera, or in the challenging environment of Bangkok or Djakarta.

I thank the secretariat for their very professional advice and the manner in which they helped the committee in its consideration of this important legislation.

Like the previous speakers, I want to acknowledge the work of the Chair and thank the secretariat, who, as we all know in this place, do an extraordinary amount of work.

I also thank our secretariat, who are sitting here in the advisers' gallery, for their wonderful work. They showed a great appreciation of the issues which were of concern to us and were of great assistance to us in coming to our deliberations.

Committee activity

At 30 June 2015, nine Committee Office secretariats were supporting nine House general-purpose standing committees; 10 joint statutory, standing or select committees; and one domestic committee.

Committees supported by the Committee Office in 2014–15 are shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Committees of the Forty-fourth Parliament supported by the Committee Office, 2014–15

House committees
Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry
Standing Committee on Economics
Standing Committee on Education and Employment
Standing Committee on the Environment
Standing Committee on Health
Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications
Standing Committee on Petitions ^a
Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue
Joint committees
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia
Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

^a In October 2014, the Petitions Committee secretariat was moved to the Committee Office, although the Chamber Research Office continued to provide some administrative support during the reporting period.

Note: Five other House committees, mainly those concerned with the domestic operations of the House, and the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings are supported by other areas of the department, and are discussed on pages 17–19. The Petitions Committee is also reported on there.

On 1 July 2014, the committees supported by the Committee Office had 32 ongoing inquiries. During 2014–15, the committees commenced 76 new inquiries and tabled 70 reports relating to 66 inquiries. At 30 June 2015, the committees had 42 ongoing inquiries. The inquiry-related activities of committees are summarised in Appendixes 5 and 6.

During the year the Committee Office supported a diverse range of inquiries and activities, as the following examples illustrate. The examples highlight the contribution that committees make to policy development and legislation, and the significant support role played by the department.

Scrutiny of legislation

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security completed 14 inquiries in 2014–15, including inquiries on four bills that formed part of the government's national security measures. These bill inquiries attracted significant media focus and public scrutiny. Specialist secondee resources were utilised for two of the bill inquiries. Their technical expertise greatly assisted secretariat staff, given the complex nature of the bills and the tight inquiry timeframes. Across the four bill inquiries, the committee made 109 recommendations, all of which were supported by the government (one was supported in principle) and the bills were amended accordingly. In the second-reading debate in the House on one of the bills—the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Bill 2014–28 of the 29 members participating in the debate referred specifically to the committee's work.

The Committee Office supported the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) in scrutinising the operation of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, which establishes a single resource management framework for all Commonwealth entities. The JCPAA played a significant role in the development of the framework, in particular focusing on managing risk, improving performance and accountability to the parliament and the public, and encouraging collaboration between agencies. In 2015–16, the JCPAA will continue its inquiry into the development of the Commonwealth performance framework to ensure an effective, integrated performance management and reporting system.

Complex logistics

The Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia presented its final report, titled *Pivot north*, during the year. The department supported the committee through 27 public hearings and 15 days of inspections across Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. The inquiry was wide-ranging and received 352 submissions and 99 exhibits, all of which were used in conjunction with the final report. The report served as a platform for development of the government's policy on northern Australia.

The travel between remote locations combined with the short inquiry timeframe required secretariat staff to arrange extensive logistical support, including charter vehicles of all types. As a result of this work, the Committee Office developed a revised departmental charter policy.

The House Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs completed an inquiry into the harmful use of alcohol in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The committee consulted widely across Australia, visiting capital cities, rural areas and remote communities. The secretariat, in addition to providing research and procedural advice, provided highly effective logistical support to the committee to enable it to fulfil its challenging public hearing program.

Diverse inquiries

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties completed inquiries into the Korea–Australia Free Trade Agreement and the Japan–Australia Free Trade Agreement, which generated considerable public interest, particularly the Korea–Australia Free Trade Agreement. The committee recommended the passage of both treaties.

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters completed its inquiry into the 2013 federal election and presented a second interim report and final report. In these and the earlier first interim report on Senate voting practices, the committee presented a wide-ranging set of recommendations for consideration in future electoral processes. In supporting the inquiry, secretariat staff received valuable assistance from a specialist secondee from the Australian Electoral Commission.

In October 2014, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry tabled the report of its inquiry into country-of-origin labelling for food. Titled *A clearer message for consumers*, the report sought to identify solutions to a policy issue that had been investigated several times in the previous decade with varying degrees of success. In early 2015, public health concerns about imported frozen berries brought food labelling to prominence. The government's response included the announcement of significant reforms of food labelling policy.

The Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee undertook an inquiry into the government's response to the committee's 2013 report *Troubled waters: inquiry into the arrangements surrounding crimes at sea*. The inquiry is believed to be the first time a committee has inquired into a government response and was a result of the committee's concern that the response was 10 months late and agreed with only two of the 11 recommendations. The inquiry provided an opportunity for the committee to reinforce the importance of its earlier report and the recommendations, and to ensure that a more detailed response was provided. Following the inquiry, the committee made three new recommendations.

Non-inquiry activity

The Auditor-General is a significant stakeholder in and contributor to the work of the committees, and the Committee Office maintains a productive working relationship with Australian National Audit Office staff. As an independent officer of the parliament, the Auditor-General is responsible for ensuring accountability and transparency in the delivery of government programs and services. The JCPAA has a statutory duty under the *Public Accounts and Audit Committee Act 1951* to approve or reject a proposed recommendation for appointment to the office of Auditor-General.

On 14 May 2015, the JCPAA approved the appointment of Mr Grant Hehir as the new Auditor-General. The Auditor-General is appointed by the Governor-General, under the *Auditor-General Act 1997*, for a term of 10 years, and Mr Hehir commenced office on 11 June 2015. Prior to his appointment, Mr Hehir was the New South Wales Auditor-General. The JCPAA acknowledged the significant achievements of Mr Ian McPhee AO PSM, who served as Auditor-General for the past 10 years.

The Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade conducts an annual program of briefings on and inspections of Defence units and facilities. The 2014–15 program was structured around the themes of Defence strategy, policy and budget; current operations; emerging threats and capabilities; and personnel, preparedness and sustainment. Secretariat staff—and in particular the Defence Advisor, who is a Defence officer on secondment—arrange the program, in conjunction with the Department of Defence. During the year, the sub-committee:

- inspected NUSHIP *Canberra*, the Navy's new amphibious assault ship, which was nearing completion at Williamstown shipyard in Victoria
- spent a day at sea with the crew of HMAS *Canberra* undergoing work-up training off Jervis Bay
- visited the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, and ASC Pty Ltd's submarine facilities in Adelaide
- inspected Navy Base HMAS Stirling and the Special Air Service Regiment in Western Australia
- visited the Avalon International Airshow, and observed C-130 Hercules capability while in transit to inspect units at RAAF Base Amberley.

Inspections provide members with a unique insight into the Defence organisation and its operation that would be difficult to obtain otherwise. They also allow members to interact with Defence personnel and hear, firsthand, about the delivery of Australia's vital defence capabilities.

Government responses to committee reports

The government is obliged, by resolution of the House, to respond to recommendations contained in a report by a House or joint committee within six months of the report's presentation.

Under the terms of the resolution, committees may bring an outstanding response to the attention of the Auditor-General or the Speaker. During the year, for the first time, a committee sought the assistance of the Speaker in resolving an outstanding response. The Speaker then wrote to all ministers informing them of the approach she would follow when receiving such requests. At the request of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker informed members of the Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the approach. The report in question was responded to.

The Speaker presented three schedules during the year listing government responses to House and joint committee reports and responses outstanding. At the start of the year, 51 reports of committees supported by the Committee Office that required a government response had not yet received one. Of these, 43 responses had been outstanding for more than six months. In 2014–15 the government tabled 28 responses to reports of committees supported by the Committee Office (13 in 2013–14), and committees presented 31 reports requiring a response (7 in 2013–14). At year end, 41 reports were yet to receive a response, and of these, 25 had been outstanding for more than six months.

The government responses presented during the year included responses to some important reports from previous parliaments:

- a report by the House Standing Committee on Regional Australia, *Cancer of the bush or salvation for our cities? Fly-in, fly-out and drive-in, drive-out workforce practices in regional Australia*
- a report by the House Standing Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Resources, *Netting the benefits—inquiry into the role of science for the future of fisheries and aquaculture*
- two reports by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Trading lives: modern day human trafficking* and *Australia's trade and investment relationship with Japan and the Republic of Korea*
- a discussion paper that followed a roundtable held by the House Standing Committee on Health and Ageing in March 2012 on the late effects of polio/post-polio syndrome.

Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs

The department supports the Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs. While this committee has formal processes, and is chaired by the Deputy Speaker, it is not a formal committee of the parliament but a forum for chairs and deputy chairs of committees administered by the House to discuss aspects of committee administration and support. The Liaison Committee met three times during 2014–15, in October 2014 and March and June 2015.

A focus of the Liaison Committee during 2014–15 was to support committees in enhancing their effectiveness. The committee also focused on informing members of the avenues available to committees to require government responses to committee reports, under the terms of the relevant resolution of the House. The Auditor-General was invited to the committee's meeting in March to brief the committee on actions he could take to resolve matters referred to in reports for which responses were outstanding.

International visits

The Australian Parliament's outgoing delegations program includes annual visits to the Asia–Pacific region, New Zealand and the People's Republic of China, assigned on rotation to House, Senate and joint committees.

In July 2014, the secretariat of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works supported committee members during their visit to Indonesia and Thailand. The aim of the delegation was two-fold. The first was to inspect existing Australian embassy facilities in Jakarta and Bangkok and examine progress on construction of new purpose-built facilities. The second was to develop an improved understanding of how the new purpose-built facilities will help to support Australia's diplomatic presence and the full range of activities intended to strengthen bilateral relationships with Indonesia and Thailand. The visit afforded committee members a unique opportunity to develop an enhanced appreciation of the complexities associated with managing and delivering large capital works projects overseas and the crucial role played by the two embassies in strengthening Australia's strategic and commercial presence in the region.

In July and August 2014, the secretariat of the House Standing Committee on Economics supported a visit to the People's Republic of China. The main aims of the visit were to gain a deeper understanding of the Chinese economy; to learn about China's economic reform agenda, its banking and non-bank lending sectors, and its trade and investment relationship with Australia; and to consider where opportunities might exist to strengthen ties between the two countries. From this visit, the committee gained a greater understanding of the economic situation in China and the ways in which Australia's trade and investment relationship with China could be enhanced and consolidated.

In 2015–16, the JCPAA will travel to Fiji and New Zealand, and the House Standing Committee on the Environment will visit Malaysia and Singapore. Two additional committee visits are planned in July 2015. The Trade Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will travel to the Middle East, and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security will travel to the United States, the United Kingdom and France.

Capability development

The Committee Office is led and managed by the Clerk Assistant (Committees) in conjunction with committee secretaries and the Director of the Office of the Clerk Assistant (Committees). Weekly meetings were held throughout the year (except in recess periods) to discuss departmental and office management and secretariat staffing and resource issues.

The department undertook recruitment for the business-critical ongoing positions of committee secretary (two external officers were engaged and two internal officers promoted), inquiry secretary (process in train at year end) and Committee Office research and administrative staff (four external officers were engaged and three internal officers were promoted), and recruitment for several vacancies for non-ongoing positions.

Committee Office debriefs and 'Inside Committee' sessions were held approximately six-weekly during the year. The debrief sessions are led by different secretariats and provide an opportunity for informal discussion of experiences and issues relating to committee support, including procedural, administrative and cultural matters. The 'Inside Committee' sessions are one-hour presentations by senior staff on committee operations. Many staff also participated in the department's leadership training and other training and development activities.

The Committee Office hosted three graduates from the department's graduate program and two Department of Defence graduates. The office also hosted placements for committee staff members from the Legislative Assembly of Victoria and the National Assembly of Kenya, and presented to a visiting official parliamentary delegation from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and visiting international parliamentary staff from Pakistan and from the Bahrain National Assembly. The secretariat of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties met with a group from the Royal Government of Bhutan who were in Australia to study the Australian treaty-making process. Australia was identified as a country with a well-established system with features that may be useful in the development of Bhutan's process.

Guides and manuals

Revised Committee Office brochures and revised *Working with parliamentary committees* guides were published at the start of the year (see Appendix 7 for a full list of the department's publications). The brochures are available on the department's website and on the members' portal, and the guides are available on the members' portal.

The Committee Office's procedure and practice manual and administrative manual were comprehensively updated and revised and published on the department's intranet during the year. A briefing session was held to inform staff of the major changes.

Information and communications technology projects

The Committee Office continued its involvement in several ICT projects aimed at improving operational efficiency and maintaining a high standard of service to committee members and other stakeholders.

Database development and consolidation

Collaboration with the Department of the Senate continued on the Shared Committee Information Database (SCID). This custom-built program enables members of the public to lodge submissions online. It doubles as a management tool for committee inquiry information and a tool for publishing submissions, public hearing information and other information on the Parliament of Australia website. It replaces a number of outdated database and publishing tools used in the Committee Office.

An important development during the year was the testing of a new report template, Report Builder, which draws on information from SCID and enables publication of reports in multiple formats (PDF, HTML and eBook). The office is planning to use the template to generate HTML and eBook versions of reports that have already been tabled in the Forty-fourth Parliament.

Following an internal audit review in the Department of the Senate, the SCID Board was re-established under revised terms of reference to provide governance of the project. The Clerk Assistant (Committees) is the initial chair of the committee. The new board held its first meeting in June 2015, and the aim is to finalise the project and transfer support functions to the Department of Parliamentary Services in 2015.

Content management

The capability of Committee Office staff in using Sitecore was further developed. Sitecore is a content management system that is used to author, publish and manage content on the Parliament of Australia website. It provides an easy-to-use interface for editing and authoring web content; a publishing approval workflow that prevents content from being inadvertently published to the website; and automatic updating of links when web content is moved or web pages are renamed.

Wherever possible, standard content drawn from SCID, such as committee contact details and membership, is automatically added to the website.



Members of the Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inspecting a C-17A Globemaster aircraft at RAAF Base Amberley.

Electronic access to committee documents

The department worked with the Department of Parliamentary Services to roll out an enhanced means of accessing committee documents on CommDocs from iPads. The enhanced access is provided through a MobileIron Web@Work browser. The browser enables access to web resources internal to the parliament through a secure platform. It gives committee members ready access to committee papers on the secure CommDocs site from their iPads without having to use the Citrix interface. Committee secretariat staff can assist committee members with CommDocs via iPads.

Members have welcomed the benefits provided by electronic access to papers, especially when travelling.

Electronic petitioning

In February 2015, the government announced its decision to support the recommendation of the Petitions Committee for the introduction of electronic petitioning to the House of Representatives. The Committee Office then submitted a request to the Department of Parliamentary Services seeking updated costings for the development of electronic petitioning for the House. The response was under consideration at year end.

Improving performance

During the year, the Committee Office had a focus on capability development through limited recruitment, continued training and development, effective performance management and process improvement, particularly in the area of ICT. The ongoing aim is to achieve enhanced capability, and progress was made during the year.

The office contributed to a review of the department's performance management system. An important change arising from the review was the requirement for new supervisors to be informed if any staff members had received a 'needs development' rating in the previous reporting cycle. The Committee Office work objectives for all staff levels were reviewed and updated to align with the revised system, streamlining the process of setting work objectives for the 2014–15 performance cycle.

The departmental planning day was held on 18 September 2014. Committee Office staff attended, and a number of committee-related matters were discussed during the sessions, including parliamentary staff as conduits for the community's engagement with parliament and its committees and increased flexibility of allocating staff in the Committee Office based on operational needs.

Outlook

The activity of committees is expected to continue at a high level in 2015–16. With the House due to expire in November 2016, pressure to complete inquiries and reports is likely to increase during the year. The Committee Office will also need to plan for the election period and schedule the project work and other activity to be undertaken during the period.

In the coming year, committee members will continue to require highly professional services from the Committee Office. Developing the capability of staff, particularly in the use of committee-based ICT resources, will remain a priority for the office. This will include drawing more on the capability of existing 'super users' in the office. We will also continue to work with the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services on developing and consolidating ICT resources to facilitate the work of committees.

Inter-parliamentary relations

The Australian Parliament's international program focuses on parliamentary engagement, cooperation and strengthening, with an emphasis on parliamentary relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

As foreshadowed in last year's annual report, in 2014-15 the department implemented the Presiding Officers' response to the report of the review of the international program which they commissioned in 2013. The resulting changed administrative structure is now in place.

The International and Community Relations Office, a joint office administered by the department, was disbanded. The department's community outreach function was separated completely from the international program function, and became part of a new office of the department focusing on access to information, the Parliamentary Business and Information Systems Office. Support for the international program is provided by two separate offices under two different directors. The International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO) manages the incoming and outgoing delegation programs, membership of inter-parliamentary organisations, and the international interests and travel of members and senators. The Parliamentary Skills Centre (PSC) is responsible for all parliamentary strengthening and capacity-building programs of the Australian Parliament.

Activities and projects in 2014-15 were coordinated primarily through IPRO and the PSC, with input from all four parliamentary departments. IPRO, established in July 2014, and the PSC, established in August 2014, are joint offices administered by this department, and IPRO also receives part funding from the Department of the Senate.

In 2014-15, the budget allocation for the component was \$2.493 million and expenditure was \$2.233 million. Progress against the deliverable and key performance indicators for the component is summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.



A delegation from ASEAN countries with members of the Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club, November 2014.

Performance summary

A comprehensive program of incoming and outgoing visits during the year strengthened bilateral links with several national parliaments. The Australian Parliament continued to support the capacity-building of parliaments in the region, and played an active role in parliamentary associations to which it belongs. Departmental staff adjusted effectively to the new administrative support arrangements for the international program, and a new Inter-Parliamentary Relations Advisory Group was formed.

Parliamentary engagement

During 2014–15, the department coordinated 20 official visits overseas, including bilateral visits to seven countries; attendance at seven assemblies, conferences, workshops and seminars; and 11 other visits, including Presiding Officer visits and the annual committee visits to New Zealand, the Asia–Pacific region and the People’s Republic of China (see pages 31–2 and Appendix 8). There were 10 official visits to Australia by parliamentary delegations from other countries as guests of the Australian Parliament (see Appendix 9) and 33 other visits, including a range of capacity-building activities (see Appendixes 10 and 11).

A significant regional focus was maintained in the visits programs. Eleven of the 20 overseas visits were to countries in Asia or Oceania, and four of the 10 official visits to Australia were from parliaments in our immediate region. One notable such visit was the first official parliamentary delegation from Fiji in 12 years, led by the Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji, Dr Jiko Luveni. The delegation’s visit in March 2015 represented a valuable opportunity to renew ties with the Parliament of Fiji, following elections in that country and the re-establishment of its parliament.

To enhance links with parliaments of Latin America, the Presiding Officers approved the introduction of a multi-country Latin American delegation visit to Australia for 2014–15. The visit took place in August and September 2014 and included regional Australia in addition to the capital cities; the delegation inspected businesses in the Hunter Valley and conducted a roundtable dialogue there with members of the Australian Parliament’s Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. Invitations have been issued to 10 parliaments for the second visit, scheduled to take place in September 2015.

For the 2014 outgoing delegations program, a new initiative—the parliamentary field visit—was trialled. The destination for a field visit is chosen based on a policy issue, rather than geography, to allow a group of parliamentarians with a particular interest in an issue to broaden their knowledge and understanding and report back to the parliament.



The Hon Philip Ruddock MP (centre, seated) and Mr Chris Hayes MP (standing, at right) visiting a class at Nizip refugee camp in Turkey on a parliamentary field visit, November 2014.

In considering potential topics for the visit to propose to the Presiding Officers, the party whips agreed that a field visit should focus on an issue that requires broad bipartisan support in the parliament to deliver an outcome for the community.

The first field visit was undertaken by the Hon Philip Ruddock MP and Mr Chris Hayes MP, who visited Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon in November 2014 to examine population movements, including asylum seekers. The delegates noted the value of the visit in giving them an insight into an important humanitarian issue with significant implications for Australia. On their return, they presented their views and findings at a forum for members, senators and parliamentary staff.

Following the success of the first field visit, a further two—to examine energy security and community inclusion—were approved for 2015. It is anticipated that two field visits will be a standard inclusion in the outgoing delegations program in non-election years.

The work of incoming and outgoing parliamentary delegations continued to be promoted through the Parliament of Australia website, including publication of short articles and video interviews with delegation leaders.

Outgoing and incoming delegations gave positive feedback on the quality of the programs, both at debrief meetings and through correspondence. For example, Professor Dr Norbert Lammers, President of the German Bundestag, who led a parliamentary delegation to Australia in October 2014, thanked the Presiding Officers for the arrangements made for the delegation, praising the 'most informative' program and its 'fantastic preparation and thoughtful stewardship', and indicating that the delegation looked forward to continuing the contact established during the visit.

Parliamentary cooperation

The Australian Parliament maintained its commitment to regional and international parliamentary cooperation. In 2014–15, delegations attended the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, two Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) assemblies, the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum and the Australian and Pacific Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference (for more details, see Appendix 8).

In June 2015, IPRO organised a visit to the parliament from the Secretary-General of the IPU, Mr Martin Chungong. Mr Chungong met with the Presiding Officers, Australia's delegation to the IPU General Assembly, other members, parliamentary staff and government officials. A focus of the visit was discussion of opportunities for the parliament and the IPU to work together to strengthen parliamentary democracy in the Pacific region.

A seminar was conducted at Parliament House for 100 members of the diplomatic community in Canberra on the processes and work of the parliament and the operation of its international program.

Parliamentary strengthening

As noted above, the PSC was established in August 2014 to carry out the parliamentary strengthening activities that had been part of the work of the former International and Community Relations Office. The PSC has a small staff, and through the generous support of members, senators and colleagues from throughout the parliamentary service it enables the parliament to engage in substantial collaboration in capacity-building with Pacific and other parliaments.

The PSC continued to coordinate activities under the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program and the work of the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project (funded under the Australian Government's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Initiative). The major focus of the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program during the year was on capacity-building to support the re-establishment of the Fiji Parliament (in collaboration with the Victorian Parliament and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) and the ongoing development of the Papua New Guinea Parliament (in collaboration with the Queensland Parliament). These two strengthening initiatives have been made possible by funding from the Centre for Democratic Institutions at the Australian National University and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

During the year, the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project's major activities comprised member exchanges for women members of Pacific parliaments with Australian parliaments, the annual Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Forum (which was held in Suva and considered the issue of family violence), the retreat for Pacific clerks (which focused on gender equality in parliaments), and scholarships for three Pacific parliamentary staff (from Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Kiribati) who undertook research attachments at the Parliamentary Library for a month.

The PSC continued to provide support for capacity-building programs and responded to requests for assistance from other parliaments and international organisations, including through collaborative work with colleagues in the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services. A highlight of professional development activities at the international level was the regular Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, which was coordinated by the PSC and took place in March 2015. Senior staff participated from national parliaments in Brazil, China, Federated States of Micronesia, Germany, Kiribati, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand and Zimbabwe.

Contributions were also made by a range of departmental staff, through the PSC, to study programs for members and staff of a number of parliaments, including Bahrain, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea.

Improving performance

The department implemented the Presiding Officers' response to the review of the international program from July 2014. The major aspects of the response were the restructure of the administrative support functions for the international program and the establishment of an advisory group. The restructure of the administrative support functions is discussed above. The other key implementation from the response was the establishment, in July 2014, of the Inter-Parliamentary Relations Advisory Group, consisting of two parliamentarians (appointed by the Presiding Officers in consultation with the whips), the heads of the parliamentary departments and the Parliamentary Librarian. The role of the advisory group is to provide advice to the Presiding Officers and to develop a strategic plan for the international program. The department provided support to the advisory group in 2014–15, encouraging greater transparency in the conduct of the international program. An important part of this process was the development of a strategic plan for the international program, which is expected to be formally implemented in 2015–16.

Outlook

The year ahead will include a full program of delegation visits. In the first half of 2015–16, 20 outgoing delegations (including committee visits, parliamentary field visits and attendance at assemblies) and five official incoming parliamentary delegations are scheduled. Delegation visits over the second half of the year, especially outgoing delegations, are expected to decrease as the Forty-fourth Parliament draws to a close.

Parliamentary strengthening programs administered through the PSC will remain a priority area for the international program, and initiatives and activities established under the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program and the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project will continue to be supported. As the Australian Parliament relies on funding from government or other sources, such as the UNDP and the IPU, to support much of its parliamentary capacity-building work with other parliaments, the extent to which the PSC is able to secure such funds will greatly influence the level of the parliament's contributions. The PSC will continue to respond to invitations to the parliament to collaborate on parliamentary strengthening, giving due consideration to the limited resources available for such work, and will continue to apply for funds when grant and other funding offers are available.

It is anticipated that the strategic plan for the international program, developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Relations Advisory Group, will be formalised during 2015–16. The advisory group will continue to be supported in its work by staff of the department.

Over the second half of the year, preparations will begin for the Forty-fifth Parliament, including periodic project work and preparation of forward work programs.

Members' services and corporate support

The members' services and corporate support component's responsibilities include:

- providing advice, services and support to members and their staff in Parliament House
- paying members' salaries and allowances
- providing the department with advice and support on financial and human resource management, and records management, publishing and office services
- organising members' office accommodation, furniture and fittings; providing mail and courier services; and handling bookings for committee rooms and chamber galleries
- maintaining and publishing key information about members and former members.

These responsibilities are undertaken by the four areas reporting to the Serjeant-at-Arms: the Finance Office, the Parliamentary and Business Information Services Office, the People Strategies Office and the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office.

The department is the primary contact for providing concierge services to members and their staff. We liaise closely with colleagues from the Department of Finance and the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) on a range of matters.

We also work in partnership with parliamentary departmental colleagues on major projects, such as enhancing ICT systems that have a whole-of-parliament application. In addition, we represent the department and support the interests of the House and members on a number of inter-parliamentary committees and boards that provide whole-of-parliament governance.

In 2014–15, the budget allocation for the component was \$7.503 million and expenditure was \$7.656 million. Progress against the deliverables and key performance indicators for the component is summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

Performance summary

A high priority for the program component is to provide advice and support to the Speaker and the Speaker's office on the control and management of the precincts, chamber and gallery security, and ceremonial and other events at Parliament House. We work closely with colleagues in the Department of the Senate, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and DPS.

A significant change during the reporting period was the restructure of security responsibilities at Parliament House. The AFP now has a key role as part of the Security Management Board and provides central oversight of all security arrangements at Parliament House. This has been a positive step forward, and we continue to work closely with the AFP on security-related matters.

During the year, we continued to work on ICT projects to improve efficiency and service delivery, including developing and replacing many of the support systems for the Chamber, committees and members' services. All projects are now close to completion.

Work on the office furniture replacement project continued. In the reporting period, installations were completed in the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's suite, the suite of the Manager of Opposition Business and the suites of the government and opposition whips, as well as offices used by departmental staff. All installations are due to be completed in October 2015.

The 2015 members' survey indicated their levels of satisfaction with the department's services. The services provided by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office again achieved a 100 per cent satisfaction level, with 82 per cent of all members responding being extremely or highly satisfied (100 per cent in 2014). All members were satisfied with their home pages on the Parliament of Australia website; 50 per cent were either extremely or highly satisfied (62 per cent in 2014). Ninety-five per cent of members were satisfied with services for salary, electorate allowances and deductions (the same as in 2014).

Services and advice

Chamber enhancements

In the previous reporting period, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker requested enhancements in the Chamber and the Federation Chamber, for which they are respectively responsible. The work has been coordinated by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office together with DPS, and includes installation of screens identifying the business before the House in the Chamber and the restructure of the Deputy Speaker and Clerk's dais in the Federation Chamber. The majority of the work was completed during the reporting period and has been favourably received. The few remaining items in the Federation Chamber, including the addition of specific art work, will be completed by the end of 2015.

Media services

The Serjeant-at-Arms and staff continued to work with the various media bureaus and the governing committee of the Parliamentary Press Gallery to ensure compliance with the rules for media-related activity in Parliament House and its precincts. The Presiding Officers adopted the rules in 2012, and their administration has been delegated to the Serjeant-at-Arms and the Usher of the Black Rod. The rules clarify the areas in the building and precincts where media activity is permitted, permitted only after prior approval, or not permitted at all. They also set out the circumstances where still photography by accredited media personnel is permitted in the chambers, and where filming and photography are more broadly permitted throughout the parliamentary precincts. It is a condition of access to the building that occupants comply with the rules, and a graduated range of sanctions may be applied for non-compliance.

During the year, the Serjeant-at-Arms, the Usher of the Black Rod and their delegates liaised closely with the press gallery to balance media access, security and parliamentary requirements at major events, including the addresses to the House of Representatives by the Prime Minister of Japan, His Excellency Mr Shinzo Abe; the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Rt Hon David Cameron; the President of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Mr Xi Jinping; and the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Mr Narendra Modi.

On a day-to-day level, the Serjeant-at-Arms and her delegates work with members' and ministers' offices, representatives of the press gallery, the AFP and the Parliamentary Security Service to ensure that media events on the precincts are conducted in compliance with the rules and with minimum inconvenience to all.

During the year, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office responded to around 145 requests to film or photograph in the private areas of the building.

Broadcasting of proceedings

In 2013 the House and Senate adopted updated resolutions for the broadcast of parliamentary proceedings. The resolutions recognise that television and radio are no longer the only broadcast media (social media and live streaming are others) and that previous distinctions between broadcasting and re-broadcasting are becoming less relevant with new technology. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate continue to retain control over broadcast content, which still needs to be supplied by authorised parliamentary staff in accordance with guidelines approved by the Presiding Officers.

The resolutions also include the general principles for the radio broadcast of parliamentary proceedings by the ABC. The general principles determine that the allocation of the live radio broadcast between the two chambers should be approximately equal. For question time, either the House or the Senate session is broadcast live and the other is broadcast later in the day. These general principles are complemented by standing determinations that provide more detailed advice to the ABC for the radio broadcasts.

Information services

To help keep members and their staff informed about developments in the House, three editions of the members' bulletin, *House Update*, were published during the year. In addition, the annual series of briefings on procedural and other developments in the House was continued. Nine briefings were held during the year, including two briefings specifically targeted at members' staff.

During 2014, the department continued to operate its drop-in centre every sitting Tuesday to enable members and their staff to get information or give feedback on any of the services provided by the department. Nine sessions were held yielding eight queries. As in previous years, the sessions were staffed by senior departmental staff members and a customer service officer from DPS was invited to attend to increase the value of the service to members. No sessions were held during 2015 because of the very low take-up of the opportunity by members.

Accommodation services

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office provides a concierge service for members and, as part of this, coordinates accommodation, capital works and routine maintenance services in the House of Representatives wing.

During the year, the office arranged six office relocations as a result of a minor ministry reshuffle and changes to office holder positions. This number was significantly less than in 2014–15, which was an election year. The office worked closely with the government whip to ensure the relocations were completed quickly. The office also coordinated 334 requests to supply and move furniture (significantly less than in the previous year), which arose from movements of members to and from the ministerial wing. All tasks were performed within agreed timeframes and to agreed standards, and to the satisfaction of the whips and individual members.

Replacement of office furniture

Work continued on the replacement of office furniture for departmental staff and the staff of certain parliamentary office holders. The furniture being replaced has been in use since 1988. Work completed to date equates to 94 per cent of the original project scope; the remainder will be completed by October 2015.

A second phase of the furniture replacement project was endorsed by the department's Executive in June 2015. It will encompass all the suites in the House of Representatives wing that were not included in the first phase, which includes all parliamentary secretaries' and backbenchers' suites.

Maintenance, access and transport services

Maintenance requests for work in members' suites are coordinated by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, and include both emergency and routine work. During the year, the office coordinated 221 emergency requests, which were all attended to within five minutes of receipt. In addition, the office coordinated 129 routine maintenance requests for repairs or alterations to suites or common areas. We take a proactive approach by performing office shutdowns and inspections over the autumn and winter recesses, so that issues can be identified, reported and addressed while parliament is not sitting.

The office coordinated 281 requests for assistance with telephone faults, relocations and allocations of telephone numbers. Faults reported were referred to telephone support in DPS within five minutes of receipt, and appropriate timeframes for resolution were agreed with the affected area.

As the area responsible for access to members' suites, the office approved 538 requests by DPS for access to suites and general circulation areas for general maintenance and services.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office provides a Transport Office to coordinate transport services for members, including managing the COMCAR shuttle service during sitting weeks. The shuttle service provides a readily available, secure car-with-driver service in Canberra for members. In 2014–15, the Transport Office managed 10,335 bookings from members, compared to 8,960 bookings in 2013–14 (figures exclude unbooked walk-outs by members). This represents a 15 per cent increase in bookings on the previous year, which included an election break.

Parliament House security

The Serjeant-at-Arms represents the department on the Security Management Board. The board is established pursuant to section 65A of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* to provide advice to the Presiding Officers on security policy and the management of security measures for Parliament House. The board met eight times during the year.

During the reporting period, the Presiding Officers reviewed the oversight and management of security arrangements at Parliament House. This resulted in representation of the AFP on the Security Management Board and the AFP taking responsibility for all security operational matters at Parliament House.

Authorised Assembly Area

The AFP is responsible for managing events on the Authorised Assembly Area at the front of Parliament House. The area is allocated variously to individuals, community groups and organisations to promote their causes and hold events. Under the authorisation signed by the Presiding Officers, the Serjeant-at-Arms and the Usher of the Black Rod are to be notified as soon as is practicable of any protests, other public assemblies, functions or events on the precincts that may disrupt the smooth running of the building or affect the security or decorum of the chambers.

During 2014–15, an extra security overlay was applied to manage protest activities arranged during visits by heads of state.

Security screening

Guests of government and parliament are automatically exempt from security screening on entry to Parliament House. Approvals for any other exemptions are jointly made by the Serjeant-at-Arms and the Usher of the Black Rod. During the year, exemptions were approved for 40 groups or individuals (compared to 16 in 2013–14).

Information and communications technology

The department continued to work within the new ICT service delivery framework, under which DPS provides most of the department's ICT functions. The department represents its interests by participating in a range of advisory and management committees, and through the DPS customer engagement model.

The Joint Management Committee, which comprises senior parliamentary department staff, continued to oversee the service-level agreement and met four times during the reporting period. The Serjeant-at-Arms is the department's representative on the committee.

Software and hardware services

Projects to replace many of the ICT support systems for the Chamber, committees and members' services continued during the year. These systems included:

- the Table Offices Production System (see page 15)
- the Parliamentary Procedural Records System
- the Shared Committee Information Database (see page 33)
- the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office bookings system—the Venue Management System—for school visits and committee room and courtyard bookings.

Work continued on developing the Report Builder template, which will simplify the production of committee reports. Output will be in .xml format that can be repurposed into other formats such as PDF for printing, and HTML and eBook for electronic distribution on the website.

The department continues to use e-Trim to file and manage our records electronically, and opportunities to upgrade and enhance the system are being investigated. During the reporting period, 77 per cent of all files created were e-files (up from 68 per cent during 2013–14), and the number of e-records filed increased by 25 per cent. All new staff receive e-Trim training as part of their induction and tailored one-on-one e-Trim support is provided to existing staff.

Internet and intranet services

Projects to redevelop the departmental and members' intranets commenced in May 2015. The redeveloped intranets are being built on the Sitecore platform and will enable the integration of content from the Shared Committee Information Database and the Parliament of Australia website. A workshop was held with departmental staff to plan the information architecture. Content migration from the previous intranet has commenced and the new intranets are scheduled for deployment in the latter part of 2015.

We continued the project to develop and distribute digital publications through RepsApp using the Adobe Digital Publishing Suite platform. The interactive seating plan continued to be popular, and digital versions of the graduate program and seminar program were released. Three digital editions of the *About the House* magazine were added to the library. Outgoing delegation apps were made available to senators and members via the RepsApp sign-in.

A joint project with DPS to provide outgoing delegation material on a secure web portal commenced. This product will replace the digital publication version of the material. The responsive design will ensure that it is available to travelling members of delegations via Web@Work on registered tablet or smartphone devices. It is due for release before the end of 2015.

Video content continued to be added to our committee websites and our social media channels via the Ooyala platform. The adaptive bitrate streaming technology ensures that the content can be accessed on desktop, iOS and Android devices. Closed-captioning was added for pre-recorded *About the House* television programs.

Printing

The department's in-house printing service produced around 2.4 million impressions in 2014–15 (an increase from 1.3 million in 2013–14). The increase reflected the volume of committee reports printed during the year, in addition to the production of routine chamber documents.

The production of hard-copy committee reports continues to decline as stakeholders take advantage of the department's online committee information.

Parliamentary assistants program

The parliamentary assistants program, managed by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, entered its fifteenth year. Parliamentary assistants are university students who perform the duties of messengerial attendants for an average of 10 hours per week; rosters are planned around student commitments and the requirements of the House.

Six students took part in the program in 2014–15: three were existing assistants, and three were new appointments. The new assistants came from Tasmania, Canberra and Victoria, and all were studying at universities in Canberra. Former parliamentary assistants were also engaged in the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office to work at the front counter and in other areas of members' services.

Members' salaries

All processing of members' salaries and entitlements by the People Strategies Office was in accordance with legislation and administrative decisions. In the 2015 members' survey, 72 per cent of members were extremely or highly satisfied (81 per cent in the 2014 survey), and 95 per cent were satisfied with services in relation to their base salary, electorate allowances and deductions (95 per cent in the 2014 survey). Annual expenditure on members' salaries and other entitlements was \$45.430 million.

Corporate support

The People Strategies Office provided corporate services advice and support to the department and a shared-service payroll service to the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO). In November 2014, the department ceased providing payroll services to the PBO.

Operational performance indicators for finance, human resources and other corporate support services were met, and the department was in compliance with internal and external governance and reporting requirements. Also during the year:

- the department's business continuity network was established and met, and work began on updating office-level business resumption plans for each work group
- leadership training and development programs were implemented for staff at Parliamentary Service Levels 4 and 5 and continued for the Executive.

Related information is detailed in Part 3 of this report.

Improving performance

It was a demanding year for the program component, which carried out its ongoing advisory, operational and project responsibilities in a context of ongoing change and significant financial pressure. Strategies to enhance and sustain performance levels included planning, people management, relationship building, innovation, sound governance arrangements and reviews. Performance was again at a high standard, sustained by the professionalism of staff.

The department continues to work closely with the Department of the Senate, DPS and the AFP on a range of matters and on a range of interdepartmental boards and groups.

Outlook

In 2015–16 the department will continue to provide advice and services of a high standard to support the Speaker, members in Parliament House and the department.

We anticipate that important priorities for the members' services and corporate support program component during the year will include:

- monitoring performance under the memorandum of understanding and related service-level agreement with DPS for the provision of ICT support
- continuing the rollout of the Venue Management System in conjunction with the Department of the Senate and DPS
- completing the first phase of the furniture replacement project and embarking on the recently endorsed second phase
- reviewing departmental performance information and reporting, in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*
- progressing the implementation of e-Trim through the remaining areas of the department
- further developing capability within the program component, including through the documentation of systems and processes and the use of supplementary and backup resources
- drafting and negotiating a new enterprise agreement for departmental staff.

Schools hospitality

The department receives a special appropriation in order to provide modest hospitality to school groups visiting Parliament House. School visits are coordinated by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, working in partnership with the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) and Visitor Services. In 2014–15, the administered appropriation for the schools hospitality program component was \$0.325 million and expenditure (including accrued expenses) was \$0.330 million. Progress against the deliverables and key performance indicator for the component is summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

Performance summary

In 2014–15 there was an increase in the number of school students participating in educational tours of Parliament House, with 120,216 students recorded, up from 113,709 in the previous year. The number of students from the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia decreased, while all other states recorded higher numbers than in the previous financial year (see Table 9).

Table 9 Students visiting Parliament House, by location and year, 2010–11 to 2014–15

Year	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Other	Total
2010–11	2,730	67,715	707	16,411	4,205	1,262	17,458	4,048	62	114,598
2011–12	1,637	66,036	899	17,389	5,059	1,676	17,312	4,706	80	114,794
2012–13	1,657	67,955	881	16,395	4,742	1,471	17,245	5,064	241	115,651
2013–14	1,859	62,597	835	18,193	5,390	1,581	17,766	5,488	–	113,709
2014–15	2,158	67,385	819	19,489	5,061	1,750	18,531	5,023	–	120,216

All visiting students participated in a guided tour and visited both chambers. Eighty-four per cent (100,254) received hospitality and 78 per cent (90,132) participated in the PEO program (see pages 23–5 for more information on the PEO's activities).

Improving performance

In previous years, school bookings were only taken for the next financial year from 1 July of that year. From July 2015, bookings will be taken on a rolling basis for the following two calendar years. This process was developed in conjunction with stakeholders to bring our booking schedule into line with other designated agencies on the visits program.

Outlook

By 30 June 2015, we had already booked 103,380 students from 1,578 schools for the following 12 months. Last year at this time we had 27,940 students booked from 732 schools. The large increase is a result of our bookings being undertaken one year in advance.