



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Annual Report 2019–2020

Report No. 20

House of Representatives

**Standing Committee on
Appropriations and Administration**

October 2020
Canberra

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Membership of the Committee — 46th Parliament

Chair Hon Tony Smith MP (Speaker)

Deputy Chair Ms Julie Owens MP

Members Mr John Alexander OAM MP

Hon Kevin Andrews MP

Ms Libby Coker MP

Mr Vince Connelly MP

Mr Chris Hayes MP

Mr Rob Mitchell MP

Mr Bert van Manen MP

Secretary Mr James Catchpole

Research officer Ms Kate Moore



1. Annual Report 2019–2020

The Committee

- 1.1 The Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration, appointed under standing order 222A considers estimates of the funding required for the operation of the Department of the House of Representatives for each year. The Committee provides its estimates of amounts for inclusion in the appropriation and supply bills for the department to the Speaker for presentation to the House and transmission to the Minister for Finance.
- 1.2 The Committee also considers proposals for changes to the administration of the Department of the House of Representatives or variations to services provided by the Department; other matters of finance or services as may be referred to it by the Speaker or the House; the administration and funding of security measures affecting the House; and proposals for works in the parliamentary precincts that are subject to parliamentary approval. The Committee reports on these matters to the Speaker or the House as appropriate.
- 1.3 The Committee may confer with the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations, Staffing and Security to consider estimates of the funding required for the operation of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) each year. The Committee may provide to the Speaker for presentation to the House and transmission to the Minister for Finance, estimates of amounts for inclusion in appropriation and supply bills for DPS. The two committees did not confer in this manner in 2019–20
- 1.4 On 19 September 2019, the House amended standing order 222A to enable the Committee to consider and report to the House on matters relating to the provision of facilities in Parliament House affecting the House, its committees or its Members (SO 222A(a)(vi)).

- 1.5 Standing order 222A(a)(vii) requires the Committee to make an annual report to the House on its operations, the subject of this report being the reporting period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Reports

- 1.6 In 2019-2020, the Committee tabled one report:
- Report No. 18 — Annual Report 2018–2019.

Meetings of the Committee of the 46th Parliament

- 1.7 The Committee held its first meeting of the 46th Parliament in July 2019. During the reporting period the Committee met on five occasions:
- 31 July 2019
 - 27 November 2019
 - 4 March 2020
 - 13 May 2020
 - 10 June 2020.
- 1.8 The following were among the matters considered at meetings during the year:
- the Electronic Access Control System
 - the Private Area Access Policy
 - Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) activity logs
 - ICT Security, with reference to the security of the Parliamentary Computing Network and the roll out of Microsoft 365
 - the capital works program at Parliament House.

Electronic Access Control System and Private Area Access Policy

- 1.9 The Committee noted at its first meeting that the Electronic Access Control System (EACS), which provides electronic swipe access to suites and other areas, has been installed for all Members' suites, although the Senate had not agreed at that time to it being rolled out to Senators' suites. The administration of EACS was intended to be regulated in a compliance framework established as part of a wider Australian Parliament House Private Area Access Policy ('the Access Policy'). However, the draft Access Policy was not able to be finalised before the rollout of EACS, as EACS itself and the Access Policy were subject to continuing review by the Senate. Of specific concern was the control of access to EACS data and its retention.
- 1.10 Noting disagreements over the draft Access Policy, the Committee resolved in July 2019 that members of the Committee, in conjunction with members of the Senate Standing Committee of Privileges, should meet out of session to clarify concerns over the Access Policy and make recommendations to the Presiding Officers. The Committee also continued to provide advice directly to the Speaker throughout the year on controls for the access and release of EACS generated data.
- 1.11 The deliberations of members of both committees and the efforts of the Presiding Officers led to a specific EACS Code of Practice to ensure that EACS was operating within a framework that governed the creation, storage, use and access, release and destruction of EACS data that might engage parliamentary privilege. This was signed in June 2020 by the Presiding Officers and the EACS Code of Practice is now in operation. The Committee continues to maintain an interest in finalisation of the wider Access Policy.

CCTV Code of Practice

- 1.12 The Committee has overseen the administration of the CCTV network at Parliament House and the application of the associated CCTV Code of Practice. As with EACS, the CCTV system generates and stores data and the Committee maintains oversight of the storage and access protocols for the data. Pursuant to clause 15.6 of the CCTV Code of Practice, the Speaker provides the Committee with:

- quarterly reports detailing the nature of requests for access and the release of CCTV footage
 - reports on any alleged breaches of the code or complaints about the operation of the CCTV system, and
 - copies of any review of the code or of compliance with the code.
- 1.13 The Committee has reviewed six quarterly reports since the adoption of the Code of Practice and remains confident that the CCTV system is being administered in compliance with the terms of the CCTV Code of Practice.
- 1.14 The Committee also provided advice to the Speaker in November 2019 on an external review commissioned by the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) into its own compliance with the operating provisions of the Code of Practice. The Committee was pleased to note that a former Clerk of the House was providing procedural advice to the review as it checks that the Code has been administered in such a way that it has not threatened the protections afforded to parliamentarians by parliamentary privilege. The review is expected to report in late 2020.

ICT Security

- 1.15 The Committee was kept informed of advances in the security of the Parliamentary Computing Network (PCN) and of attempts to penetrate the network. The Committee was also interested in the roll out of Windows 10/Microsoft 365 across the PCN and the productivity and security potential of the new platform for Members and other PCN users.

Capital Works

- 1.16 DPS is managing a number of major capital works projects across Parliament House. The Committee was briefed about the upgrade of the parliamentary kitchens, the auxiliary power system, glass linkway reglazing and the rollout of the distributed antenna system to improve mobile phone coverage within the building. The Committee has looked forward to the completion of these projects, which should improve the amenity and function of Parliament House.

Conclusion

- 1.17 The Committee has worked at an increased tempo during the reporting period, primarily because of regular briefings on security matters at Parliament House, including on the security of the PCN. The Committee has welcomed the briefings and appreciates the willingness of the Speaker to keep the Committee informed about developments and to seek its advice in decision making.

Hon Tony Smith MP
Chair
October 2020