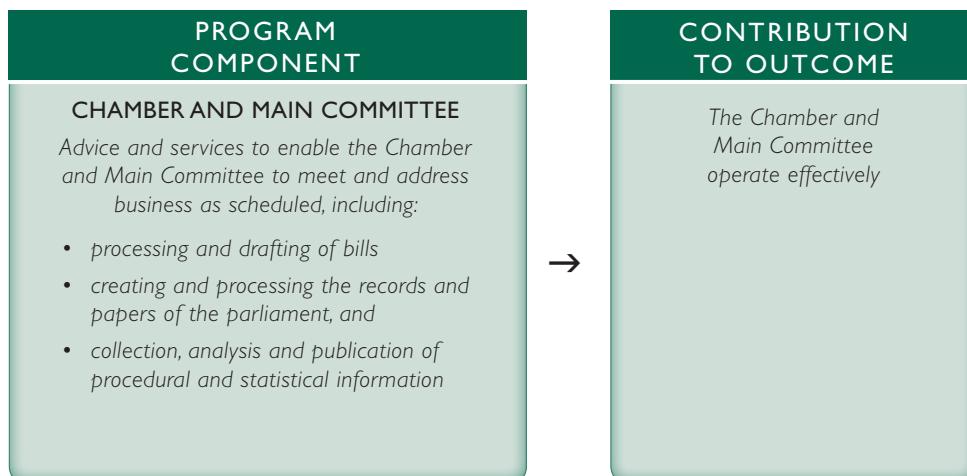# PERFORMANCE

- Chamber and Main Committee
- Community awareness
- Committee services
- Interparliamentary relations
- Members' services

CHAMBER AND MAIN COMMITTEE

PROGRAM COMPONENT	CONTRIBUTION TO OUTCOME
CHAMBER AND MAIN COMMITTEE *Advice and services to enable the Chamber and Main Committee to meet and address business as scheduled, including:* • *processing and drafting of bills* • *creating and processing the records and papers of the parliament, and* • *collection, analysis and publication of procedural and statistical information*	*The Chamber and Main Committee operate effectively*

→

The work of the Chamber and Main Committee program component is delivered primarily through the Clerk's Office, the Chamber Research Office and the Table Office. Other departmental areas also contribute as required.

During the year, we provided effective secretariat and advisory support for the Chamber and Main Committee of the House of Representatives. Our main functions were 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

• undertake procedural and parliamentary research and publish statistical information on the business of the House, and

• provide secretariat support to certain domestic committees.

In 2009–10, the budget allocation for the component was $4.4 million and expenditure was $4.0 million. The financial resources for the component are summarised in Appendix 2; staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 11.

Performance summary

The results of the department's annual survey of members (see Appendix 12) indicated high levels of satisfaction with our performance, consistent with the findings of earlier surveys. All respondents were satisfied with our advice and support, with 'extreme' or 'high' satisfaction reported as follows:

• advice and services received from the Clerks-at-the-Table in the Chamber and Main Committee—89 per cent (95 per cent in 2008–09)

• advice and services received from other staff in relation to Chamber and Main Committee duties—83 per cent (91 per cent in 2008–09)

• quality and availability of procedural and statistical publications and support in obtaining such information—67 per cent (77 per cent in 2008–09).

We continued to achieve high levels of performance as measured against key performance indicators and service standards. We met targets set in the business plan and performed well against budget. Appendix 1 provides a summary of performance information.

The focus of the component's work is supporting the sittings of the House of Representatives and meetings of the Main Committee. Quantitative information on the sittings of the House and meetings of the Main Committee in 2009–10 and the previous year is shown in Table 1.

In 2009–10, a final full year of the parliamentary cycle, sitting days totalled sixty-seven. This represented a reduction of five days from the preceding year (7 per cent) and a reduction of four days (6 per cent) by comparison with the equivalent final-cycle year (2006–07) in the previous parliament. There was also a reduction (12 per cent) in meeting hours of the Chamber and Main Committee by comparison with 2008–09 and, by contrast, a small increase (1 per cent) by comparison with 2006–07. Legislative activity continued at a medium to high level during the period, requiring corresponding support from the department.

Further information on the business of the House and the Main Committee is in Appendix 3 and in the department's publication *Work of the Session* (available on the Parliament of Australia website).

Advice on practice and procedures

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

Our oral and written advice ranged from immediate support for the Speaker, ministers, shadow ministers and others during proceedings to detailed written advice. Subjects included the application of the standing orders and practice of the House, procedural options for the conduct of business, the admissibility of amendments to legislation, the requirements of the Constitution and standing orders in respect of financial legislation, legal obligations of members, privilege matters and requirements of the House in respect of the registration of members' interests.

Feedback from the Speaker and members indicated a high level of satisfaction with this role.

PERFORMANCE CHAMBER AND MAIN COMMITTEE

Table 1 Performance summary, Chamber and Main Committee, 2008–09 and 2009–10

Aspect of performance	Result	
	2008–09	2009–10
Number of sittings of the House	72	67
Number of meetings of the Main Committee	65	55
Hours of sittings of the House[a]	682	614
Hours of meeting of the Main Committee[a]	267	222
Number of bills introduced	210	236
Number of bills passed both Houses and assented to[b]	148	178

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

Programming and coordination of business

Throughout 2009–10, we provided advice and services to facilitate sittings of the House, including:

- programming and procedural advice to ministers, shadow ministers, party whips, other members, their staff and others
- the preparation and publication each sitting day of:

    – the *Notice Paper*—a document listing all unresolved business before the House in proposed order of consideration

    – the *Daily Program* (also known as 'the Blue')—an informal agenda for the day, and

    – procedural scripts for all items of business for use in the Chamber

- the provision of Serjeants and attendants for sittings of the House and meetings of the Main Committee to oversee ceremonial and security arrangements and ensure that sittings can be conducted in an appropriate environment and that chamber papers are made available

- processing members' questions in writing to ministers, including editing for compliance with the standing orders, publication in the *Notice Paper* for the next day of sitting, and managing answers to questions

- providing a broadcasting captioning service for the televised and webcast proceedings of the House and Main Committee, and

- preparation of *This Week in the House*, a weekly online forecast of expected business for the House, and its counterpart document, *Last Week in the House*.

Table 2 provides details of the number of questions in writing to ministers dealt with by the House of Representatives for the period 2004–05 to 2009–10. The number of questions in writing in the Forty-second Parliament was markedly lower than in the Forty-first Parliament.

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

- government business (e.g. legislation)
- private members' business (e.g. a motion proposed by an individual member), and
- House business (matters potentially involving all members—e.g. question time, debate on committee reports or privilege matters).

A longitudinal view of the amount of time the House (Main Chamber and Main Committee inclusive) has devoted to each of these types of business is shown in Figure 5. In 2010, there was a slight reduction in the proportion of time allocated to government business and business of the House and a corresponding increase in private members' business.

Table 2 Questions in writing to ministers and answers to questions in writing, 2005–06 to 2009–10

|	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08 [c]	2008–09	2009–10
Questions in writing [a]	1,904	2,304	437	642	571
Questions answered [b]	1,233	1,386	177	497	444

Note: The figures for questions in writing for 2006–07, 2007–08 and 2008–09, and for questions answered in 2005–06 and 2006–07, have been revised since publication of the department's 2008–09 annual report.
a Net of questions withdrawn.
b The responsibility for responding to questions in writing rests with the individual ministers to whom the questions are put.
c Election year.

Figure 5 Government and private members' business and business of the House
(Chamber and Main Committee)
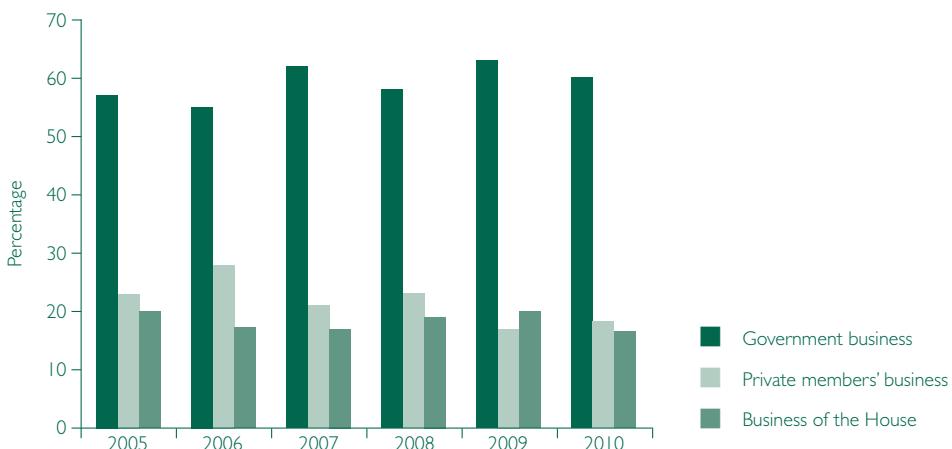
Processing and drafting of bills

Legislation

As in previous years, our support for the legislative process in 2009–10 included the following:

- receipt from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, and custody under embargo, of bills before their introduction

- provision to ministers of bills for introduction, and, after introduction, to all members in the Chamber

- uploading of bills, explanatory memoranda and proposed amendments to the Parliament of Australia website via ParlInfo Search, and provision of an inquiry counter 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

- provision of a legislative drafting service for private members

- preparation and delivery of messages to the Senate—259 messages relating to the passage of bills in 2009–10

(230 in 2008–09) and 15 other messages (19 in 2008–09), and

- preparation and issue each sitting day of a *Daily Bills List*, providing cumulative information on the status of all bills before the parliament or assented to in the current calendar year.

The system for the electronic storage, management and publication of bills implemented in late 2008 continues to provide a much-improved service. As noted last year, the system is more robust than its predecessor and enables efficiencies in the processing of bills. All 'versions' of bills are now retained in the system and the full legislative history of a bill is thus available to users. Information on the status of bills in the legislative process is also readily available. There was a total of 6,423,042 queries of the bills and legislation collection available on the internet during the year (4,531,766 in 2008–09). This represented 21 per cent (36 per cent in 2008–09) of the queries through ParlInfo Search, although these figures may be affected by the denial of service attacks on the parliament's website in early 2010. Work on including bills from earlier parliaments in the electronic storage system is ongoing.

Legislative workload

During the year, 236 bills were introduced (210 in 2008–09), of which 228 were initiated in the House of Representatives and 8 were received from the Senate; 178 bills passed both Houses (148 in 2008–09), of which 173 were initiated in the House of Representatives (139 in 2008–09) and 5 in the Senate (9 in 2008–09).

In 2009–10, the House passed 215 bills (187 in 2008–09). This represented 3.2 bills on average each sitting day compared with 2.6 bills on average passed in the previous year. The House amended 12.6 per cent of the bills it passed (9.6 per cent in 2008–09).

The House amended 27 bills that were initiated in the House (16 in 2008–09). 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. In addition, the House agreed to Senate amendments and/or made amendments requested by the Senate, to 37 House bills (28 in 2008–09), with further processing by the office before the bills were presented, as assent prints, to the Governor-General for assent.

The House did not amend any bills initiated in the Senate (1 in 2008–09).

Table 3 Number of bills introduced in the House, and number of bills assented to, 2005–06 to 2009–10

	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08[b]	2008–09	2009–10
Bills introduced	162	218	167	210	236
Bills assented to[a]	154	207	142	148	178

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

The Clerk of the House with the department's participants in the 2009 Parliamentary Law, Practice and Procedure course conducted by the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table, 9 June 2010.

In brief, the Table Office prepared 24 third reading prints (13 in 2008–09) and 173 assent prints (139 in 2008–09). All documents accurately reflected the decisions of the Houses and were processed promptly, and all deadlines were met.

Legislative drafting

The department drafts bills, amendments and second reading (in principle) amendments for private members. It also ensures that these documents comply with the Constitution and the standing orders. Further, the department prepares bills and amendments in correct form and arranges copies for circulation. Table 4 provides chamber statistics for private members' legislation. This does not reflect all of the department's work in this area, as some drafted material is not introduced. The table shows some decrease in the level of activity of the Forty-second Parliament (2008 onwards) compared with that of the Forty-first Parliament (2004 to 2007).

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* are prepared from the *Votes Officer's Minutes*, an electronic record of the proceedings of the House and the Main Committee compiled progressively throughout a sitting day, enabling anyone with access to the internet to follow events in the House and Main Committee as they occur. Internal and external clients continued to provide positive feedback on this service.

Documents

During the year, we processed all documents presented to the House and recorded their details in the *Votes and Proceedings* and the *Index of Papers Presented to the Parliament*. We made copies available to members and their staff and others, principally in Parliament House, in response to requests, including through an online daily document-ordering system. The original documents were added to the records of the House, which we continued to maintain (see 'House records' below). We reduced our requirements for tabling stock from sixty to forty copies.

In 2009–10, 5,681 documents were presented to the House (6,519 in 2008–09), a decrease of 13 per cent. The reduction in stock copies of documents over the years and the consequent reduction in the workload of our basement records manager were reported last year. The job, which in 2008–09 was made part time rather than full time, was absorbed into the duties of other staff during the year, with resulting savings.

The preparation of the cumulative *Index of Papers Presented to the Parliament* for the Forty-first Parliament was completed.

As reported last year, the review of the Legislative Instruments Act, released in May 2009, recommended that the Attorney-General's Department and the Table Office of each House actively pursue the potential for efficiencies through the active sharing

Table 4 Private members' bills introduced and amendments moved, 2005–06 to 2009–10

	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08 [b]	2008–09	2009–10
Bills introduced	15	11	4	6	15
Second reading amendments moved [a]	62	63	42	10	12
Consideration in detail amendments moved [a]	186	188	36	85	134

a Includes Main Committee.
b Election year.

of information. This approach was strongly advocated by the department in its submission to the review. While the department has developed an electronic interface between the Attorney-General's Department's Federal Register of Legislative Instruments and the Table Office documents database, consistent formatting of source information is needed to achieve efficiencies in reporting. The department met during the year with representatives of the Office of Legislative Drafting and Publishing to continue dialogue on electronic sharing of information in the context of the development of ComLaw II. The proposed redevelopment of the Table Office document production system will also have a significant impact in this area.

In conjunction with the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services, a Tabled Papers Register was developed. The register was made publicly available on the Parliament of Australia website in April 2010 through ParlInfo Search. It provides information on all documents presented to parliament, including the date of presentation, the title, and whether the document is part of the Parliamentary Papers Series. The register was developed through an interface with the Table Office documents database. Although it currently does not contain, or link to, electronic copies of documents, provision has been made to enable this to occur. The development provides a platform to address a suggestion of the Australian National Audit Office that a central digital repository be considered to improve the online availability of tabled documents.

To meet the needs of clients, each sitting day the Table Office prepares and issues in electronic and hard-copy form a *Disallowable Instruments List*. The list provides details of all instruments presented to the House that are subject to disallowance, by number of sitting days remaining for a notice of disallowance to be lodged.

Parliamentary Papers Series

The Parliamentary Papers Series consists of documents of a substantial nature presented to the parliament. This year, the 2008 series was completed for distribution to recipients. In May 2010, the Joint Committee on Publications undertook an inquiry into the electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series. The Clerk made a submission to the inquiry, recommending that the parliamentary departments develop a business case for a central digital repository for parliamentary papers and certain other tabled documents, with electronic versions of documents to be provided by agencies. The committee's report was presented in June and recommended that an electronic Parliamentary Paper Series be developed, with a repository based in the parliament and managed by the Chamber departments. The committee also recommended that a business case be developed to examine issues relating to maintenance of election records and long-term archival requirements, as well as the scope of the repository and its cost. The committee recommended that the repository be accessible by early 2011.

House records

The department is responsible for the custody and preservation of, and 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 a basement archive area at Parliament House.

Following the completion of a five-year project to relocate House records into archival-quality containers, and the implementation of preventive conservation measures for the records during the previous year, a project to improve the archive storage area and reduce potential risks arising from building systems and infrastructure was completed during the year. The works included installation of a dedicated air-handling system to maintain air quality, humidity and temperature control to around 20°C and risk-abatement measures

for the hydraulic piping. The project ensures that the archive storage area meets document preservation standards, with low risk of damage to records from pipe malfunction.

The anticipated loan, on a temporary basis, of the 1963 Yirrkala bark petitions to the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, referred to in last year's report, did not proceed. However, interest in the petitions, both national and international, continues, with a steady flow of requests to reproduce images of the petitions in exhibitions and publications

Pictorial collection

The Chamber Research Office, in cooperation with the department's Information Systems and Publishing Office, has recently begun a project to upgrade the storage and cataloguing of the department's extensive pictorial collection. The collection includes photographs, transparencies, slides, digital images, DVDs and videos. The project will improve the collection's compliance with records management standards and enable greater access to the collection for use in House activities and publications.
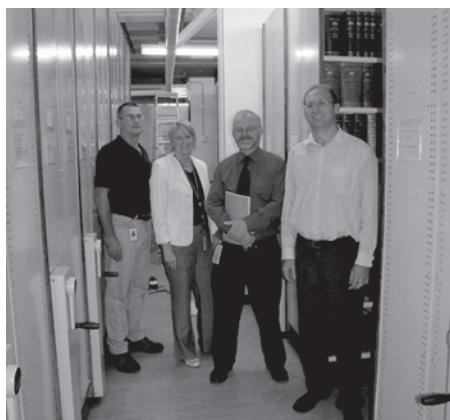
Departmental staff and project manager David Rayner, Department of Parliamentary Services, in the House's upgraded archives.

Petitions

Table 5 provides details of petitions presented to the House, and the number of signatories, for the past five years. The reduction in the number of petitions presented in recent years can be partly attributed to a change in the way petitions are counted. From its establishment in February 2008, the Committee on Petitions has combined petitions in the same terms received at the same time for purposes of presentation.

Research

The Chamber Research Office continued to collect, store, analyse and publish a range of procedural and statistical information. The office provided:

- advice, or assistance with advice, to the Speaker and other members on the application of the standing orders and precedents in applying the standing orders and other House practices, and support to the Committee on Procedure

- advice and publications in relation to statistics of legislation and House practices

- advice and publications regarding precedents and procedural records, and

- information to the public and to other parliaments on how the House operates.

Feedback from the Speaker, members and the public on the provision of procedural and statistical services and advice by the Chamber Research Office continued to be very positive.

The Chamber Research Office also produced an online procedural knowledge induction kit for use by departmental staff in developing their procedural knowledge of the House of Representatives.

Table 5 Petitions and signatories to petitions, 2005–06 to 2009–10

	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08[a]	2008–09	2009–10
Number of petitions presented	244	305	150	141	163
Number of signatories	272,662	204,509	104,903	234,622	270,964

a Election year.

The department continued its input to the Australian National University's Parliamentary Studies Centre. Contributions included submission of research papers drafted by departmental staff, as well as support for the centre's workshop, 'Benchmarking Parliamentary Performance', which was held at Parliament House in November 2009. Support for the centre's 'Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions' project is carried out in cooperation with colleagues from the Department of the Senate and the Parliamentary Library.

Publications

The Chamber Research Office is responsible for the maintenance, publication and distribution of the standing orders. An insert to the *Standing and Sessional Orders* as at 1 December 2008 was produced in August 2009 to reflect amendments to standing orders 192 and 193. An updated insert was produced in June 2010 to reflect an amendment to standing order 4 relating to an Indigenous ceremony of welcome at the first meeting of a new parliament.

Several publications produced by the office were updated, including the department's Infosheets series and the *Facts and Figures* booklet. Work continued on the next edition of *House of Representatives Practice*, a major reference work for the parliament. The edited text of the sixth edition is nearing finalisation.

The office continued to produce two publications detailing procedural issues of note, generally following each sitting fortnight. The *Procedural Digest*, a subject-based record of proceedings, is available on the Parliament of Australia website, while the *Procedural Extracts*, derived from a precedents database, have a more restricted distribution, primarily to internal users. The office also continued to produce the *Statistical Digest,* which is available online and provides details of particular proceedings of the House. It is published with the same frequency as the *Procedural Digest* and supplements the six-monthly publication *Work of the Session*, which is also available online.

Parliamentary committees

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

During the year, the committees held a total of 56 meetings (66 in 2008–09) for 44 hours (49.5 hours in 2008–09) and produced 17 reports (16 in 2008–09). Details of meetings and reports are set out in Appendixes 3 and 4.

Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests

The committee meet six times during the reporting period and dealt with two major matters.

In September 2009, the committee presented to the House a report recommending that the House adopt procedures for the committee and the House in relation to the consideration of privilege matters to provide natural justice and procedural fairness. This matter had been under consideration for some time and the procedures represent a significant development in the consideration of privilege matters by the committee and the House.

The House resolved to adopt the proposed procedures on 25 November 2009.

In November 2009, the committee presented a report to outline to members the committee's views on the desirability of publishing the details of members' interests on the Parliament of Australia website and to advise members of a specific proposal for implementation. Subsequently the committee reported to the House advising that, from the commencement of the Forty-third Parliament, an online register of members' interests will be implemented.

Standing Committee on Petitions

The committee continued its work of receiving and processing petitions. Public hearings were held in Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney, at which discussions on selected petitions were held with petitioners, representatives from government departments and other interested parties.

The committee presented its report on electronic petitioning in November 2009. The report recommends that a system for receiving and hosting electronic petitions be established by the House and managed by the Committee on Petitions. The report further recommends, in relation to implementing such a system, that arrangements be made to utilise the software supporting the Queensland Parliament's electronic petitioning system, including the signature verification methods that the Queensland system currently employs. If implemented, an electronic petitioning system would operate alongside the traditional paper petitioning practice.

The committee presented the report of its inquiry into the arrangements for petitions, *The work of the first Petitions Committee: 2008–2010*, in June 2010. Terms of reference for the inquiry required the committee to examine its role and operations, and the effectiveness of the standing and sessional orders that relate to petitions, some of which were put in place to underwrite the new arrangements. The committee recommended that current sessional orders 207 and 209 on petitions be made permanent.

Standing Committee on Procedure

The committee presented two reports in the period. *The display of articles: An examination of the practices of the House of Representatives* was tabled in October 2009. The report was initiated following a request from the Speaker seeking the committee's assistance in assessing the adequacy and consistency of the practices of the House in relation to the use of 'props' by members.

The committee also concluded its inquiry into the effectiveness of the House committee system. Its report, titled *Building a modern committee system: An inquiry into the effectiveness of the House committee system*, was presented in June 2010. See also page 35.

The committee continued with its inquiries into the maintenance of standing and sessional orders, and the conduct of the business of the House.

Standing Committee on Publications

The committee met twice in 2009–10, and met together with the Senate Publications Committee on another seven occasions. The committee presented nine reports recommending which documents presented to parliament should be included in the Parliamentary Papers Series. All reports were agreed to.

As mentioned, the committee, together with the Senate Publications Committee, conducted an inquiry into the electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series and presented its report on 24 June 2010.

Table 6 Committees supported by Chamber and Main Committee component, 2009–10

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

Procedural training

Emphasis continued on developing staff knowledge and skills in the application of parliamentary law, practice and procedure through a number of mechanisms, including:

- on-the-job training and experience

- parliamentary and departmental briefing sessions

- pre-sitting briefings for rostered Clerks-at-the-Table each sitting day

- regular sitting debriefs following each sitting week or fortnight, focusing on matters of procedural interest. The sessions are facilitated by the Director, Programming, and a record is published on the departmental intranet

- 'shadowing' opportunities, enabling staff outside the Table Office to learn chamber support duties on sitting nights. 'Shadows' provide important back-up capability in the event of staffing absences or turnover

- opportunities to draft papers, including for the Parliamentary Studies Centre, and deliver presentations, and

- for a small number of staff, participation in the annual course in Parliamentary Law, Practice and Procedure under the auspices of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table, and parliamentary seminars and conferences.

The department held training sessions for Clerks-at-the-Table and Deputy Clerks-at-the-Table on the use of the eComPress software version of *House of Representatives Practice*. It is important to be able to locate material rapidly during proceedings in the Chamber, and the software provides sophisticated search, electronic messaging and document notation capability.

Information technology

Two important achievements during the year were the implementation of improved technology for the Speaker and the Clerks-at-the-Table in the House of Representatives Chamber (see also page 43) and the development of a Tabled Papers Register (see page 18). With the installation of monitors in the Speaker's desk in the Chamber, the occupant of the chair now has access to the parliamentary computing network and the television broadcast, and also has two-way communication with the Clerks-at-the-Table. The computers supporting the monitors for the Speaker and the Clerks are located outside the Chamber, allowing IT problems to be rectified during proceedings.

The Clerk Assistant (Table) established an internal working group and a draft business case was subsequently prepared, in conjunction with the Department of the Senate, for redevelopment of the document production system and associated databases. In May, the Chamber Research and Table offices held a successful round-table brainstorming session to identify efficiencies and opportunities for improvement to include in the redevelopment. The department was fortunate to have as facilitator for the session a former departmental staff member who was the project officer for the development of the initial system, Ms Marion Ryan. It is planned to allocate staff to this project on a full-time basis from July 2010, and to call for tenders in 2011.

The Table Office business continuity plan was tested using a scenario developed with the assistance of a staff member from the Department of Parliamentary Services. The desktop exercise with Table Office and departmental IT staff was facilitated in-house. The exercise confirmed that the plan provides a useful framework to ensure continuity of service in the event of disruption to the parliamentary computing network. As a result of the exercise, staff became more aware of the framework, and a number of useful changes to the plan were made. The back-up hard drives for the document production system were separately tested and proven fit for purpose.

Further work was done with the Legislative Assembly, South Australia, to redevelop the department's Procedural Records System.

The aim is to provide a system that will meet the requirements of, and provide a value-for-money solution for, each House. This project may provide a model for further cross-jurisdictional work in future, with benefits for all parties involved.

Considerable support was also provided for the parliamentary project to redevelop the Parliament of Australia website, with emphasis on material relating to the Chamber and Main Committee of the House.

Improving performance

The focus of our work in 2009–10 continued to be on service delivery and capability development, with some enhanced IT capability and additional staffing flexibility. Minor staffing efficiencies were achieved, as mentioned, and care was taken to avoid any unnecessary expenditure, including through use of in-house rather than contract resources. Some savings were again achieved for agencies by further reduction of the stock requirements for documents presented to the House.

The emphasis on training and development outlined in previous reports continued during the year, as did planning, people management and evaluation strategies. Sustained high levels of performance were achieved.
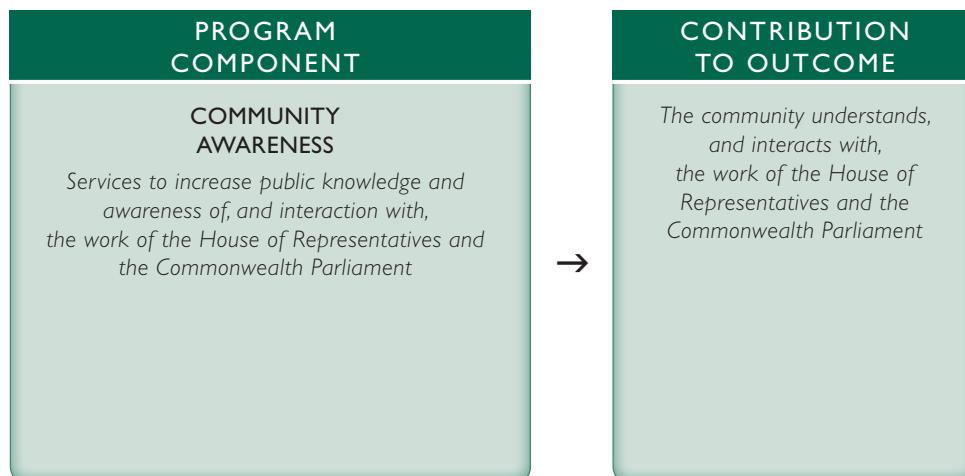
Outlook

In 2010–11, the department will continue providing advice and services of a high standard to support the Chamber and Main Committee of the House of Representatives. It will be an election year and it is anticipated that the level of direct support activity will be lower than for the previous year, reflecting a likely reduction in the number of sitting weeks of the House.

The redevelopment of the document production system will be a major priority during the year. The system is used to produce all documents supporting sittings of the House, and the project will need to involve all staff in the Table Office. The aim will be to implement a system that takes the chamber support function forward for the next decade and

achieves more effective and efficient modes of operation. This will include the capability to support an electronic Chamber, and a new generation of members. The redevelopment of the Procedural Records System will also receive attention, with the aim being to finalise the project. The implementation of the new Parliament of Australia website will involve work to optimise the value of the new site and achieve efficiencies where possible.

Following the dissolution of the House for the general election, end-of-parliament tasks, including compilation of the bills volumes (comprising all bills, amendments and explanatory memoranda) for the Forty-second Parliament, and the *Votes and Proceedings* for that parliament, will be addressed. There will also be preparation for the Forty-third Parliament, including arrangements for the opening of the parliament. A range of publications and presentation material will be reviewed and revised as necessary. The aim will be to position the chamber support function for the future.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

PROGRAM COMPONENT
COMMUNITY AWARENESS
Services to increase public knowledge and awareness of, and interaction with, the work of the House of Representatives and the Commonwealth Parliament

→

CONTRIBUTION TO OUTCOME
The community understands, and interacts with, the work of the House of Representatives and the Commonwealth Parliament

Engaging the community with the work of the House of Representatives and its committees is an important focus of the department. The House's work benefits from public input, and better community understanding of the workings of parliament contributes to the health of our democracy.

Through a range of multimedia products and services, the department's Liaison and Projects Office works with other areas of the department to inform the community about the House and encourage community participation in its work.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office also plays a major role in promoting community awareness. It maintains several databases to facilitate the dissemination of information to the public and to encourage community participation in the proceedings of the House. The office oversees security arrangements for the Chamber, the Main Committee and all House of Representatives committee rooms, and plays a vital role in liaising with and coordinating other offices across the parliament in support of visitor access to parliamentary proceedings.

Community awareness activities recorded an expenditure of $1.5 million for 2009–10, against a budget allocation of $2.0 million. The financial resources for the component are summarised in Appendix 2; staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 11.

Performance summary

The department's community outreach products and services were in high demand throughout the year. The department received much positive feedback from the community on the information made available through printed and electronic media. The department continued to develop its multimedia outreach services to ensure its products remained up to date and in tune with modern communication trends.

Schools can bring their students to visit Parliament House and participate in the schools visits program. As was the case last year, the number of students visiting under this program increased, maintaining the trend of growing student visitor numbers. Statistics are given below under 'Public visits to the House'.

Community liaison

Print and electronic media

The *About the House* magazine is a flagship publication that reports on the work of the House of Representatives and its committees. The December 2009 edition marked the magazine's tenth anniversary, and in May 2010 the fortieth issue of the magazine was published. The department also produces the *About the House* television program, which is broadcast regularly on Sky News and Australia's Public Affairs Channel (A-PAC).

Budgetary pressures and the parliamentary cycle heading into an election meant that only three issues of the magazine were published this year instead of the usual four. A small amount of advertising was included to help cover some of the production costs. Costs were also contained by reducing the number of printed copies and by sourcing photographs from more cost-effective providers.

Public feedback on the magazine remained very positive, with many emails, letters and phone calls praising the publication. The following comments from readers are indicative of the feedback received during the year:

> 'The range of subjects and the quality of the writing are consistently high. I value the editorial tone of objective authority that is in sharp contrast to other media sources, both public and privately owned.'

> 'Your *About the House* magazine is increasingly useful, informative and, dare I say, even essential reading (on contemporary issues).'

A survey of the magazine's readership inviting feedback was included with the May 2010 edition and was also made available online. A similar survey was conducted in September 2007. The May 2010 survey included questions on the content and layout of the magazine, and sought public opinion on whether the magazine should move towards online publication. As at 30 June 2010, more than 1,600 completed survey forms had been received. An initial analysis of results shows a very high satisfaction level with the content and layout of the magazine. Readers have also indicated a strong preference for receiving a printed copy of the magazine rather than reading it online. As the survey is ongoing, final results will be reported in next year's annual report.

Extended interviews conducted for the television program were included as video items on committee web pages. Those interviews featured people who made submissions to committee inquiries and who appeared as witnesses at committee hearings. This provided an additional way to promote the work of committees and public engagement with that work.

The email alert service, which provides regular updates on committee investigations, remained a popular and effective way to publicise the work of parliamentary committees. More than 3,200 people and organisations subscribe to the free service, including more than 1,200 media representatives.

Seminars and presentations

Eleven seminars with 296 attendees were conducted on the processes and work of the House of Representatives (compared with eleven seminars with 319 attendees in 2008–09). This year's seminars included four that were requested by individual Commonwealth agencies and a private sector organisation. Public servants continued to be the main audience for the seminars. Evaluation forms completed by attendees indicated a high level of satisfaction with each of the seminars.

Five university lectures were presented under the House Calls program. The Speaker and Clerk delivered two lectures at the University of Tasmania and lectures at Newcastle University, the University of Queensland and Murdoch University. Feedback on the lectures was positive, with lecturers and students indicating that they value the opportunity to hear presentations on and ask questions about the realities of working in the House of Representatives.

Projects and events

The 'Meet your MP' touch-screen kiosk was launched in October 2009. Located in one of the key public display areas of Parliament House, the kiosk provides visitors to the building with a range of information about the 150 members of the House of Representatives, including biographical and electorate information, photographs of members undertaking their duties, and video messages. It provides a much-needed boost to public displays at Parliament House.

The public displays had been reviewed by an interdepartmental working group, which completed its report in 2008–09. In September 2009 that report was forwarded to the Presiding Officers for their consideration. The Presiding Officers agreed to the development of a management structure to review relevant coordination processes and policies. They also agreed to the establishment of an implementation team to commence work on those recommendations of the working group that can be achieved from within existing resources. Departmental staff are involved in both aspects of this work.

Departmental staff are also involved with preparations for the Parliament House Open Day to be held on 18 September 2010. An interdepartmental working group, chaired by the Department of the Senate, is coordinating the Open Day.

Parliamentary assistants program

The department continued its program of recruiting university students in the Australian Capital Territory to work as parliamentary assistants. The program combines elements of educational, employment and outreach programs (see page 44 for more detail).

Public visits to the House

Public visits to observe proceedings

As in previous years, a large number of visitors booked seats in the galleries to observe proceedings: a total of 93,870 visitors viewed proceedings during the year. Question time bookings continued to be much in demand. There were several large bookings for question time, including 250 seats for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation – Kids in the House program. Peak times for gallery attendances other than question time were

The Speaker, Mr Harry Jenkins MP, and Members of Parliament at the launch of the 'Meet your MP' touch screen kiosk in October 2009.

the presentation of the Budget and the Budget reply on 11 and 13 May 2010, respectively, and the address to the Australian Parliament by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, His Excellency Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, on 10 March 2010.

In the first week of the spring sittings after the winter break (11–13 August 2009), over 6,000 people were recorded entering the galleries. Over 1,900 people were recorded visiting the galleries on the afternoon of the first question time for Prime Minister Julia Gillard on 24 June 2010.

School visits to Parliament House

The number of students visiting Parliament House and participating in school programs continued to increase. In 2009–10, they numbered 117,955 (compared with 114,190 in 2008–09). Of these, the majority participated in a guided tour including visiting the galleries of the House and the Senate. The department provided hospitality to 83 per cent of the student visitors, and 75 per cent participated in the Parliamentary Education Office program (see below). This popular program continued to offer after-hours classes to make it accessible to more students.

The number of schools that visited Parliament House in 2009–10 increased by 150; the increase occurred mainly in schools from New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania. Student numbers from the Northern Territory increased from 341 in 2008–09 to 623 in 2009–10, which reflected the participation of five additional schools. Victoria and Western Australia were represented by fewer schools but more students. There were

fewer local ACT schools and school children visiting Parliament House than in previous years. Detailed numbers of participants are given in Table 7.

Parliamentary Education Office

The department and the Department of the Senate jointly fund the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO), which is administered by the Department of the Senate to provide parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students. The two departments confer on the strategic direction of the PEO and the content of its educational material and online resources. The PEO Advisory Committee is chaired by the Deputy Speaker and it met in November 2009 and May 2010. The Clerk Assistant (Table) attended as an observer.

A new record of 91,648 students from every state and territory participated in the PEO's role-play program at Parliament House during the year (compared with the previous record of 90,786 in 2008–09). This brought the cumulative total of students who had participated in the role-play programs since the Parliament House building opened on 9 May 1988 to 1,462,275.

The PEO continued to invest substantially in other activities and in technology to cater for the broader student population. Work began on reviewing the structure and content of the PEO website, and on implementing a content management system for it. Website patronage continued to increase, with over 4.3 million page views recorded in 2009–10, compared with 3.7 million page views in 2008–09. The PEO continued its work with members and

Table 7 Students visiting Parliament House, by location and year, 2005–06 to 2009–10

	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Other	Total
2005–06	2,350	71,586	354	12,100	3,255	1,084	15,423	2,408	127	108,687
2006–07	3,270	73,891	336	14,663	3,400	877	16,879	2,759	8	116,083
2007–08	3,733	67,148	532	15,077	4,523	1,050	17,002	3,100	295	112,460
2008–09	4,031	69,673	341	14,333	4,024	1,113	16,913	3,591	171	114,190
2009–10	3,703	70,294	623	15,845	4,618	1,394	17,041	4,378	59	117,955

senators in a targeted school visits program, Parliament Alive. Visits were successfully conducted this year in Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory, reaching approximately 9,100 students. The PEO also continued to produce a wide range of educational resources, with a focus on content for the website.

Improving performance

Public feedback on the department's community outreach program indicated the high regard the community has for the magazine, television program, email alerts, news web page and seminars. The results of the May 2010 survey of the magazine and the evaluation forms from seminars are being used to further improve these products and services.

The *About the House* magazine web page was improved during the year, with a more dynamic appearance and links to video items. The legislation section of the magazine was expanded to increase the information available to the public on proposed laws being considered by parliament.

A new television program is being produced to provide more information to the public on the federal parliament's work during sitting weeks.

The schools booking system is due to be updated to cope with the increased demand from schools and agents seeking information on availability and to improve the booking process. Several issues have arisen with the system, causing increased workload for staff. Upgrading the system will increase productivity, and the department will seek off-the-shelf systems to replace the current model.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office has an important role in coordinating the department's training of staff from other parliamentary departments on the functions and responsibilities of the House to increase their knowledge of the Australian Parliament and the Chamber. This training will assist them in providing information to the public on a variety of matters.

Outlook

Aspects of the community outreach program, especially those relating to parliamentary committees, will not operate during the upcoming federal election period, as the work of the House and its committees will be suspended during that time. These activities will resume in the new parliament; however, budgetary pressures will be taken into account in the future delivery of the community outreach program.

Redevelopment of the Parliament of Australia website will enable the department to explore further opportunities to promote the House's work online.
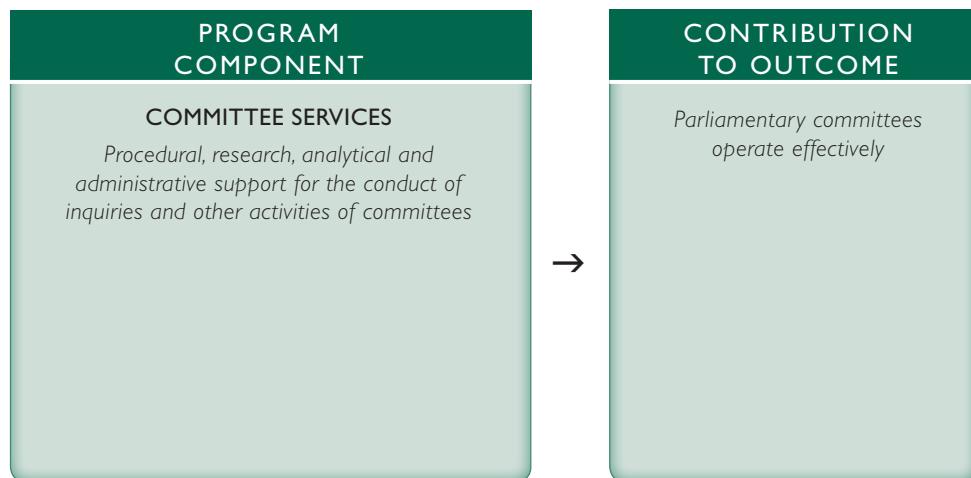
Feedback from the May 2010 magazine survey will be used to help determine future directions for the magazine.

Parliament continues to attract visitors to the galleries as well as increasing numbers of schools and students to the school visits programs. For example, by May 2010, the PEO program had already been heavily booked through to the end of November 2010.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office meets regularly with the PEO and Department of Parliamentary Services to monitor trends and discuss any issues as they arise. The challenge is to meet the needs of the larger number of school groups visiting parliament, provide efficient and timely service to our clients and maintain the integrity of the Chamber and building. The upgrade of the schools booking system is expected to enable the Serjeant-at-Arms Office to continue to improve its service to schools, tour operators and members.

The department has commenced initial preparation for the election period expected later in 2010. In particular, the department will be planning the opening of the new parliament, which is a significant event. During an election period visitors and school groups are not able to view sittings and experience the parliament at work. However, the department will continue to encourage and assist visitors and school groups that wish to visit during this time.

COMMITTEE SERVICES

PROGRAM COMPONENT	CONTRIBUTION TO OUTCOME
COMMITTEE SERVICES *Procedural, research, analytical and administrative support for the conduct of inquiries and other activities of committees*	*Parliamentary committees operate effectively*

→

The work in this program component is primarily performed by the Committee Office. The office supports parliamentary committees in discharging their responsibilities of parliamentary consideration of policy and legislation and scrutiny of government.

The expenditure on these services in 2009–10 was $9.4 million, which was $1.3 million below the budget allocation of $10.7 million. The financial resources for the component are summarised in Appendix 2; staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 11.

Performance summary

The 2009–10 financial year saw the parliamentary cycle drawing to a close, with an election scheduled in 2010–11. In the latter part of the year, committees were generally completing current inquiries, although a small number commenced new inquiries as well.

In addition to the twenty committees that the Committee Office was supporting on 30 June 2010, the department also administered the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety. The committee was established on 15 March 2010. The committee had a final reporting date of 11 February 2011, which is the last working day before the possible automatic dissolution of the Forty-second Parliament under the

Constitution. If the parliament concludes before this date, then the re-creation of this committee and any further activity on its part will be subject to House and Senate agreement in the Forty-third Parliament.

Administrative structures remained unchanged during the year. The Committee Office comprised eight secretariats of six to ten staff, which were supported by a small unit attached to the Clerk Assistant (Committees).

Committees supported by the Committee Office in 2009–10 are shown in Table 8.

The department also 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 means by which chairs and deputy chairs can discuss aspects of committee administration and support. The committee meets every six months. In 2009–10, it met in November 2009 and June 2010 to discuss topics such as access to Commonwealth Parliament Offices for public hearings, video conferencing for public hearings, and government responses to committee reports.

Table 8 Committees supported by the Committee Office, 2009–10

House committees
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts
Standing Committee on Communications
Standing Committee on Economics
Standing Committee on Education and Training
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth
Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation
Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources

Joint committees
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety
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

Note: Four other House committees mainly concerned with the domestic operations of the House, in addition to the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings, are supported by the Chamber and Main Committee program component of the department and are discussed at pages 20–1

Committee activity

On 1 July 2009, the investigatory committees supported by the department had 35 ongoing inquiries. During 2009–10, these committees commenced 53 inquiries and tabled 55 reports relating to 60 inquiries. As at 30 June 2010, the committees had 25 ongoing inquiries.

Most inquiries typically relate to policy or administrative issues within government. The committees that the department administers occasionally conduct bill inquiries, which generally have a significant influence on the legislation in question. There was one bill inquiry in 2009–10: a report by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories on the Territories Law Reform Bill 2010. The inquiry-related activities of committees are summarised at Appendixes 4 and 5.

During the year, the Committee Office supported some high-profile inquiries. For example, in October 2009 the House of Representatives Standing C ommittee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts tabled its report on the effects of climate change. The report, *Managing our coastal zone in a changing climate: The time to act is now*, contained forty-seven recommendations designed to better prepare Australia for the risks involved with climate change across the

breadth of government. The report received international press coverage. Reporting outlets included *The Times*, Radio Nederland, *The Straits Times* in Singapore, *The Miami Herald*, *The Irish Times, The Hindu* in India and *What's On Xiamen* in China.

In 2009, the Presiding Officers allocated one parliamentary delegation annually for a committee to visit two Asia–Pacific countries in connection with an inquiry or their wider work. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing conducted the inaugural Asia–Pacific committee delegation. The aim of the visit was to learn more about the health issues that jointly affect our Pacific neighbours and Australia, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, dengue fever and tuberculosis. The committee proposed visiting Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands because of their proximity to Australia. The delegation's visit provided a unique and valuable opportunity for parliamentarians to learn more about the health system and health services delivery in neighbouring countries and to strengthen the bilateral relationship with two countries with which Australia has longstanding and important ties. The committee tabled its report in March 2010.

In 2009–10, the government responded to some important reports from the previous year. In May 2010, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel responded in the House to *Sealing a just outcome*, a report by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. This report dealt with issues arising from damage caused to the health of Royal Australian Air Force personnel tasked with keeping the F-111 aircraft operational (deseal/reseal). The minister congratulated the committee on its work and stated that the committee had dealt with the issues in the inquiry 'fairly and justly' through its recommendations. The government response commits to expanding the definition of eligible personnel and the benefits and services available under the *Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*. It provides $55 million over four years for better access to care and compensation.

In March 2010, the Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities, the Hon Bill Shorten, released at a public launch the government response to the report on disability access under building standards, *Access all areas*, by the House of Representatives Standing
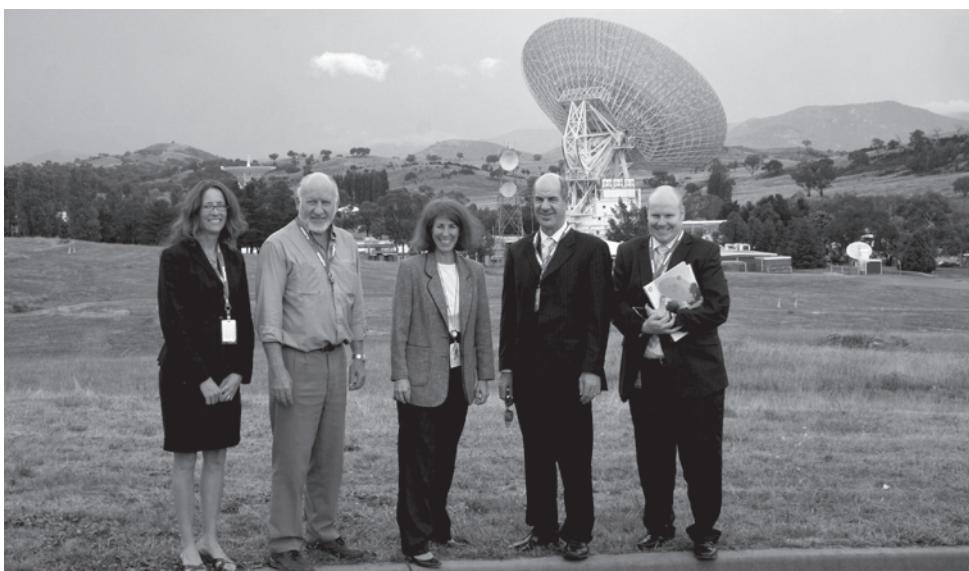
The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties at the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex for its examination of the Agreement concerning Space Vehicle Tracking and Communication Facilities in February 2010.

Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. The Hon Justine Elliot (Minister for Ageing) also responded to the report in the House, stating that the committee had made 'an outstanding and important contribution in assessing and reviewing the draft premises standards'.

In both cases, the government accepted a large number of the committees' recommendations.

Analysis of performance

The most important performance indicator for the Committee Office is the level of satisfaction with committee services reported by members in the department's annual survey of members. In May and June 2010, a random selection of 30 current members of parliament was asked to participate in the survey. The survey was conducted confidentially with an option to participate in an interview with a departmental executive officer. Eighteen current members responded to the survey (23 in 2008–09), of whom two participated in an interview. Details of the survey findings are at Appendix 12.

As in previous years, the department rated very highly on members' satisfaction with committee services. One hundred per cent of members stated that they were 'extremely satisfied', 'highly satisfied' or 'satisfied' with

committee services. As Table 9 shows, satisfaction rates of at least 90 per cent have been reported for the past five years.

Table 9 also shows output and efficiency indicators for the Committee Office. It must be borne in mind that these figures do not reflect solely on the department. They also reflect on the actions of committees, which make the strategic decisions about inquiries and committee reports; and they reflect on the House and ministers to the extent that they provide references to committees.

The total number of reports suggests a drop in activity over the past five years. This is largely due, however, to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works changing the way it packages its reports. In the Forty-first Parliament (2004 to 2007), the committee produced a report for each public work that it examined. In the Forty-second Parliament (2007 onwards), it tabled combined reports that allocated a chapter to each public work. An alternative output measure is the total number of pages in tabled reports, which is not affected by how a committee might package its reports. This statistic shows that 2006–07 and 2008–09 were years of increased activity for the Committee Office.

Table 9 Committee Office performance indicators

Indicator	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08[e]	2008–09	2009–10
Members' satisfaction rates (%)[a]	100	91	95	100	100
Reports, total[b]	68	62	51	58	55
Pages, total[c]	4,000	4,708	3,410	4,546	4,199
Staff numbers, Committee Office[d]	68	65	61	63	64
Pages, per staff member	59	72	56	72	66

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

b The report totals include committee delegation reports and reports by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit on the draft estimates of the Australian National Audit Office.

c The number of pages in a report is the number of pages in the body of the majority report, excluding introductory material, appendixes and dissents.

d Staff numbers are based on historical data for 30 June each year.

e 2007–08 was an election year, which led to reduced committee activity due to the election period between October 2007 and February 2008.

The year 2007–08 included an election, which meant that there were no committees from the prorogation of the Forty-first Parliament on 15 October 2007 to the creation of committees on 18 February 2008 in the Forty-second Parliament. This resulted in a drop in output for this period. Committee staff are engaged in other work during election breaks, which does not directly contribute to committee reports and is not reflected in these figures.

Efficiency data is calculated in terms of pages per staff member. Although this measure of efficiency has its shortcomings, by this measure the Committee Office was at its most efficient in 2006–07 and 2008–09. Further, in the four non-election years, by this measure the Committee Office sustained increased efficiency over its performance in 2005–06.

Smart infrastructure conference

Smart infrastructure is infrastructure with embedded communications technologies that aim to improve efficiency. In transport, smart infrastructure is used to automate transport systems to monitor, control and optimise traffic flows. In water and energy, smart metering is used to allow remote and real-time monitoring of use, with potential benefits to the consumer and improved responsiveness to maintenance.

The House Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government held the ThinkFuture Smart Infrastructure Conference on 12 March 2010 as the first activity for its inquiry into smart infrastructure. The conference, opened by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, was a new style of inquiry activity, designed to open the debate between key industry players, government representatives and the wider community. The conference generated significant interest, with 200 registrations, including from companies such as IBM and Accenture. The one-day conference comprised sector workshops and keynote addresses, as well as some trade displays. The day's proceedings were webcast, with selected video and transcripts available from the Parliament of Australia website.

Feedback from conference participants was overwhelmingly positive. Many cited as a highlight the opportunity to discuss smart infrastructure challenges that are common

Participants at a working group of the smart infrastructure conference in March 2010.

PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE SERVICES

across several sectors. The conference was also successful in strengthening links between government and industry regarding smart infrastructure in the transport sector, with invitations offered to industry to provide input to a government working group on common standards. Conference participants noted their support for the committee's approach to this new inquiry. They stated that a conference setting allowed greater dialogue and networking opportunities for participants than standard committee practice.

Committee support

While the Committee Office provides day-to-day assistance to committees with advice, analysis and drafting, it also assists committees by developing support systems and other 'back office' functions specific to committees. For example, it revised the practice and procedure manual for Committee Office staff in 2009–10 and the revised fourth edition is scheduled for publication early in the next financial year. Other projects are discussed below.

Records management and archiving

Committee Office staff continued to work closely with the department's Records Management Unit to process the remaining committee records that predate the Forty-second Parliament using the streamlined electronic system implemented during 2007–08. Over fifteen shelf metres of committee records were transferred into the custody of the National Archives during the year. A further four shelf metres of committee records to be retained permanently at Parliament House were sorted, boxed and placed in appropriate on-site storage.

The Records Management Unit continued to offer a program of formal and on-the-job records management training to Committee Office staff during the year.

One committee secretariat has been involved in a pilot of managing committee records electronically. The feedback from the staff of the secretariat has been very useful in formulating standards for managing records electronically in other secretariats. The use of the electronic records management system will

be extended to other committee staff in 2010–11.

Digitisation of committee reports

In response to a recommendation made by the Joint Committee on Publications in its 2006 report *Distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series,* the department has sought to post digital copies of reports dating from 1901 onwards on the Parliament of Australia website. Out of the 406 House committee reports identified in this project, 357 have been scanned and uploaded to the Register of Committee Reports.

In addition to completing this project, the department is looking to standardise the report listing on each committee's web page and ensure that these listings as well as all reports in the register have adequate document properties, which will assist with electronic searching. The department also plans to begin creating digital copies of reports dating from 1901 onwards by all joint committees after digitisation of House reports has been completed.

Improving performance

The Committee Office has both led and participated in a number of projects designed to improve its operations. For example, it has commenced a pilot of a more rigorous method of internally editing committee reports. Like the rest of the department, it has also been assisting the Department of Parliamentary Services in the redevelopment of the Parliament of Australia website. Two other projects are discussed below.

Committee report template

During the year, the department identified possible improvements to the word processing template that committee staff use when drafting reports. The template, which was introduced in 1999, automates much of the formatting of committee reports. Improvements the department is investigating include further automating the various steps in compiling chapters into a final document and improvements to the program's robustness. It may also be possible to automate the process by which committees produce HTML

versions of their reports from the template. The current technology available to the department requires manual conversion, which is resource intensive. A fully automated system would allow HTML versions to be published on the same day that reports are tabled, improving accessibility for users with a disability and those with low-speed data connections.

The department has consulted with the Department of the Senate in developing the project, to leave open the possibility of the two departments both having access to the technology that will be developed. If this were to occur, it would deliver efficiencies through the sharing of development costs.

Operational efficiencies

The Committee Office was involved in two reviews of its expenditure during the year. In the latter half of 2009, the department's internal auditors reviewed the department's management of the printing of committee reports. Among its conclusions, the audit found that greater use of internal printing, when excess capacity existed, could deliver savings to the department. The department has implemented the report's recommendations, which will probably deliver annual savings of between $15,000 and $25,000.

Also in 2009, the Committee Office conducted an internal review of its travel and accommodation spending, most of which is incurred for public hearings interstate. One of the recommendations from the review was to engage an accommodation broker for hotel bookings. A pilot of this arrangement will be conducted in 2010–11.

Outlook

On 21 June 2010, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure tabled its report on the effectiveness of House committees. The report was wide-ranging and made twenty-five recommendations. It covered areas such as committee resourcing, membership, powers, the number of committees, and arrangements for the debate of committee reports. The report is now with government.

If the government accepts all of the committee's recommendations, there will be significant changes to how the department supports committees.
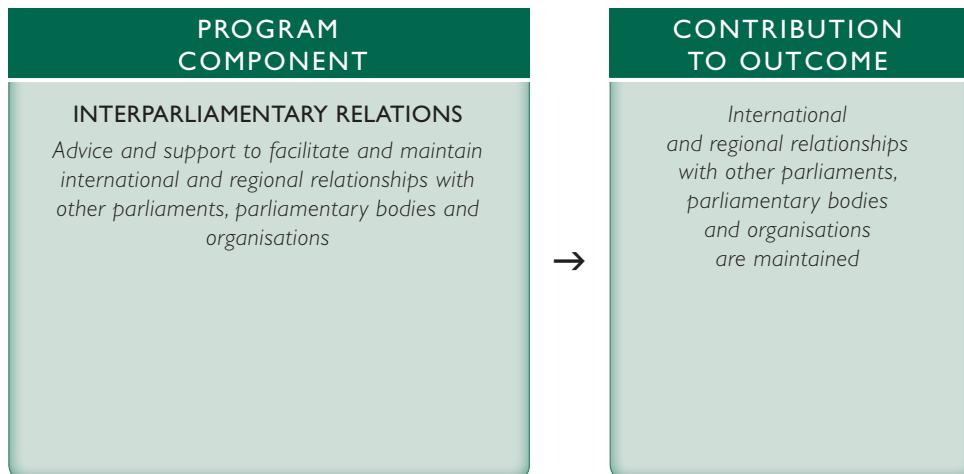
An election will be held in 2010–11. One implication of this is that the pace of work for many staff increased as they sought to finalise reports prior to the election. However, once the election is called, committees will cease to exist for several months. Staff will then either be involved with election period projects or be on secondment with other agencies. On the establishment of the Forty-third Parliament, committee staff will assist with the creation of new committees and the establishment of new inquiries. It is also possible that the House will restructure its committees after the election, depending on the government response to the procedure committee report.

The election will cause a reduction in committee activity, meaning that the department's tight financial position will probably not be a constraint on committee activity next year. However, the department's budget may have an impact on all aspects of operations from 2011–12, when normal levels of activity resume, and the following years as well. Without additional funding, this may affect the support that the department provides to committees.

The Chair of the Health and Ageing Committee, Mr Steve Georganas MP, with community members in Papua New Guinea during the Committee's Asia–Pacific delegation in October 2009.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS

PROGRAM COMPONENT		CONTRIBUTION TO OUTCOME
INTERPARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS *Advice and support to facilitate and maintain international and regional relationships with other parliaments, parliamentary bodies and organisations*	→	*International and regional relationships with other parliaments, parliamentary bodies and organisations are maintained*

The Australian Parliament has an active program of engagement with other parliaments, particularly at the regional level. Support for the parliament's international activities is provided primarily through the Parliamentary Relations Office (PRO), which is jointly funded by the departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and administered by the Department of the House of Representatives.

Expenditure on the component in 2009–10 was $2.4 million, against a budget allocation of $2.3 million. The financial resources for the component are summarised in Appendix 2; staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 11.

Performance summary

The range of visits and parliamentary-strengthening activities coordinated during the year helped promote relations with other parliaments and benefited Australia's relations with other countries. Initiatives were developed to boost regional parliamentary links and to provide more professional development opportunities for parliamentarians. Feedback received during the year indicated a high level of satisfaction with the programs offered and the services provided by the PRO.

Delegations and visits

During 2009–10, the department coordinated twenty-seven official overseas visits, which included bilateral visits to eight countries, attendance at ten conferences, workshops and seminars, and twelve other visits (see Appendix 8). There were fourteen official visits to Australia by parliamentary delegations from other countries as guests of the Australian Parliament (see Appendix 6), along with thirty-nine other visits by parliamentarians and eight visits by parliamentary staff and other individuals (Appendixes 7 and 9).

The outgoing delegations program maintained its focus on the Asia–Pacific region: of the eight bilateral visits undertaken during the year, seven were to countries in the region. With this aim in mind, and for the second year in a row, an Australian parliamentary delegation visited countries that are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The feedback from this year's delegation, which visited Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Laos in April 2010, indicated that the visit to ASEAN member countries was a valuable component of the annual outgoing delegations program.

As mentioned, the first committee delegation visit to the Asia–Pacific region took place in October 2009, with the House of Representatives Health and Ageing Committee visiting Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands to examine regional health issues affecting Australia and other countries in the Pacific. A report from the visit, including fifteen recommendations, was released in March 2010. In that report the committee wrote:

> The Committee firmly believes that the travel provided a valuable platform for committee members to learn more about issues relevant to their portfolio and to build parliament and other people-to-people contacts in the region. Such purposeful travel, in conjunction with an ongoing inquiry, considerably enhances committee work and the work of the Parliament.

At debrief meetings for outgoing visits, delegation members indicated a high level of satisfaction with the arrangements. Of the thirty-two evaluation forms completed for outgoing visits, twenty-two rated the support provided as 'excellent', nine provided a rating of 'good', and one provided a rating of 'fair'.

The incoming visits program also maintained its focus on strengthening regional links, with official visits from Bhutan, Cambodia, Chile, New Zealand, Tonga, Vanuatu and Vietnam. The number of official incoming delegations during the year was reduced to twelve because of the need for budget savings.

The Speaker, Mr Harry Jenkins MP, and participants in a democracy-strengthening program conducted in partnership with the Centre for Democratic Institutions in October 2009.

Support for other parliaments

The Inter-Parliamentary Study Program was conducted in March 2010, with twelve parliamentary officials participating from the Asia–Pacific region, Africa and Europe. The annual program provides the opportunity for senior parliamentary staff to learn in detail about the processes and procedures of the Australian Parliament and exchange views on parliamentary developments. Participants in this year's program indicated that they were highly satisfied with the content, providing an average rating of 4.6 out of 5 for the program. As a result of contacts made during the program, follow-up requests for information and advice are being received from participating parliaments.

Training and equipment were provided to Pacific Island parliaments though the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Australian Region Education Trust Fund. This included information technology equipment and training for parliamentary staff. Two parliamentary websites were developed, for the Vanuatu and Nauru parliaments, bringing to a total of five the number of parliamentary websites that have been developed with the support of the trust fund in recent years.

The level of support requested from the trust fund varies from year to year, depending on electoral cycles and changing priorities within Pacific Island parliaments. This year the Tongan Parliament was particularly active in seeking the support of the fund, following a historic review of the Tongan constitution and electoral system. The fund supported the development of an independent process for the appointment of Tongan parliamentary staff, a needs assessment of its Hansard operations, training for a new committee and legal drafting clerk, academic studies for its librarian, and development of an accounts and superannuation database.

A study visit was arranged for the Speaker and parliamentarians from Bangladesh, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The visit was focused on strategic and corporate planning as well as change management and institutional strengthening. Following on from the visit, further assistance has been provided in response to specific requests for technical support.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians conference held from 30 June to 2 July 2010 in Sydney.

Participation in international parliamentary organisations

The department supported the Australian Parliament's participation in a number of international parliamentary organisations, including the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly. This included coordination of delegations to attend conferences and meetings of those organisations.

In its role as the Australian Region secretariat for the CPA, the PRO coordinated the regional activities of the association, including its annual regional meeting and the twinning program established between Australian and Pacific parliaments. During the year a visit was coordinated for a Tongan parliamentary delegation; the visit included meetings with their twinned parliament in South Australia.

In 2009–10, AusAID awarded the New South Wales Parliament funding to coordinate a comprehensive parliamentary-strengthening program with its twinned parliaments of Bougainville and Solomon Islands. Following this, a proposal for a similar program was prepared jointly by the CPA Australian Region and the UNDP for Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu. A decision on that proposal is pending.

As part of efforts to boost the professional development opportunities available to parliamentarians through the CPA, the PRO, in consultation with the whips of the Australian Parliament, developed a proposal to establish a Commonwealth Parliamentary Whips Network. The aims of the network are to encourage information sharing about the role and work of parliamentary whips; enable professional advice to be sought about their role and work; and facilitate their professional development. The proposal was endorsed by the CPA's international executive committee.

The PRO coordinated arrangements for a workshop to launch the network in Australia in July 2010.

The PRO also provided the secretariat for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee in the Australian Region. That included coordination of the Australian CWP conference, which was held from 30 June to 2 July 2010.

For the IPU, the PRO developed a proposal for a meeting of Pacific parliaments to discuss their engagement with the IPU. At recent IPU assemblies the Australian delegation had raised this matter with the IPU. The meeting, which is being coordinated jointly by the Australian and New Zealand parliaments, has been scheduled for August 2010.

Improving performance

To better inform parliamentarians and parliamentary staff about the outcomes of outgoing parliamentary visits, the department introduced briefings from returning delegations. Two briefings were held during the year: one on the first committee delegation to the Asia–Pacific region, by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing; and one by the parliamentary observers to the United Nations General Assembly. As those briefings were well received, similar briefings will be arranged in the future so that delegation members can inform other parliamentarians and parliamentary staff about the outcomes of their visits.

A seminar on the operation of the Australian Parliament was conducted for members of the diplomatic community to help inform them about the procedures and processes of the federal parliament. The seminar included a session on the parliament's international program, including information on the way the PRO can assist embassies and high commissions with parliamentary visits to Australia. More than 100 members of the diplomatic community attended the seminar, and feedback indicated that it was of significant value to them. The seminar will be conducted on an annual basis.

Debrief meetings and evaluation forms are being used for each outgoing delegation to obtain feedback on the visits. This feedback helps in planning future visits.

Information about the parliament's international activities is being included in the *About the House* magazine and television program to provide the Australian community with a better understanding and appreciation of that work.

Budget savings have been made through a reduction in the number of official visits received annually and through adjustments to travel and other arrangements associated with incoming visits.

Contacts with international organisations such as the UNDP have been developed further, as part of efforts to build partnerships in relation to parliamentary-strengthening activities.
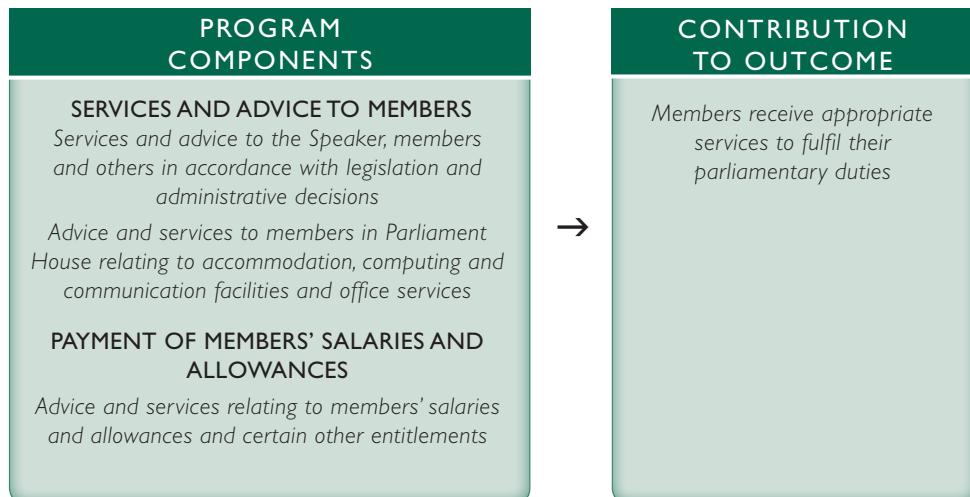
Outlook

The upcoming election period will have an impact on the number of parliamentary visits into and out of Australia, as visits do not take place during an election period. Preparations for the new parliament will be undertaken.

Initiatives that have helped to give the Australian Parliament a more prominent role in international organisations, such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Whips Network and the meeting of Pacific parliaments on IPU matters, will be progressed.

The redevelopment of the Parliament of Australia website will provide the opportunity to increase and improve publicly available information on the parliament's international activities.

MEMBERS' SERVICES

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PROGRAM COMPONENTS

SERVICES AND ADVICE TO MEMBERS
Services and advice to the Speaker, members and others in accordance with legislation and administrative decisions

Advice and services to members in Parliament House relating to accommodation, computing and communication facilities and office services

PAYMENT OF MEMBERS' SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES
Advice and services relating to members' salaries and allowances and certain other entitlements

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<td>

CONTRIBUTION TO OUTCOME

Members receive appropriate services to fulfil their parliamentary duties

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Members' services comprises two program components: *Services and advice to members in Parliament House* and *Payment of members' salaries and allowances*. The department's responsibilities include support for accommodation at Parliament House; the delivery of office and communication services such as stationery, printing and information technology; and the payment of salaries and allowances. These responsibilities are undertaken by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, the Information Systems and Publishing Office, the Finance Office and the People Strategies Office.

In providing these services, the department maintains close liaison with the Department of Parliamentary Services. That department is responsible for providing building maintenance and the central information technology services for Parliament House generally, while staff in the Department of the House of Representatives are the primary contacts for members in relation to the provision of the services.

The expenditure for members' services in 2009–10 was $3.9 million. The budget allocation was $4.3 million. The financial resources for the program components are summarised in Appendix 2; staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 11.

Performance summary

The results of the 2010 members' survey indicated the levels of satisfaction with the work of the areas. The work of the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office in supporting members received a high level of satisfaction (100 per cent satisfied and 67 per cent extremely or highly satisfied). The level of satisfaction with members' home pages on the Parliament of Australia website rose again this year (54 per cent were either extremely or highly satisfied, compared with 30 per cent in 2009).

In response to the constraint on financial resources that was foreshadowed in the previous annual report, a number of services were discontinued or reduced. One of the services to members, the members' in-house printing allowance, ceased from 1 July 2009. This resulted in a reduction of two staff in the printing area and attendant budgetary savings.

Services and advice

Information services

To help keep members and their staff informed about developments in the House, four 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; seven briefings were held during the year.

The department continued to operate its drop-in centre for an hour every sitting Tuesday to enable members and their staff to get information or provide feedback on any of the services provided by the department. During the year, the centre operated during all eighteen sitting Tuesdays, and sixteen members or their staff used the service on one or more occasions. It was staffed, as before, by senior departmental staff members. The department continued to invite a representative of the Department of Finance and Deregulation to attend to increase the value of the service to members. Any comments relating to services provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services were referred to the appropriate office of that department.

Accommodation services

Staff in the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office serve as the principal contacts in relation to accommodation, capital works and maintenance services within the House of Representatives wing. In 2009–10, the office coordinated a review of certain departmental accommodation. The review resulted from the significant increase in the number of staff in the People Strategies Office arising from the shared services arrangement, whereby the department agreed to provide and manage payroll services on behalf of the Department of Parliamentary Services. A consultant was engaged to assist in identifying a suitable accommodation solution. Three departmental offices were relocated as a result of the review. A small amount of refurbishments were completed and a request for a minor works project was raised with the Department

of Parliamentary Services as a result of the changes.

The retirement of two members and changes in the ministry, including the Prime Minister, and the shadow ministry, including the Leader of the Opposition, resulted in fifteen office relocations. All requests were met in a timely manner and preparations for the incoming members were well in place for their arrival. The office received 492 requests to supply and move furniture. This is a number similar to that received the previous year (527), which corresponds to a typical level of service in a non-election year.

Maintenance, access and transport services

Requests for routine and periodic maintenance work are managed by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. A total of 315 emergency requests were processed during 2009–10 and were attended to within five minutes of receipt. The office continued its pre-emptive maintenance program to avoid a large number of otherwise emergency maintenance requests when members return for sittings. Routine maintenance requests for repairs or alterations to suites or common areas numbered 224, a figure higher than the previous year's (158). This result is reflective of a number of office moves resulting in more routine maintenance requests identified.

The office received and dealt with 151 requests for assistance with telephone faults, relocations and allocations of telephone numbers. Of the total number of requests, fourteen were related to faults. These faults were reported to telephone support within five minutes of receipt and telephone support officers resolved the faults within the agreed forty-five minute period.

There were 683 requests for access to suites and general circulation areas. These requests related to general maintenance and services provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services, and the approval process supports appropriate security standards.

The office coordinated transport services for members, including managing the shuttle service on behalf of the Department of Finance and Deregulation during sitting weeks. There were 10,372 bookings made in 2009–10, with a 98.9 per cent success rate. The number of bookings was higher than the previous year's (7,923). The trend that was noted last year—that is, more members arriving on Sundays and an increase in activity during the sitting weeks with members travelling to meetings and functions within the Canberra region—continued this year.

This was the second year for which the office has reported on its provision of support in relation to requests for filming and use of facilities. During the year, the office responded to 439 filming/photography requests (336 in 2008–09) and dealt with 519 proposals to use the facilities at Parliament House (409 in 2008–09).

An upgrade to Parliament Drive was carried out, managed by the Department of Parliamentary Services. This work included changes to ensure the road was safer through implementation of a one-way traffic flow and road resurfacing. The departmental representative, as a member of the project team, provided advice and helped ensure that the impact and timing of the changes were managed appropriately.

Several projects in relation to the Chamber were completed. These included the installation of a Distinguished Visitors Gallery on the floor of the Chamber and the re-covering of existing seating in the public galleries to restore the original colour scheme and replace fabric that had become faded and worn. The Speaker's chair was renovated to meet occupational health and safety requirements via the provision of lumbar support and new adjustment features and controls. Technology improvements were made at the Speaker's and Clerks' desks; further details on these aspects of the projects are provided below.

Work is continuing on the pager replacement project, which is managed by the Department of Parliamentary Services. New pagers have been provided to members; however, testing is continuing on the software component before the new software is activated.

Software and hardware services

Work was completed on the project to provide improvements to technology in the House of Representatives' Chamber. This project was managed by the Department of Parliamentary Services, at the request of the department. The aim of the project was to integrate technology hardware in places where space was limited, such as at the Speaker's chair and for the Clerks'-at-the-table. There is now access to the parliamentary computing network from the Speaker's chair, with monitors installed into the edge of the arc of the Speaker's desk. These changes provide the occupant of the chair with access to a range of procedural and general information and an extended ability to communicate. There were also improvements to the integration of the hardware at the Table.

A new standard operating system, which includes Microsoft Vista, has been developed by the Department of Parliamentary Services for the parliamentary environment. In preparation for the rollout of the new operating system, the department carried out a considerable amount of work in testing all software applications and making modifications to some applications to ensure they worked correctly with the new system. Many departmental staff are now using the new operating system; however, the rollout to members and their staff has been deferred until after the next election.

New desktop computers were installed in all members' offices in Parliament House, early in 2010, in readiness for the rollout of the new operating system.

As mentioned, the Committee on Petitions completed an inquiry into electronic petitioning. The department provided advice to the committee via submissions and at a public hearing.

Initial testing has commenced of an online faxing solution to allow members to send and receive faxes electronically. Depending on the results of the initial testing, this solution will be trialled in some members' offices in Parliament House before being made available to all members.

Internet and intranet services

The review and redesign of the Parliament of Australia website continued. This project is being conducted by the Department of Parliamentary Services in conjunction with the Department of the Senate and this department. A number of staff of the department have participated in the various stages of the project. A consultation process was conducted in 2009 and a tender process was completed for the design component of the project. Staff have provided assistance to the project team on the infrastructure architecture of the new site as well as its overall design. The second phase of the project, to select a content management system, has also been conducted. The redesigned site is expected to be operational in late 2010.

Printing

The department's in-house printing service produced approximately 5.2 million impressions in 2009–10. Since the cessation of the members' in-house printing allowance, the majority of these impressions relate to documents for the operations of the Chamber (such as the *Notice Paper,* the *Daily Program* and assent prints of bills), committee and delegation reports, briefing papers, bound volumes of submissions and documents for conferences, seminars and visiting delegations. The printing service also produces other documents for members such as party directories, first-speech booklets and school certificates, and limited printing services are provided for the shadow ministry.

Messenger services

During 2009–10 the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office continued to provide messenger services to the standards specified in the service charter.

The office received no complaints, either formally or through the feedback process identified in the charter. Messengerial staff numbers remained the same; however, due to natural attrition, four new staff members were appointed.

Parliamentary assistants program

The department continued its program of recruiting university students to work as parliamentary assistants alongside the messengerial attendants. The program, which commenced in 2000, provides elements of employment, educational and outreach programs. It is managed through the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. Parliamentary assistants perform the duties of messengerial attendants for an average of ten hours per week; rosters are planned around student commitments and the work requirements of the Chamber and the department.

The program offered six positions this year: two experienced parliamentary assistants were offered a second year and four new parliamentary assistants were appointed. The students appointed were from metropolitan and country New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

Members' salaries

All processing of members' salaries and entitlements by the People Strategies Office was in accordance with legislation and administrative decisions. In the 2010 members' survey, 44 per cent of members were extremely or highly satisfied (39 per cent in the 2009 survey) and 100 per cent were satisfied with services in relation to their base salary, electorate allowances and deductions (83 per cent in the 2009 survey).

Annual expenditure on members' salaries and other entitlements was $28.019 million during 2009–10, an increase over the $26.802 million spent last year. All performance targets were met during the year, with all salary variations completed when required and with 99 per cent accuracy. The cost per transaction rose slightly from $6.46 to $6.75.

The office processed an increase to the members' rate of pay during the year, with effect from 1 October 2009. The pay rise increased the base rate of members' pay to $131,040 per annum. Office holders' additional salaries were also adjusted in accordance with the formula outlined in the Remuneration Tribunal's Determination 2009/20.

Improving performance

The redesigned Parliament of Australia website will improve access to existing information about the work of the House of Representatives. As mentioned, an online Register of Members' Interests will be published from the commencement of the Forty-third Parliament. The department is considering other possible additions to the website to enhance the information that is available to the public, such as electronic petitioning, subject to decisions by the House.

During 2009–10, the department significantly changed its distribution of telephone directories following advice to members. The practice of providing interstate white and yellow pages was discontinued and there was also a significant reduction in the provision of Canberra white and yellow pages. This resulted in savings in staff time and reduced paper waste for the department. It also resulted in cost savings to the Department of Parliamentary Services, as the department responsible for purchasing the telephone books.

The department continues to work closely with the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Department of the Senate through its participation in the Senior Management Coordination Group, the Project Assessment Committee, the Security Management Board, the Security Projects These forums are important in giving direction to activities and projects that affect members and the department.
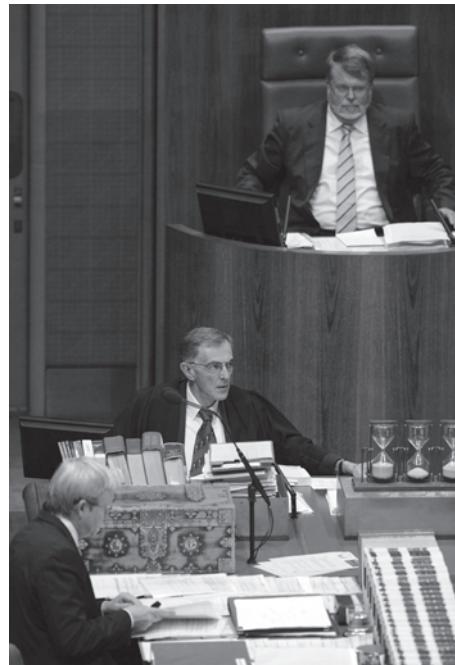
The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister, Mr Bernard Wright, Clerk of the House, and The Hon Harry Jenkins MP, Speaker of the House. Courtesy Auspic.

Outlook

The Forty-second Parliament will be brought to a conclusion in the next financial year. The retirement of members and other election changes will mean a significant increase in accommodation movements and related services. There will also be a considerable extra workload for departmental staff that process members' salaries and entitlements and provide information technology support.

Early in 2010–11, the department will be replacing the analogue televisions with high-definition digital flat-screen televisions. The current televisions have exceeded their useful lives and the frequency of equipment failure is increasing, with high ad hoc repair costs.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office is managing a major project for the replacement of office furniture used by members' staff and departmental staff. The project is expected to extend over the next two financial years.

A furniture style guide for the department and the Department of the Senate will be completed in the next financial year. Establishing a display office and seeking feedback through a staff questionnaire eliciting information on the nature of work and job requirements will form part of the next stage of the project.

The outlook for the members' services program components continues to be affected by the constraint on financial resources expected in future years. Costing projections indicate that maintaining current levels of service will result in a shortfall of funds in the forward years. If this is the case, further efficiencies and possible further reductions in services will need to be investigated.