



MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Corporate governance
- External scrutiny
- Management of people
- Management of financial resources
- Ecologically sustainable development and environmental reporting
- Outlook

Photo: The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs, holds a public hearing in Alice Springs, 4 April 2012.

Corporate governance

The Speaker of the House of Representatives is able to be questioned by members about the work of the department. The Clerk of the House of Representatives, who is responsible for managing the department, reports to the Speaker.

Key elements of the department's corporate governance framework are outlined below.

Legislation

The department's operations are governed by the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* and the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, and are subject to provisions of the *Fair Work Act 2009* and other legislation. Those Acts set out the responsibilities of the Clerk for the management of the department.

Ethical standards

The Parliamentary Service Values and Code of Conduct set out in the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* provide a framework for the department's ethical conduct. The department actively promotes sound ethical behaviour. All staff new to the department are briefed on what it means to work in a values-based environment and how ethical standards apply to their day-to-day work.

Senior management

Senior management of the department consists of the Executive and managers at the Executive Band 2 level. The Executive comprises the Clerk of the House, the Deputy Clerk and three Senior Executive Service Band 1 staff—the Clerk Assistant (Committees), the Clerk Assistant (Table) and the Serjeant-at-Arms—each of whom has management responsibility for one or two of the department's program components. (See Figure 3 on page 9.)

During the year, the Executive met eight times to discuss and make decisions on a wide range of departmental management issues. Staff were informed of the outcomes of each of the meetings through the staff bulletin, *In House*.

The Executive Band 2 staff also met formally to consider the effect of the efficiency dividend on the department's budget.

Senior Management Coordination Group

The Senior Management Coordination Group coordinates corporate and related matters across three of the parliamentary departments. The department is represented by the Serjeant-at-Arms; the Department of Parliamentary Services by its Deputy Secretary; and the Department of the Senate by the Usher of the Black Rod. The position of Chair rotates annually among the three members; the Serjeant-at-Arms is chairing the meeting in 2012. It is anticipated that the Parliamentary Budget Office will be represented on the Group later in 2012.

The Senior Management Coordination Group met six times in 2011–12. Among the issues considered were:

- developments in the Australian Public Service (APS) and their implications for the Parliamentary Service (including APS enterprise bargaining, the Commonwealth Financial Accountability Review, APS reform)
- proposed amendments to the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, to reflect the Public Service Amendment Bill 2012
- the 2012–13 Budget outlook for the parliamentary departments
- application of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* to the parliamentary departments
- the information and communication technology review commissioned by the presiding officers
- information technology and communications projects and issues
- Parliament House environmental performance and the 10 per cent energy challenge
- implementation of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- provision of potential shared services for the parliamentary departments
- the Department of Parliamentary Services' services catalogue

- accommodation planning for the parliamentary departments
- car parking in the parliamentary precincts.

Management committees

Audit Committee

The department's Audit Committee comprises the Clerk Assistant (Committees), the Clerk Assistant (Table), the Serjeant-at-Arms and an independent member (Ms Barbara Davis). The committee, chaired by the Clerk Assistant (Table), met four times during the year. Representatives of the Australian National Audit Office and internal audit, and the Chief Finance Officer, attended all meetings.

The department conducted a tender process for an internal auditor during the year. The outcome saw the department enter into a 3-year service contract with Oakton and conclude its 17 years of service contracts with KPMG as the department's previous internal auditor. Internal audits during the year covered the following areas:

- payroll processes
- IT general controls
- protective security policy framework
- fundamental accounting controls.

The internal auditor also provided significant advice in relation to a risk assessment associated with requirements under section 83 of the Constitution, and asset management in anticipation of the planned procurement of replacement assets over the next 2 years.

The department collated the views of sponsors and other staff about the results and conduct of internal audits and the feedback was considered by the committee.

Consistent with the internal audit charter, the outgoing internal auditor provided an annual report on internal controls. The overarching observations were that, within the Australian Government context, the department was a relatively low-risk business environment, and that the control environment, particularly in respect of finance, had improved in recent years.

During the year, the committee approved an internal audit plan for the period 1 July 2011–30 June 2015. It reviewed the report of the Chief Finance Officer on the certificate of compliance process, and recommended that the Clerk sign the certificate on the basis that the department's compliance processes were satisfactory and that the department was financially sustainable—in the context of the following financial year.

In accordance with requirements, the committee conducted an annual review of the committee charter, the internal audit charter and risk management policy and framework. Following their endorsement they were forwarded to the Clerk for approval. The annual report of the committee for 2011 was also forwarded to the Clerk.

The committee undertook a self-assessment of performance, using an Australian National Audit Office questionnaire. The results were satisfactory, with the average score across all items increasing from 4.0 in 2007 to 4.3 (out of 5) in 2011.

As in previous years, staff were informed of the outcomes of Audit Committee meetings through meetings of the Consultative Committee and weekly senior management meetings.

Consultative Committee

The Consultative Committee, which is chaired by the Deputy Clerk, continued to be an important mechanism for communicating and consulting with staff on workplace issues. The committee has:

- four departmental representatives
- two elected staff representative
- two union-nominated representatives.

Routine matters discussed at the meetings included monitoring of the enterprise agreement, recruitment policy, general employment matters and reports from other committees. The committee met six times during 2011–12. Discussions covered issues relating to disability access, finalisation of the Committee staffing review, access to parking, the extension of items for reimbursement through the Department of the House of Representative Enterprise Agreement 2011–12 and the introduction of the Serious Illness (Personal) Leave Bank.

Planning and evaluation

A large number of staff attended the department's annual planning meeting on 13 June 2012. The Clerk addressed the meeting on challenges and opportunities anticipated in the coming year. Staff were appraised of the outcome of the Investors in People (IIP) re-accreditation process conducted on the same day. (See page 54). As in previous years, staff participated in workshops covering the following topics:

- Investors in People accreditation survey results
- Minority government—18 months' experience.

Corporate plan

Our priorities during the period of the Corporate Plan 2010–13 are to seek to build on our capacity to serve our clients, develop our people, sustain our capability, and work collaboratively with each other and other key people and organisations.

Business plan

The department's business plan for 2011–12 was issued in 2011. Progress on implementing the plan was monitored regularly during the year including through six-monthly reporting meetings. Good progress was made on the targets in the business plan.

Members' survey

The department receives periodic and ongoing feedback from members to gauge the effectiveness of its service provision.

In May and June 2012, the 2012 members' survey was conducted. This was the tenth annual survey, and followed the same format as in previous years.

The department surveyed a random sample of 30 members, 20 of whom responded (24 participated last year). All participants were asked whether they were satisfied with the advice, services and support they received from the department. The results confirmed that the department provided a high standard of service.

Details of the survey findings are in Appendix 12.

Accountability mechanisms

The department's main formal external accountability mechanisms are the Portfolio Budget Statements and the annual report, which is prepared pursuant to section 65 of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*. The annual report for 2010–11 assessed performance against the targets set in the Portfolio Budget Statements 2010–11 and presented the financial statements of the department.

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

Service charters

The department's service charters for members and the community continued to provide the basis for the standards of service that members and the public can expect from the department.

Social justice and equity impacts

The department's role is to support the House of Representatives rather than to deliver services directly to the public. Accordingly, contributing towards achieving social justice within the community, in the main, is not a direct responsibility of the department. However, the department meets social justice needs indirectly through the work of the House of Representatives itself, its members and its committees.

Risk management and fraud control

The department's risk management policy and framework was reviewed during the year. The biennial review of the risk management plan will be undertaken in 2012–13.

During the year, the department progressed a number of recommendations made in an internal audit review of the department's business continuity arrangements. A business impact assessment was finalised following a roundtable discussion with senior staff, and business resumption plans were commissioned from each office area. This work will enhance the department's resilience in the event of any disruption to systems or services.

The department's fraud control plan and fraud risk assessment were endorsed in 2011–12 and will be reviewed in 2012–13.

As in previous years, new staff were informed of their financial management responsibilities and the department's fraud risk assessment and control plan in the regular induction programs. There were no losses of public money and no instances of fraud identified during the year.

Purchaser–provider arrangements

The department continued to provide payroll services to the Department of Parliamentary Services during the year on a fee for service basis (see page 54). The department will similarly provide payroll services to the Parliamentary Budget Office once it commences operations in July 2012.

The department does not have any other purchaser–provider arrangements in place for selling services to or buying services from an Australian government agency.

The department receives certain building, information technology and communication services from the Department of Parliamentary Services and audit services from the Australian National Audit Office. These services are accounted for in the department's financial statements as resources received free of charge.

The department also has agreements in place with the Department of the Senate in relation to the provision of inter-parliamentary services (by this department) and parliamentary education services (by the Department of the Senate). We run parliamentary education seminars on a fee-for-service basis for government departments.

External scrutiny

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

Judicial and administrative decisions

No judicial decisions or decisions in administrative tribunals during 2011–12 had, or are anticipated to have, a significant effect on the operation of the department.

Reports by the Auditor-General, a parliamentary committee or the Commonwealth Ombudsman

The Australian National Audit Office audited the department's 2010–11 Financial Statements and provided an unqualified audit report.

The House Standing Committee on Procedure presented two interim reports during the year for its inquiry into procedural changes implemented in the Forty-third Parliament. The reports were on the referral of bills to committees by the House Selection Committee, and the effectiveness of reforms to the House committee system. The Clerk made a submission to the inquiry in 2010–11.

The department continued to support the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration. The Clerk and other departmental staff provided the committee with information on the department's budget position and attended the committee's meetings to enable the committee to discharge its responsibilities under standing order 222A. The committee presented two reports, *Annual Report 2010–11*, on 23 November 2011 and *Budget Estimates 2012–13: Department of the House of Representatives*, on 9 May 2012. The latter report fulfilled the committee's obligation to provide to the Speaker for presentation to the House the amounts for inclusion in the appropriation bills

for the department. The committee endorsed the department's proposals to seek additional operational funding in the form of new policy proposals for certain funding. The outcomes are outlined on page 4.

No investigations by the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2011–12 involved the department.

Freedom of information

In previous annual reports, the department has reported that although the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) did not apply to the department, it seeks to comply with the intent of the Act in relation to the release of administrative information. There had been very few FOI requests of the department over the past 29 years.

During the year, there was a revised legal interpretation to the effect that, although it was unintended, with the passage of legislation to establish a separate parliamentary service, the explicit exclusion of the parliamentary departments from the application of the FOI Act, no longer applied. The Parliamentary Budget Office, which was established as a parliamentary department in 2011–12, was exempted expressly from the application of the FOI Act.

On 9 May 2012, the Australian Information Commissioner amended the guidelines issued under section 93A of the FOI Act to state that the Department of the House of Representatives, the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services were subject to the FOI Act. Prior to this, the guidelines stated that the FOI Act did not apply to the departments of the parliament.

With the revision of the guidelines, the department received 15 FOI requests in May and June 2012. The department dealt with the requests in accordance with the provisions of the FOI Act.

The FOI Act requires an agency to publish on its website details of documents provided to information requesters, and information about the agency's operations, and the department has commenced addressing these matters. In conjunction with the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services, the department has developed a register to allow publication of responses to FOI requests. It is planned to publish this information early in 2012–13.

The department has complied with the requirement to provide statistical information to the Information Commissioner.

As an agency now subject to the FOI Act, the department is required to publish information to the public as part of the Information Publication Scheme. This requirement is in Part II of the FOI Act. A formal Agency Publication Plan had been started but not completed by the end of 2011–12. However, information about the department's structure and its functions was already provided on the Parliament of Australia website. The website also fully details ways in which members of the public can interact with the work of the House and its committees.

Privacy

While the department is not an agency to which the *Privacy Act 1988* applies, we abide by the principles of the legislation in our dealings with employees, including handling employees' records.

Changes to disability reporting in annual reports

Since 1994, Commonwealth departments and agencies have reported on their performance as policy adviser, purchaser, employer, regulator and provider under the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. The department has provided information on compliance with the strategy through annual reports. From 2010–11, departments and agencies are no longer required to report on these functions.

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy has been overtaken by a new National Disability Strategy which sets out a 10-year national policy framework for improving life for Australians with disability, their families and carers. A high-level report to track progress for people with disability at a national level will be produced by the Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services to the Council of Australian Governments and will be available at www.fahcsia.gov.au. The Social Inclusion Measurement and Reporting Strategy agreed by the government in December 2009 will also include some reporting on disability matters in its regular *How Australia is faring* report and, if appropriate, in strategic change indicators in agency annual reports. More detail on social inclusion matters can be found at www.socialinclusion.gov.au.

Management of people

Investors in people

The department has held accreditation against the Investors in People Standard since 2002. The Standard is an international quality framework with 10 indicators, which set a level of good practice and a basis for continuous improvement of a department's or agency's performance through its people.

The department was re-assessed against the Investors in People Standard in June 2012. The assessment was conducted by independent external assessors and involved interviews of staff who were randomly selected.

As mentioned, the results of the assessment were announced at the departmental planning meeting on 13 June 2012. The department was assessed as meeting the Standard to the newly created 'Bronze' level. The department was informed that there were only two other agencies in Australia assessed to be at this classification level; and one other agency was assessed as at the higher 'Silver' level.

Shared services: the Department of Parliamentary Services payroll

The department continued to provide the payroll function for the Department of Parliamentary Services. During the year, the People Strategies Office began work to amalgamate its separate pay teams for this department and for DPS. This will achieve efficiencies and provide a wider range of experience for staff.

Staff survey

In June 2012, the department conducted its eighth annual staff survey, the 2012 Survey Feedback Action. The survey, derived from a benchmarking exercise conducted in July 2004, incorporated the features of previous separate surveys, particularly the previous staff survey and leadership questionnaire, completed in 2003.

As in previous years, most staff participated in the survey. The survey measures the quality of the department's leadership, the satisfaction of staff with

pay and conditions of service, and the strengths of the department. The results are taken into account in the department's ongoing development of its strategy for attracting and retaining staff.

The department has established a number of internal benchmarks based on the results of the survey. These benchmarks, or index scores, correspond to the total percentages of staff selecting 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' in response to specific sets of questions.

- The 'core elements' satisfaction index measures the extent to which the department provides the core elements needed to attract, focus and keep the most talented staff (82 per cent in 2012, 82 per cent in 2011, 85 per cent in 2010 and an average of 82 per cent over the last five annual surveys).
- The 'leadership' satisfaction index measures the level of satisfaction of staff with their managers, as measured against the department's leadership statement (85 per cent in 2012, 85 per cent in 2011, 82 per cent in 2010 and an average of 85 per cent over the last five annual surveys). (The department has 12 years of trend data for the leadership satisfaction index.)
- The 'benefits' satisfaction index measures the level of staff satisfaction with pay and working conditions (85 per cent in 2012, 85 per cent in 2011, 88 per cent in 2010 and an average of 84 per cent over the last five annual surveys).

People strategies planning

The department's people strategies framework (Figure 6) helps to achieve corporate outcomes through departmental staff.

People strategy 1: people forecasting

Workforce planning

During 2011–12, some work was carried out on workforce planning to enable continuous provision of high-level service.

Organisational reviews

The department conducts organisational reviews as required to ensure that workload is matched with the number of staff required to undertake the work in all areas, and that the classification levels or work-value requirements of individual jobs are appropriate to the work being carried out.

People strategy 2: finding and retaining the right people

Recruitment of staff

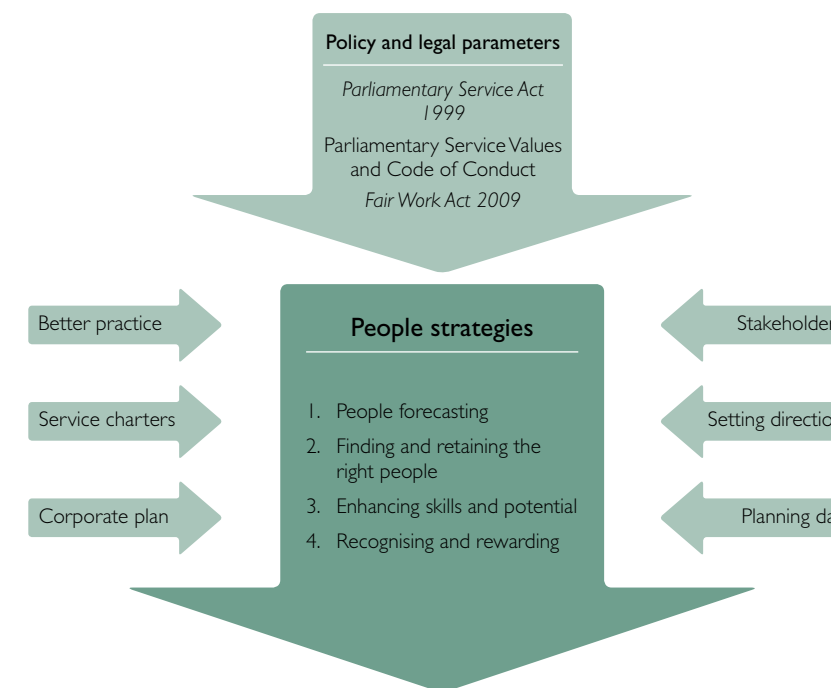
The department advertised to fill four ongoing vacancies during 2011–12 (six in 2010–11), of which three were filled by internal applicants. The one external was a woman.

Retention of staff

A total of 15 ongoing and 19 non-ongoing staff left the department in 2011–12—a turnover rate of 10.7 per cent of ongoing staff. This compares with 7.5 per cent in 2010–11. Appendix 11 includes details of separations.

Exit interviews with staff leaving the department continued to be conducted by Senior Executive Service managers. Two interviews were conducted during the year.

Figure 6 People strategies framework



Graduate placement program

The parliamentary graduate placement program for 2012 was conducted by the department and the Department of the Senate. The program involves three-month placements of staff from the graduate recruitment programs of Australian government agencies. An objective of the program is to promote the work of the parliament to agencies and the staff of those agencies.

The program continued to draw a high level of interest from individual graduates and from a range of agencies. We placed six graduates on three-month placements in 2011–12.

Feedback from graduates has confirmed that the program is highly successful and that the objectives of the placements have been met.

Alumni

The department formed an alumni association of former staff in 2008. On 30 June 2012 there were 197 members. The Association issued two newsletters during the year.

On 28 September 2011, the annual general meeting of the association was held; 21 members of the association attended. At the meeting, two co-chairs were re-elected and the membership of the alumni board was increased by self-nomination of attendees.

The board met once in 2011–12. A reception is planned for November 2012.

People strategy 3: enhancing skills and potential*Training and development*

Table 10 compares the department's training and development expenditure as a percentage of expenditure on salaries in 2010–11 and 2011–12. It also shows the average number of person-days spent on training and average staffing level in both years. The average number of training days for staff increased marginally from 4.7 to 5.6 days of off-the-job training per person per year.



Photo: A staff member of the International and Community Relations Office providing training to parliamentary staff from various Pacific Islander nations, 1 May 2012.

Table 10 Expenditure on training and development programs, 2010–11 and 2011–12

	2010–11	2011–12
Expenditure as percentage of annual payroll	1.5%	1.0%
Average training days per person	4.7	5.6
Average staffing level	152.5	156

Table 11 Average attendance of staff at training courses, 2010–11 and 2011–12

Classification	Average staffing level	Total number of training days attended	Average number of training days attended	
	2011–12	2011–12	2010–11	2011–12
Senior Executive Service	5.4	29.5	5.3	5.4
Executive Band 2	19.3	73.9	2.8	3.7
Executive Band 1	41.0	216.5	3.9	5.3
Parliamentary Service Level 6	23.0	127.1	3.6	5.5
Parliamentary Service Level 5	9.4	51.9	4.9	5.5
Parliamentary Service Level 4	30.3	195.1	5.5	6.4
Parliamentary Service Level 3	7.3	17.8	2.9	2.4
Parliamentary Service Level 2	19.4	51.8	3.0	2.6
Not specified		110.3		
Totals	156.0	873.9	4.7	5.6

Table 11 compares the average attendance of staff at training courses in 2010–11 and 2011–12. It also shows the average staffing level and total number of training days attended in 2011–12 for each classification.

Leadership development

The department has invested in leadership development with a range of external providers for more than a decade and has trend data from staff surveys on leadership for this period. During the year, the longer-term effectiveness of the leadership development program for middle managers was reviewed. The results will be considered early in 2012–13.

Knowledge management

The Knowledge Management Steering Committee continued to meet during 2011–12 and met six times. The committee comprised staff from all areas of the department and was chaired by the Clerk Assistant (Table).

The committee continued its work in the area of records management and the implementation of e-Trim. In addition, the committee monitored progress with the Intranet upgrade, implementation of the new parliamentary website, the Table Office's production system, as reported on above, and the CommDocs enhancement project. It also kept a watching brief on emerging technologies, including trials of 'unmanaged devices' such as iPads and smart phones. The committee also considered draft guidelines for the use of social media in the workplace.

Studybank

A total of 19 staff participated in the department's Studybank program during the year (compared with 20 staff in 2010–11). Collectively, they received financial assistance of \$30,792 (compared with \$19,604 in 2010–11), along with 154.6 days study leave on full pay.

Security-awareness training

As part of their induction program, all new staff are required to undertake an online security-awareness training program provided by the Protective Security Coordination Branch of the Attorney-General's Department.

People strategy 4: recognising and rewarding performance*Performance assessment processes*

All eligible staff participated in the annual work performance assessment cycle, completed on 31 October 2011. The cycle consists of setting individual work objectives, conducting performance assessments, preparing individual development plans and providing feedback to supervisors.

The individual development plans are compiled and the development requirements of staff are reviewed. These then form the basis for the training program for the next calendar year.

People strategy 5: providing a quality working environment*Enterprise agreement*

The Department of the House of Representatives Enterprise Agreement 2011–12 covers all staff except SES staff who are covered by a determination made under section 24(1) of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*. The enterprise agreement was negotiated between the Clerk and the department in 2010. The second pay rise was paid on 1 October 2011.

Staff were advised in May 2012 that bargaining for a new agreement had commenced. At that time all staff received the Notice of Employee Representational Rights. The first bargaining meeting was held on 6 June 2012.

Staff salary scales under the agreement are summarised in Table 12.

Salaries expenditure

In 2011–12, salaries and allowances totalled \$18.0 million (\$16.2 million in 2010–11).

Workplace diversity

The department's workplace diversity program aligns our workplace diversity strategies and actions with the Parliamentary Service Values. The program builds on the department's existing commitment to embed the Parliamentary Service Values into our business.

Training in the prevention of discrimination, bullying and harassment was provided to all new staff and more extensive training was provided to supervisors. In March 2012 staff were invited to nominate as harassment contact officers. Training was provided for four continuing and two new harassment contact officers.

Workplace health and safety

The department's aim under the health and safety management arrangements is to create and maintain a safe and healthy working environment.

Workstation assessments are conducted for staff on request. Included in the workstation assessment is

education on the correct set-up of workstations. This information is also included in orientation sessions for new staff.

In March 2012, influenza vaccinations were offered to staff; 51 staff were vaccinated.

The department's Comcare premium rate for 2011–12 was 0.71 per cent of payroll, a small increase from the rate in 2010–11 of 0.59 per cent.

The *Work Health Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) commenced on 1 January 2012. The main object of the Act is to provide for a balanced and nationally consistent framework to secure the health and safety of workers and workplaces. During the year, no dangerous occurrences required notification under section 37 of the WHS Act. No investigations were carried out and no directions or notices were received by the department under section 191 of the WHS Act.

Table 13 summarises compensation claims received from staff for the past four financial years.

Table 12 Salary scales of staff covered by the enterprise agreement, at 1 October 2011

Classification	Salary scale (\$)
Executive Band 2	121,355–128,586
Executive Band 1	93,763–104,585
Parliamentary Service Level 6	75,563–85,757
Parliamentary Service Level 5	69,844–73,905
Parliamentary Service Level 4	61,748–66,806
Parliamentary Service Level 3	55,864–60,011
Parliamentary Service Level 2	49,646–54,208
Parliamentary Service Level 1	43,886–48,020

Table 13 Compensation claims incidence, by injury group, 2008–09 to 2011–12

	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12
Fracture excluding back	–	–	–	–
Strain excluding back	1	2	1	–
External effects	–	–	–	–
Multiple injuries	–	–	–	–
Occupational overuse syndrome	1	–	–	1
Psychological injuries	1	1	–	–
Total	3	3	1	1

Management of financial resources

Assets management

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

A stocktake of computing equipment, plant and portable and attractive assets was completed during 2011–12. The department completed a desktop review of the office machines and furniture and fittings asset classes. Impairment testing was undertaken during stocktake. There were no material impairment adjustments required.

As part of the furniture replacement project, a number of furniture items were purchased to establish a trial office within the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. The existing furniture items within this office have been placed in storage or utilised in other offices within the department.

Purchasing

The department undertook procurement of IT hardware (desktop computers and monitors) in accordance with life-cycle management planning. These purchases were completed using the Whole of Australian Government panel arrangements. A small number of large multi-function devices were purchased under the Whole of Australian Government Major Office Machines contract. A contract was also signed to purchase smaller multi-function devices for use in members' and departmental staff offices. These items were delivered in July 2012. In conjunction with the Department of the Senate, a contract was signed with an external supplier to develop a new Table Office document production system. This project will be completed in 2014–15. A joint project with the South Australian Parliament and the department was continued to develop a Procedural Records System.

Consultants

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

Prior to engaging consultants, the department takes into account the skills and resources required for the task, the skills available internally, and the cost-effectiveness of engaging external expertise. The decision to engage a consultant is made in accordance with the FMA Act and related regulations including the *Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines* (CPGs) and relevant internal policies.

The total value of consultancy services procured in 2011–12 was \$183,179.

Competitive tendering and contracting

The department's contracting activities have been disclosed as required through the government's AusTender system. There were no instances during 2011–12 where contracts were let that did not provide for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor's premises, or where the Chief Executive exempted a contract from being published on AusTender.

Advertising and market research

Section 311A of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* requires the department to detail amounts paid to advertising agencies, market research organisations, polling organisations, direct mail organisations and media advertising organisations during the financial year.

The department's total advertising expenditure for 2011–12 was \$131,507 an increase from the previous year's total (\$96,526). This reflects the increased activity levels within the Committees area in line with the stage of the Parliamentary Cycle.

The expenditure was as follows:

- \$111,134 for publicising the work of the House and committees (\$79,010 in 2010–11)
- \$11,689 for advertising in relation to inquiries being undertaken by parliamentary committees (\$7,729 in 2010–11)
- \$2,374 for publicising recruitment advertising (\$5,604 in 2010–11)
- \$5,780 paid to the Attorney-General's Department for Chamber-related gazettals (\$4,185 in 2010–11).
- \$528 for publicising a request for tender (\$Nil in 2010–11)

Discretionary grants

The department did not administer any grant programs in 2011–12.

Ecologically sustainable development and environmental reporting

The department is not subject to the provisions of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*; however, it has adopted policies and practices in energy and water use and recycling that contribute to sound environmental performance.

Most aspects of the parliament's environmental management are coordinated by the Department of Parliamentary Services, which is responsible for managing the Parliament House building and precincts. The department participates in meetings of the parliament-wide Environment Management Committee. The committee provides a useful forum for progressing environmental initiatives and improving environmental performance at Parliament House.

The Senior Management Coordination Group receives a report on environmental performance at Parliament House as a standard agenda item at its meetings.

An important development for the Parliament during the year was that both Houses resolved that the Parliament should participate in the '10 per cent energy challenge' to reduce energy use at Parliament House by 10 per cent. Achieving this target will be challenging as energy use at Parliament House has decreased significantly through a range of measures implemented over many years.

The Department of Parliamentary Services prepares an annual report on behalf of all parliamentary departments in accordance with section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The report is structured using core performance indicators of the Global Reporting Initiative and is included in the Department of Parliamentary Services' annual report, which is available from the Parliament of Australia website. In 2012, the Department of Parliamentary Services is participating in a sustainability reporting pilot involving a number of government agencies and co-ordinated by Department of Finance and Deregulation. The Department of Parliamentary Services was selected as an agency already well-established in best-practice environmental reporting. Outcomes of the pilot will inform a new sustainability reporting framework proposed for all agencies that is intended to provide clear and common environmental indicators across all government operations.

Outlook

In 2012–13, the department will continue to support a minority House. The department must continue to be capable of delivering advice and support of a high standard, and of being able to anticipate and respond quickly to developments and changing requirements.

The department will implement a range of savings measures from 1 July 2012. Notwithstanding, it is anticipated that the department's financial position will remain very tight during the year and will continue to be closely monitored, with reporting to the House Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration as appropriate. The department will continue to seek efficiencies, and to innovate, with emphasis on ICT improvements. To ensure resilience, the department will test business continuity and resumption plans, and will work in collaboration with the other parliamentary departments to ensure capability at whole of parliament level. It is anticipated that there will be many implications for the department of the ICT Review.

An important early priority for the department will be the negotiation of a new enterprise agreement, the current agreement due to end on 30 September 2012. Another early priority will be the introduction to the Parliament of draft legislation to amend the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, primarily to reflect proposed amendments to the *Public Service Act 1999*.

The implications of APS reform for the department and the parliamentary administration will continue to be monitored and responded to. For example, the department will ensure its procurement practices benefit from developments in the APS involving more centralised procurement arrangements. It will take into account the new APS framework for protective security in collaborating with the other parliamentary departments to finalise a whole of parliament protective security policy.

The department will also continue to accord priority to supporting and enhancing whole-of-parliamentary-governance arrangements, including the Security Management Board, the Senior Management Coordination Group, the Projects Assessment Committee and the Heritage Advisory Committee. The Serjeant-at-Arms represents the department on these bodies. These processes are important in ensuring that strategic priorities are addressed and operate effectively.

The department will work with the other parliamentary departments to support environmental sustainability initiatives.

