



Part 2

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*Departmental employee James Rees
leading a tour of the House of Representatives
Chamber during Parliament House Open Day,
19 September 2015.*

Photo: David Foote, Auspic/DPS

Chamber and Federation Chamber

The Clerk's Office, Table Office and Chamber Research Office work together to support the day-to-day operations of the Chamber and Federation Chamber, with other areas contributing as necessary.

During the reporting period the offices continued to:

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

The focus of these customary functions changed to some extent during the year. On 15 April 2016 the Governor-General prorogued the parliament, and on 18 April the second session of parliament commenced. The opening of the second session—the first since 1977, during the Thirtieth Parliament—was a significant event that required consultation and collaboration with a range of stakeholders. Supporting and providing advice on the second session also demanded considerable effort by the Chamber support offices—no staff member had had experience of preparing for and implementing the various procedural measures or of making the necessary adjustments to systems. While departmental records of the previous occurrences were available, our systems, particularly ICT, had since changed considerably, so adaptations were necessary. The systems were adapted and operated successfully. The unusual and additional nature of this work, often conducted in collaboration with other agencies, was acknowledged by members.

In 2015–16, the budget allocation for this activity was \$2.948 million and expenditure was \$3.166 million. Results against the performance criteria for the activity are summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

An election year

The House was dissolved on 9 May 2016, ending the Forty-fourth Parliament. The dissolution of the House triggers a range of administrative actions, including finalisation of House records and preparation for the opening of the new parliament.

Performance summary

The focus of this program activity is on supporting the sittings of the House of Representatives Chamber and meetings of the Federation Chamber. Performance is usually measured in two ways: qualitatively, based on the annual survey of members; and quantitatively, based on information relating to the sittings of the House, meetings of the Federation Chamber and business conducted in the Chamber and Federation Chamber.

The annual survey of members was not completed because the House was dissolved earlier than expected. Anecdotal evidence suggests a continuing high level of satisfaction with the department's support of the Chamber and Federation Chamber. The valedictory speeches of a number of members who were not contesting the election indicated a strong regard for the advice and services we provide to assist members in their duties in the Chamber and Federation Chamber. This was consistent with comments made during interviews with retiring members conducted just prior to the election.

Statistics on the sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber for 2015–16 and the two preceding years are shown in Table 1.

There were 60 sitting days in 2015–16, a decrease of 17 days (22 per cent) on 2014–15. There was also a corresponding reduction in the number of sitting hours. In 2015–16 the House sat for 134 fewer hours than in the previous year (18.5 per cent less time), and the Federation Chamber met for 76 fewer hours than in the previous year (36.5 per cent less time). However, legislative activity continued at a high rate during the period relative to the decrease in sitting hours: 162 bills were introduced (compared to 203 in 2014–15) and 118 bills were passed by both Houses and assented to (compared to 168 in 2014–15).

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

Table 1 Performance summary, Chamber and Federation Chamber, 2013–14 to 2015–16

Aspect of performance	2013–14 ^a	2014–15	2015–16 ^a
Number of sittings of the House	53	77	60
Number of meetings of the Federation Chamber	40	57	41
Hours of sittings of the House ^b	523	726	592
Hours of meetings of the Federation Chamber ^b	152	208	132
Number of bills introduced	182	203	162
Number of bills that passed both Houses and were assented to ^c	94	168	118

a Election year (refers to calendar year).

b Excludes suspensions; rounded to the nearest hour.

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

Advice on practice and procedure

During proceedings, the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and other staff members provided immediate support and advice on the practice and procedure of the House to the Speaker, ministers, shadow ministers, members and others. They also provided detailed written advice on subjects such as the application of the standing orders and the practice of the House; the content of questions without notice; procedures for private members' business; delegated legislation and the disallowance process; the requirements of the Constitution and standing orders with respect to financial legislation; privilege matters; and requirements of the House for the registration of members' interests.

An unusual aspect of the advice and support was the request from a range of clients for information on the constitutional and procedural aspects of prorogation, a second session and a double dissolution election (which had last occurred in 1987). Again, while we were able to call on our records and analysis of previous such events, we needed to respond to current circumstances. The Clerk, Deputy Clerk and other staff members fully met the professional challenges that arose, including the heightened requirements for accurate and timely responses to requests.

Programming and coordination of business

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

- » offering programming and procedural advice to ministers, shadow ministers, party whips, other members, their staff and others
- » preparing and publishing, each sitting day:
 - » the *Notice Paper*—a document listing all unresolved business before the House in the proposed order of consideration
 - » the *Daily Program* (also known as 'the Blue')—an informal agenda for the day
 - » procedural scripts for all items of business for use in the Chamber and Federation Chamber
- » providing staff from the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office to:
 - » support sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber
 - » oversee ceremonial and security arrangements
 - » ensure the availability of chamber papers
- » processing members' questions in writing to ministers, which involved:
 - » editing them for compliance with the standing orders
 - » publishing them in the *Notice Paper* for the next sitting day
 - » managing answers to questions
- » providing a captioning service for the televised and webcast proceedings of the Chamber and Federation Chamber
- » publishing *This Week in the House*, a weekly online forecast of expected business for the House; and its counterpart, *Last Week in the House*.

Table 2 provides details of the number of questions in writing to ministers that were processed by the House in the five years from 2011–12 to 2015–16.

Table 2 Questions in writing to ministers and answers to questions in writing, 2011–12 to 2015–16

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^a	2014–15	2015–16 ^a
Questions in writing ^b	678	411	201	633	1,310
Questions answered ^c	491	374	126	623	1,235

a Election year (refers to calendar year).

b Excludes questions withdrawn.

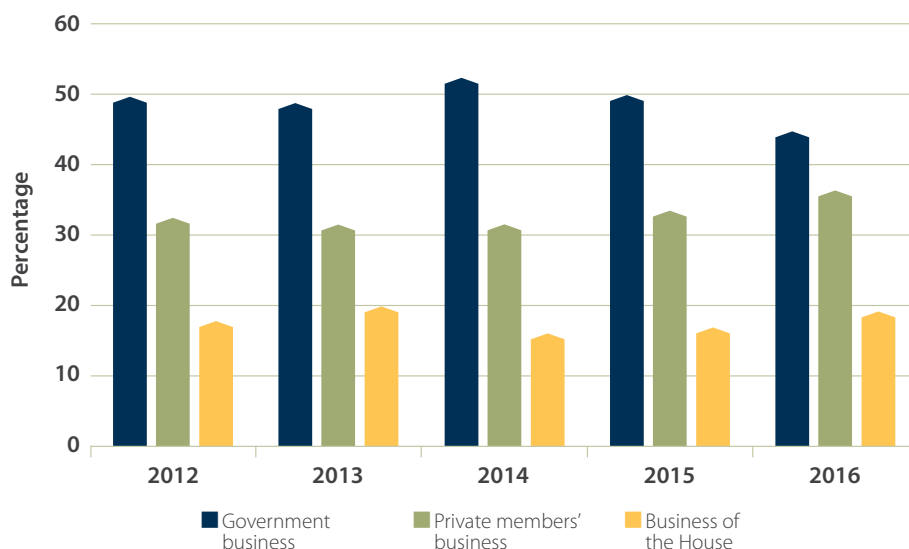
c The responsibility for responding to questions in writing rests with the ministers to whom the questions are put.

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

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

A longitudinal view of the amount of time the House (Chamber and Federation Chamber inclusive) devoted to each of these three types of business is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Government and private members' business and business of the House (Chamber and Federation Chamber), 2012 to 2016



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

Processing and drafting of bills

Legislation

Support for the legislative process in 2015–16 included our traditional responsibilities of:

- » receiving bills from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and keeping them in custody under embargo before their introduction in the House
- » providing bills to ministers for introduction, and to all members in the Chamber after introduction
- » uploading bills, explanatory memorandums and proposed amendments to the Parliament of Australia website, and providing an over-the-counter service for access to hard copies of bills and associated material
- » processing all bills and amendments to bills:
 - » initiated in the House—from introduction to assent
 - » initiated in the Senate—from introduction in the House until passage by the House
- » providing a legislative drafting service for private members
- » preparing and delivering messages to the Senate—173 messages relating to the passage of bills (209 in 2014–15) and 18 other messages (21 in 2014–15)
- » preparing and issuing a Daily Bills List each sitting. The list provides cumulative information on the status of all bills before the parliament, or assented to in the current calendar year.

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

Queries on the bills and legislation collection on the website totalled 1.5 million during the year, representing 15.1 per cent of the 9.7 million queries on the website made through ParlInfo Search.

During the year, 162 bills were introduced (203 in 2014–15), a decrease of 20.2 per cent on the previous year. Of these, 156 were initiated in the House of Representatives and six were received from the Senate. A total of 118 bills passed both Houses (168 in 2014–15), of which 113 were initiated in the House of Representatives (158 in 2014–15) and five in the Senate (10 in 2014–15). Table 3 shows the number of bills introduced and assented to in the five years from 2011–12 to 2015–16.

In 2015–16, the House passed 136 bills (185 in 2014–15), an average of 2.3 bills for each sitting, compared with 2.4 bills on average in the previous year.

The House amended eight (5.9 per cent) of the bills it passed compared to 17 (9.2 per cent) in 2014–15. The Table Office incorporated the amendments into the text of the bills and arranged for their reprinting (as third-reading prints) before transmittal to the Senate. The House agreed to Senate amendments, made amendments requested by the Senate, or did both, in relation to 20 House bills (23 in 2014–15). After further processing by the Table Office, the bills were presented to the Governor-General for assent. The House made amendments to two bills in place of Senate amendments that were not agreed to. (One of those bills is included in the total, above, of House bills with Senate amendments agreed to by the House.)

The number of amendments moved during consideration in detail fell sharply, from 303 in 2014–15 to 119 in 2015–16. Of these, 62 were passed, of which two were opposition amendments. The House did not amend any bills initiated in the Senate in 2015–16 or in the previous year.

The Table Office prepared eight third-reading prints (17 in 2014–15) and 114 assent prints (158 in 2014–15). All documents accurately reflected the decisions of both Houses.

Table 3 Number of bills introduced in the House, and number of bills assented to, 2011–12 to 2015–16

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^a	2014–15	2015–16 ^a
Bills introduced	256	241	182	203	162
Bills assented to ^b	221	228	94	168	118

a Election year (refers to calendar year).

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

Legislative drafting

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

In 2015–16, 21 private members' bills were introduced (including one private Senator's bill). Of the 119 amendments moved during consideration in detail, 59 were private members' amendments, two of which were agreed to. Table 4 provides chamber statistics for private members' legislation for the last five financial years. The table does not reflect all of the department's work in this area, as some drafted material is not introduced into the House.

Since 2010, the department has had an arrangement with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for one of its senior drafters to be seconded to the department. This arrangement continues to be mutually beneficial.

Table 4 Private members' bills introduced and amendments moved (Chamber and Federation Chamber), 2011–12 to 2015–16

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^a	2014–15	2015–16 ^a
Bills introduced	25	30	7	12	21
Second-reading amendments moved	17	9	36	22	16
Consideration in detail amendments moved ^b	732	923	66	303	119

a Election year (refers to calendar year).

b Includes government amendments.

Record of proceedings and House documents

Votes and Proceedings

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

The *Votes and Proceedings* is prepared from the *Votes Officer's Minutes* (or *Live Minutes*), an electronic draft record of the proceedings of the Chamber and the Federation Chamber. The *Votes Officer's Minutes* are more detailed than the *Votes and Proceedings* and are compiled progressively throughout a sitting. The *Votes Officer's Minutes* enable anyone with access to the internet to follow events in the Chamber and Federation Chamber as they occur. Internal and external clients continued to rely on this service and provided positive feedback. In May we marked the 10th anniversary of the publication of the *Votes Officer's Minutes* on the internet, although the Table Office had made this available to Parliament House users three years before that time.

Table Offices Production System

The project to develop the Table Offices Production System (TOPS) was finalised in September 2015. Since then, further development has allowed information held on the system to be available to ParlWork, an application under development by the Department of Parliamentary Services, with the assistance of this department and the Department of the Senate (with both House departments providing the content). ParlWork is intended for use on hand-held devices and is scheduled for public release for the start of the Forty-fifth Parliament. It displays repurposed parliamentary information, including the *Live Minutes*, *Daily Program* and *Notice Paper* provided by the Table Office (alongside the Senate's equivalent documents, provided by the Senate Table Office). Questions in writing for the Forty-fifth Parliament will become available on ParlWork, together with any answers provided.

The Table Office made significant effort to prepare the requirements for ParlWork and test both TOPS and the new application itself—in collaboration with colleagues from the departments of Parliamentary Services and the Senate. Some additional benefits for TOPS users resulted from this development work. Another round of enhancement work for TOPS is being scoped and is expected to be delivered for testing in early 2017.

Documents

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

In 2015–16, documents presented to the House numbered 3,023, a small decrease on 3,308 in the previous year.

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

Parliamentary Papers Series

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

Printed copies of the papers are distributed to 27 external recipients. During the reporting period, the department took over responsibility for administering the distribution of the printed copies from CanPrint. The Presiding Officers advised that 2016 will be the final year the printed series is distributed to recipients.

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

Petitions

The House petitioning process continues to enable Australians to raise issues with the House that are of interest to them. Table 5 shows the number of petitions presented to the House, and the number of signatories, for the past five years. In 2015–16, 87 petitions were presented, compared to 101 in 2014–15. The number of signatures dropped to 118,846 from 250,369 in the previous year.

Table 5 Petitions and signatories to petitions, 2011–12 to 2015–16

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^a	2014–15	2015–16 ^a
Number of petitions presented	183	125	75	101	87
Number of signatories	446,619	325,360	1,365,151	250,369	118,846

a Election year (refers to calendar year).

Research

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

In 2015–16, the office provided:

- » advice, and assistance with advice, to the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and members on the application of the standing orders and House practice
- » secretariat services to the Standing Committee on Procedure
- » advice about and publications on House statistics, practice and procedure
- » information to the public, the media and other parliaments on the operations of the House.

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

Publications

The Chamber Research Office continued to produce regular publications outlining significant procedural events and popular statistics, catering to the wide variety of readers interested in the work of the House by varying the complexity and style of its publications. After each sitting fortnight the office published the *Procedural Digest*, an online, subject-based record of proceedings; the *Procedural Extracts*, a technical document; and the *Statistical Digest*, a statistical record of the work of the House. *Work of the Session*, a comprehensive six-monthly overview of the business of the House and committees, was published in August 2015 and, due to the prorogation of the first session of the parliament, in April 2016. Due to the dissolution of both Houses, another edition was published in May 2016 for the sittings of the second session of the parliament. Three infosheets in the series of 22 infosheets on the work of the House were updated in August 2015, and May and February 2016.

Together, these publications provide a current and concise record of the work of the House and the more significant aspects of that work. The department's publications, including the *Infosheet* series, are listed in Appendix 7.

The Chamber Research Office maintains, publishes and distributes the standing orders of the House. On 13 October 2015 and 2 February 2016, amendments to the standing orders were made by the House and published as addenda to the standing orders printed as at 26 March 2015.

Collaboration with the Department of the Senate

The Chamber Research Office continued its longstanding collaboration with colleagues in the Department of the Senate, including through participation in orientation seminars for the Australian National Internship Program and the Australian Defence Force parliamentary exchange program (discussed in more detail on page 27). Collaboration on a virtual tour of the House and the Senate came to fruition in September 2015, when the tour became available on the parliament's website.

Collaboration with other parliaments

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

Parliamentary committees

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

In 2015–16, these committees held 51 meetings and produced 32 reports. Details of meetings and reports are set out in Appendixes 4 and 5.

Table 6 Committees supported by the Chamber and Federation Chamber activity, 2015–16

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

Selection Committee

Table Office staff supported the Selection Committee in fulfilling three important roles:

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

The committee has 11 members: the Speaker (as chair), the chief whips of the three largest parties, four government members and three non-government members. The committee met 13 times during the reporting period.

Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration

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

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

Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests

The Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests met 13 times during the reporting period and presented two reports to the House. One of the reports was presented under the resolution agreed to by the House to allow individual citizens to have published in Hansard a response to an adverse reference made to them in the House.

The other report, *Report into whether the former Member for Dobell, Mr Craig Thomson, in a statement to the House on 21 May 2012 deliberately misled the House*, followed an extensive process of inquiry by the committee. The task for the committee was to assess whether the findings against Mr Thomson by the Victorian criminal courts could be reconciled with his lengthy and deliberate address in the House. The committee's view is that they could not be reconciled and that Mr Thomson intended to mislead the House, which amounted to a contempt of the House. The committee recommended that the House find Mr Thomson guilty of a contempt of the House and reprimand him for his conduct. The House passed a resolution to this effect on 4 May 2016.

The committee presented two sets of alterations of members' interests during the period and in February 2016 reported on its operations in connection with the registration and declaration of members' interests in 2015.

Standing Committee on Procedure

The Standing Committee on Procedure usually meets once each sitting week. The committee was productive in 2015–16, presenting four reports. The committee demonstrated its responsiveness to concerns raised by the House, presenting reports into provisions for a more family-friendly Chamber and electronic voting in the Chamber. The committee also completed a major inquiry into the consideration in detail of the main appropriation bill, along with its regular inquiry into the maintenance of House standing orders. As always, these inquiries provided members and the public with a means of raising procedural issues of concern and interest. The reports provide a useful snapshot of technical issues being faced by the House and members, as well as offering options to the House for improvement and reform.

Standing Committee on Publications

The House Publications Committee held two meetings in 2015–16 and met with the Senate Publications Committee on eight other occasions. The committee presented 10 reports containing recommendations on which documents presented to parliament should be included in the Parliamentary Papers Series. All recommended documents were agreed for inclusion.

Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings

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

Under the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act, the committee has nine members, including the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. By tradition, the Speaker is chair and the President is vice-chair. The committee meets when required and did not meeting during the reporting period.

Procedural training

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

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

Improving performance

Procedural training and development continued to be a priority during the year. The complexities that needed to be addressed in the circumstances of prorogation, a second session and a double dissolution election provided us with a rich period of learning and development that we will capitalise on.

Outlook

Further improvements were made to TOPS and associated workflows and some efficiencies have been realised, while implementation of some enhancements were delayed. The introduction of ParlWork had its advantages and disadvantages in regard to workflows and optimising the potential of TOPS.

The year saw a return to the long-term pattern of chamber support activity, although the time available for meetings of the Federation Chamber continued to be underused.

Our focus in 2016–17 will continue to be on providing high-quality services to meet the needs of the Speaker, members and other clients. Given the number of members who decided not to contest the election, there will be a large number of new members in the Forty-fifth Parliament. The opening of the new parliament and assistance in the orientation of new members will be a feature of the first half of the coming year. The election period provides an opportunity to review and refresh our procedural publications to ensure their continuing relevance to the needs of members as well as the wider community.

Community awareness

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

In 2015–16 the budget allocation for the activity was \$1.254 million and expenditure was \$0.500 million. Results against the performance criteria for the activity are summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

Performance summary

In 2015–16 the department continued to promote the work of the House and its committees by developing engaging communication products, events and seminars.

In order to meet continued demand for information about the work of the House, the quarterly *About the House* magazine will be replaced by a fortnightly email publication delivering regular pieces of news and information.

The department's social media platforms saw sustained growth, and the face-to-face seminar program received consistently positive feedback from participants.

The department contributed to the education of school-aged children by supporting the Parliamentary Education Office and school tours of Parliament House. We continued to engage younger audiences through the My First Speech competition and to raise awareness of the work of the House and parliament through various internship and exchange programs.

Electronic media

The department continued to engage with the community through social media platforms. The department's Twitter handle, @AboutTheHouse, achieved sustained growth and recently reached 37,000 followers. Given its real-time nature, the platform continues to be a useful tool for engaging with the public and the media.



(@AboutTheHouse Twitter mentions, 18 April 2016)

The department's Facebook following grew to 4,600 in 2015–16 and the platform is proving to be a valuable tool for publishing more descriptive information about the work of the House and its committees. The department also trialled a new Instagram platform in order to promote the work of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

The About the House YouTube channel grew to 2,240 subscribers during the reporting period. Question time remains the most popular content on the YouTube channel and is posted each sitting day.

YouTube is also used to broadcast committee inquiry information and highlights from the House.

Seminars

The department continued to use its seminar program to raise awareness of its work, particularly among staff in government departments.

The department offers four seminar topics: 'About parliament', 'About the budget', 'About legislation' and 'About committees'. Five seminars with a total of 154 participants were held in 2015–16.

The department is also able to tailor seminars to the needs of particular organisations or agencies. In 2015–16 three such custom seminars were held: for the Department of Communications and the Arts, for the Department of Health and for the Loddon Murray Leadership Group. There were a total of 66 participants.

Formal evaluation of the seminar program continues to garner positive feedback.

Competitions and events

My First Speech is an annual nationwide competition open to Australian students enrolled in years 10 to 12. In 2015 (the fourth year of the competition) entries were received from all over the country.

Muthukkumarasamy Mohanapiriyam from AB Paterson College on Queensland's Gold Coast won the 2015 competition, followed by Rachel Aquino from Chatswood High in New South Wales and Anna Pryse-Smith from Ballarat Grammar in Victoria.



My First Speech Competition, 2015. Left to right: Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Tony Smith MP; winner, Muthukkumarasamy Mohanapiriyam; the Hon Catherine King MP; second-place winner, Rachel Aquino; the Hon Stuart Robert MP; third-place winner, Anna Pryse-Smith; Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham; John Alexander OAM MP.

The students were asked to imagine themselves as a newly elected member of parliament and to write and present on video a three-minute speech either about issues important to their electorate or about something they would like to communicate to the federal parliament and the Australian people.

Judges were Member for Longman and Assistant Minister for Innovation the Hon Wyatt Roy MP; Member for Griffith, Terri Butler MP; and Member for Melbourne, Adam Bandt MP.

Competition winners presented their speeches at Parliament House in front of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Tony Smith MP, as well as other members, senators and guests.

Parliament House Open Day

Over 5,000 visitors attended the Parliament House Open Day on 19 September 2015. The event was organised by the Department of the Senate with assistance from the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of Parliamentary Services.

The 2015 Open Day coincided with the 800-year anniversary of Magna Carta. The Australian Parliament is home to the only original copy of Magna Carta in the southern hemisphere. For this reason, the Open Day focused on the two themes of Magna Carta and the House at Work.

The Speaker's University Challenge was one of the key events of Open Day. The Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) and the Australian National University (ANU) debating societies argued whether Magna Carta is still relevant today. The ANU, arguing in the affirmative, took away a spectacular trophy made by the ANU School of Art's Glass Workshop.

Other highlights of the day were tours of the Chamber and the Speaker's suite, areas not usually accessible to the public.



2015 Speaker's University Challenge. Speaker of the House of Representatives the Hon Tony Smith MP (third from left) with the ADFA and ANU debating teams, Australian Parliament House Open Day 2015.



Open Day 2015. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Tony Smith MP, answers questions in the Speaker's suite.



Open Day 2015. Over 5,000 people visited the building. Some of the younger guests enjoyed getting to know some of our national emblems, pictured here in the Marble Foyer.

Parliamentary assistants program

In 2015–16 the parliamentary assistants program, run by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, entered its 16th year. The program offers university students part-time employment in the House of Representatives to promote understanding of, and engagement with, the work of the parliament. (For further details see page 53).

Parliamentary internship program

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

In the second semester of 2015, 20 of the 37 students enrolled in the program were placed with a member or senator. In the first semester of 2016, another 46 interns joined the program, of whom 18 were placed with a member or senator.

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

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

In 2015–16 the program continued to give students from around Australia and from other countries the opportunity to extend and complement their academic studies by studying and working in the parliamentary environment.

Parliamentary exchange program for the Australian Defence Force

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

In August 2016 the program saw members and senators hosting 16 Defence Force representatives.

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

Public visits to the Chamber of the House

In 2015–16 public interest in the sittings of the House continued to be high. Over the 70 sitting days, 55,435 people attended the galleries. Visitor numbers peaked at more than 1,000 per day on 18 occasions, including budget day (brought forward by one week to 3 May 2016 due to the impending double dissolution), when 1,216 people visited the chamber, slightly down from 1,410 in 2014–15; and budget reply night, when 1,327 people visited, down from 1,403 in 2014–15.

These special events in particular required close coordination between the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, the Australian Federal Police and the Parliamentary Security Service, because of the heightened security environment.

Parliamentary Education Office

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

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

Programs at Parliament House

In the reporting year, 89,087 students from around Australia participated in the PEO's experiential role-play program at Parliament House. This was a 1 per cent decrease on 2014–15, a normal amount of variation and to be expected in a near-capacity program. Attendance figures reflect the program's continued popularity. The cumulative total of students who have participated in role-play programs since the building opened in 1988 passed two million in 2016. In 2015–16 the PEO also conducted a number of activities targeting students, trainee and qualified teachers, school principals and parliamentary visitors.

In late 2015 the PEO acquired a second regular teaching space, the APH Public Alcove. This additional room ensures secure accommodation for the simultaneous delivery of two role-play programs and brings many further benefits.

Modifications were made to the PEO's operating procedures for managing school groups to make adjustments for the second teaching space and to ensure overall compliance with the enhanced security requirements at Parliament House.

In collaboration with the Parliamentary Skills Centre, the PEO made a significant contribution to the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project, managed by the Parliamentary Skills Centre, through written resources and conference presentations. The project aims to increase the level of gender awareness within the parliamentary cultures of many Pacific nations (see page 45 for more information.)

The parliamentary venue management system, which includes school tour bookings, continues to undergo refinement. When fully functional, the system will provide improved information and services to schools and tour operators that book student programs at Parliament House.

Outreach activities

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

The PEO website (www.peo.gov.au) remains a highly effective and popular vehicle for disseminating parliamentary education material and resources to teachers and students located around Australia. PEO website patronage increased in 2015–16 to 1,357,684 visitor sessions, a 50 per cent increase on 2014–15. The increase may reflect the addition of considerable new content and improved functionality, which has broadened audience appeal and allows the site to better support the draft national curriculum in civics and citizenship. The introduction of rolling advertisements on the homepage for web content is also likely to have expanded the website's appeal.

During the year, the PEO continued to revise and update web content and developed significant new content, including the new video, 'Get involved', which was designed to inform and encourage young people to be active citizens. The reporting year saw expanded resources supporting the national curriculum, as well as improvements to the interactive website 'Your questions on notice', which allows students to ask questions of parliamentary educators. 'To our last shilling: Australian Parliament and World War 1', an online resource acknowledging the role of the parliament in World War 1, was expanded to include fact sheets. The PEO website resource 'Parliament now' continued to develop and present up-to-date information about current parliamentary events and the achievements and statistics of the Forty-fourth Parliament.

In recognition of its national responsibilities, the PEO continued to explore the potential of new technology for the remote delivery of PEO programs and resources, including interactive videoconferencing. This is on track to be introduced early in the new financial year.

School visit program

The PEO continued its work with members and senators on a limited scale through a targeted school visit program called Parliament Alive. In 2015–16, visits took place in 60 schools in northern Queensland, suburban Sydney and regional New South Wales. More than 4,000 students participated in programs delivered in their classrooms. These activities gave students an invaluable opportunity to learn first-hand about the role and work of their federal member or senator.

Educational resources

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

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

Outlook

The department will continue to enhance its community engagement in 2016–17 by working to increase the number of digital subscriptions to social media accounts and the new *About the House* newsletter. It will also work to improve the profile of committee activities by investigating more effective ways of engaging with the media and the community, and developing tailored communication strategies.

The department will build on its popular seminar program by investigating more topics and different approaches to delivery, and will continue to encourage youth engagement with the House through activities such as the My First Speech competition. Another special event scheduled for 2017 will celebrate the 30th anniversary of House of Representatives committee system. This will provide a new opportunity to engage the public in the work of the House and a possible forum for the Speaker's University Challenge.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office will maintain its close working relationship with the PEO and Visitor Services in providing the best possible service to the various individuals, groups and schools visiting Parliament House.

Committee support

The Committee Office supports parliamentary committees in examining policy and legislation and scrutinising the executive. In the 2015–16 financial year, the office supported the work of 11 House standing committees, 10 joint committees (including two joint select committees) and one domestic committee (Petitions) (see Table 7).

These committees were supported by nine Committee Office secretariats. Expenditure on these services in 2015–16 was \$8.527 million, which was \$0.818 million above the budget allocation of \$7.709 million. Staff levels are shown in Appendix 2.

Table 7 Committees of the Forty-fourth Parliament supported by the Committee Office

House committees	Joint committees
Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry	Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (since 13 October 2015)	Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia ^a
Standing Committee on Economics	Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth ^a
Standing Committee on Education and Employment	Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Standing Committee on the Environment	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Standing Committee on Health	Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs	Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications (until 13 October 2015)	Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities (since 13 October 2015)	Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
Standing Committee on Petitions	Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs	
Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue	

^a Each of these committees was continued for the life of the parliament.

Note: Five House domestic committees (Appropriations, Procedure, Publications, Selection and Privileges) and the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings are supported by other areas of the department and are discussed on pages 19 to 21.

On 13 October 2015, by resolution of the House, the Committee on Infrastructure and Communications was abolished. In its place two new committees were created—the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts, and the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities. This was the first occasion when House standing orders were amended mid-parliament to change the structure of the general-purpose standing committees.

Committee Office activity

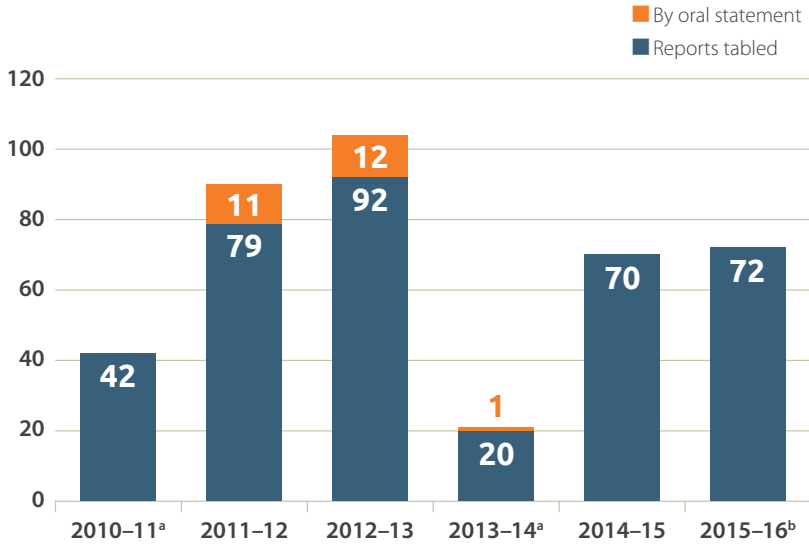
In 2015–16 Committee Office staff continued to support the diverse work of committees. This involved:

- » supporting committees' private meetings and public hearings
- » providing procedural and inquiry-related advice for committees and stakeholders
- » fielding inquiries from interested stakeholders about the purpose and progress of inquiries
- » assisting witnesses and the general public to participate in committee inquiries
- » undertaking research and analysing evidence received by committees
- » drafting chairs' reports
- » facilitating the adoption and tabling of the committees' reports
- » undertaking projects during the election period to strengthen the framework to support the committees.

Figure 5 shows that committees supported by the Committee Office tabled 72 reports in the 2015–16 financial year (until 10 May 2016). Figure 6 shows that these committees held 555 meetings (public and private) over the period. Appendix 4 presents a breakdown of this activity by committee.

Figure 5 shows that these committees tabled 142 reports in the second and third (financial) years of the Forty-fourth Parliament. This compares with 171 reports (excluding reports by oral statement) tabled in the previous two full financial years of the Forty-third Parliament—the higher level of reporting reflecting the unusually large number of bills inquiries conducted. The level of reporting in the Forty-fourth Parliament is consistent with trend levels.

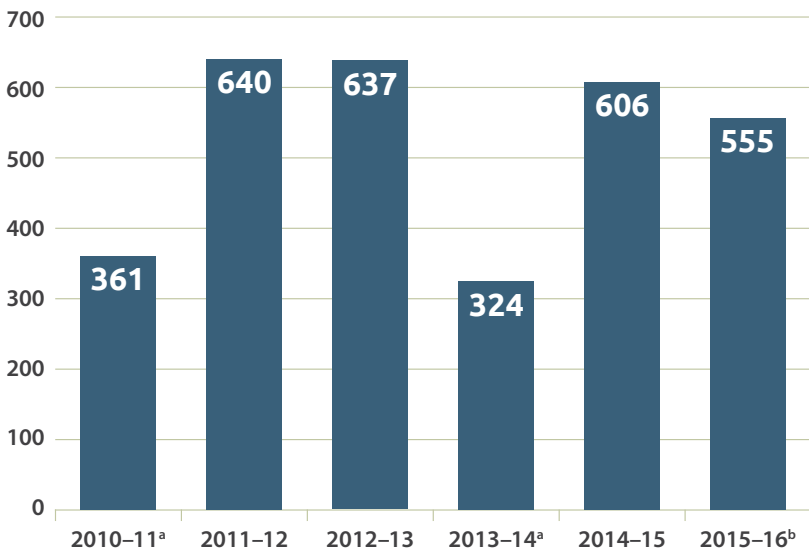
Figure 5 Number of reports tabled by committees supported by the Committee Office, 2010–11 to 2015–16



^a Election year (refers to calendar year).

^b The Forty-fourth Parliament ended with the dissolution of both Houses on 9 May 2016.

Figure 6 Number of committee meetings (public and private) supported by the Committee Office, 2010–11 to 2015–16



^a Election year (refers to calendar year).

^b The Forty-fourth Parliament ended with the dissolution of both Houses on 9 May 2016.

Committee work, the prorogation and dissolution of parliament

The Forty-fourth Parliament was unusual in that, for the first time since 1977, parliament was briefly prorogued and a second session was convened. Because of prorogation, House committees were unable to operate between 5.00 pm on Friday 15 April and 9.30 am on Monday 18 April. However, the prorogation had little practical impact on the work of the Committee Office.

The prospect (from at least 21 March 2016) of the dissolution of both Houses had a significant impact on the work of committees as they sought to conclude inquiries and present reports should the parliament come to an end earlier than anticipated. In the three months to 10 May 2016, committees tabled 43 reports (see Appendix 5), more than 60 per cent of the total number of reports presented in 2015–16.

On 1 July 2015, the committees supported by the Committee Office were conducting 41 ongoing inquiries. During 2015–16, the committees commenced 54 new inquiries and tabled 65 reports (including three interim reports) relating to 78 inquiries. As a result of the efforts of committees and secretariats, only 20 inquiries lapsed when the Houses were dissolved, of which six were inquiries by House committees and 14 were joint committee inquiries. The inquiry-related activities of committees are summarised in Appendix 5.

Changes in committee membership

The period was marked by many changes in the membership and chairs of committees. This was the result of several factors, including changes to the ministry in September and December 2015, and February 2016. There were 29 changes of chairs of committees that are supported by the Committee Office. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters had five different chairs in seven months and the House Standing Committee on Economics had three chairs during the year.

Government responses to committee reports

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

At the start of the year, 50 reports of committees supported by the Committee Office that required a government response had not yet received one. Of these, 34 had been outstanding for more than six months. From 25 June 2015 to 4 May 2016, the government tabled 30 responses to reports of committees supported by the Committee Office (28 in 2014–15). At year's end, 53 reports for committees supported by the Committee Office were yet to receive a response and, of these, 35 had been outstanding for more than six months.

Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs

The department supports the informal Liaison Committee of Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs, which is chaired by the Deputy Speaker. The committee was established to provide a forum for discussion on matters of interest among chairs and deputy chairs and to provide advice to the Speaker on matters affecting parliamentary committees. The committee met three times during 2015–16: in September and November 2015, and March 2016.

In 2015–16, the committee continued its focus on helping committees to enhance their effectiveness, using avenues available to committees to require government responses to committee reports and updates on new technologies.

Performance of the Committee Office

A key performance indicator for the Committee Office is the level of satisfaction with committee advice and services reported in an annual survey of members. Because of the timing of the 2016 federal election, the survey did not take place in 2016. Feedback on members' satisfaction with the performance of staff in the Committee Office was, however, provided through other channels.

The Clerk Assistant (Committees) met individually with most committee chairs during the final quarter of 2015 and received generally positive feedback on the performance of committee secretaries and other secretariat staff. The Committee Office consistently met support standards for providing briefing material and draft reports to committees. Secretariats generally provided timely, accurate and clear advice to chairs and committee members, and arranged public hearings and supported meetings of committees effectively and efficiently.

Positive feedback on the work of secretariats was also received during filmed interviews with nine committee chairs and deputy chairs in March and May 2016. The footage is to be used during the induction of members, in presentations to visiting parliamentarians and staff, and in official seminars.

The satisfaction of members with the work of staff in the Committee Office was also indicated in statements members made when presenting reports. The box on page 36 shows a selection of these statements.

Comments from members acknowledging the work of secretariats in 2015–16

[The secretariat staff] were just so professional and so good. On behalf of the committee and the parliament, I thank them and their colleagues. I had not actually been involved in committee work for something like 10 years until I took over this committee recently. I had forgotten just how very good they are. I thank them.

The work of the secretariats of all committees is, I venture to say, very much unsung in this place. I know that people do acknowledge it, but, for people out there in the community who might be listening to this, the secretariats of the committees in parliament work very hard to ensure the smooth running of this place. I commend them for that.

Public Accounts and Audit is one of the premier committees of parliament, and it is served by a great secretariat that does brilliant work.

The committee's work is extraordinarily important. We are very ably supported by a very professional secretariat. I thank [the secretariat] for the support they have given us.

I also want to thank the secretariat for the professional support that they have given us and for the invaluable work that they do. Without their support we, as members of parliament, may struggle to bring forward such a comprehensive report.

I, too, at the start, give my sincere thanks to the committee secretariat, who have worked so diligently not just on this inquiry but throughout the course of this parliament. We are privileged to have access to people with tremendous research skills and a great depth of knowledge, and they have helped us to pull together the best reports that we possibly can. Given the breadth of the inquiries this committee takes on, the committee has to work tremendously hard to make sure that all of those inquiries, all of the hearings, run as smoothly as they do.

I also acknowledge the great contribution of all the members of the secretariat. As the chair's contribution made clear, this was a very extensive inquiry that presented some logistical challenges as well as some other challenges, and the work of the secretariat was invaluable and of the highest professional standard.

I give my appreciation to the inquiry secretariat who worked tirelessly to source appropriate witnesses and managed to pull together some very disparate evidence and submissions.

I thank the hard-working secretariat who helped us through this inquiry. They really sped things up so the committee, like many committees at the moment, could meet the timelines of this parliament, finish our report and present it to the parliament today before, inevitably it seems, it will be prorogued sometime soon.

I would especially like to thank the committee secretariat for their assistance in enabling the committee to develop this high-quality report in such a short time frame.

I would like to also express my sincere thanks to the secretariat for the fine work that they do to assist all members and senators on the committee.

Finally, I would like to thank the hardworking secretariat, who have been called on to go beyond the call of duty to ensure that the reports that we have delivered have been done on time and, I think, with serious detail and commitment to the task that was given to us.

Secretariat support for committee inquiries

Committee Office staff supported complex and demanding committee inquiries in 2015–16.

Handling email campaigns

Three committee inquiries supported by the department received substantial public interest: the inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations, and the inquiries into the China–Australia Free Trade Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The Standing Committee on the Environment's inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations commenced in February 2015. Significant volumes of submissions and other written contributions were received from stakeholder groups and members of the public, and public hearings were held throughout the year. More than 12,000 written contributions were received, largely by email, many of which were based on one of 22 different form letter templates, with some being facilitated by campaign-style websites. In all, the committee accepted 685 unique submissions to the inquiry, and noted a broad range of general correspondence relating to the inquiry.

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties' inquiry into the Trans-Pacific Partnership received over 16,000 written contributions by email and hard-copy letters. Of these, 316 were received directly from individuals or organisations, while the remainder were generated through campaign-style websites. The committee accepted and published 3,348 contributions as formal submissions.

For both inquiries, the large volume of written contributions resulted in increased administrative workloads. The secretariats had facilitated appropriate levels of public engagement, and ensured the committees had access to the written evidence necessary to carry out their functions.

Supporting domestic public hearings and site visits

Secretariats in the Committee Office supported public hearings and site visits across the country.

- » As part of its inquiry into agricultural innovation, the Agriculture and Industry Committee visited the Alpine Valleys Dairy Pathways Project in the Kiewa Valley, the University of New England's Kirby SMART Farm in Armidale, and the Australian Centre for Field Robotics at the University of Sydney.
- » As part of its inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations, the Environment Committee conducted several site inspections, public hearings and roundtable discussions in Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria.
- » As part of its inquiry into Smart ICT, the Infrastructure, Transport and Cities Committee visited BCE Surveying in Bunbury to inspect the company's mobile spatial imaging system.
- » In October 2015, the Public Works Committee conducted an inspection of proposed works at HMAS Stirling on Garden Island in Western Australia.

Managing organised protests

The Treaties Committee inquiry into the China–Australia Free Trade Agreement received considerable interest from key stakeholder groups. Six large demonstrations were held to coincide with the committee’s public hearings. Demonstrations were also staged to coincide with some public hearings of the inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations.

In both cases, the secretariats worked with stakeholder groups and the Australian Federal Police to ensure that the demonstrations did not prevent the orderly conduct of committee proceedings or endanger the public hearing participants.

Facilitating international visits

Committee Office staff supported several overseas committee visits over the reporting period.

In September 2015, the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit visited New Zealand and Fiji. The secretariat supported several meetings with the joint committee’s counterparts and other public account and audit bodies in these countries. It drafted recommendations that identified areas of New Zealand’s oversight of public administration to be assessed for use in Australia.

In October 2015, the secretariat of the House Standing Committee on the Environment supported a committee visit to Singapore and Malaysia. The secretariat prepared a series



Members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works with ADF personnel at HMAS Stirling, October 2015. The Department of Defence sought committee approval to upgrade and refurbish key infrastructure and facilities, some of which had been operating for nearly 40 years.

of meetings with relevant parliamentarians, public officials, academics and companies in these countries to help the committee to understand some of the key environmental challenges facing these nations.

In December 2015, the secretariat of the Trade Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade facilitated a committee visit to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar. The secretariat assisted with the committee's busy program of meetings in these countries. It drafted a comprehensive report, tabled in May 2016, outlining the current state of, and future prospects for, Australia's trade with the Middle East.

Supporting significant legislative reforms

The secretariat of the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters supported a significant bill inquiry proposing reform of the Senate voting system. The Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Bill 2016—the centrepiece of which was the abolition of group voting tickets—was touted as the biggest reform to Australia's electoral system in 30 years.

The committee's majority report recommended a significant amendment to the bill to allow for partial optional preferential voting below the line. This recommendation was accepted and the revised bill passed both Houses. The Australian Electoral Commission made the corresponding changes in time for the 2 July 2016 federal election.

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security conducted two bill inquiries on national security matters over the reporting period. Its advisory reports on



Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade delegation members meet Saudi Arabian politicians following the December 2015 municipal council elections, which were the first elections in which women in Saudi Arabia were allowed to vote and stand for election. Left to right: Maria Vamvakinou MP; Dr Lama Al Sulaiman, the successful candidate for Jeddah Municipal Council election; Her Excellency Dr Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, the appointed member of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Shura Council; two members of Dr Al Sulaiman's campaign team; and the Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP.

these bills made a significant contribution to parliamentary scrutiny. Indeed, of the six bills it scrutinised in the Forty-fourth Parliament, the committee made 48 recommendations to amend provisions or introduce further safeguards and oversight mechanisms.

Gathering evidence internationally

In his last speech in parliament, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP presented the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on its inquiry into Australia's advocacy for the abolition of the death penalty. The inquiry report, *A world without the death penalty*, tabled on 5 May 2016, concluded that the need for Australia to solidify its efforts towards global abolition has never been more pressing. The inquiry followed the executions carried out in 2015 of Australians in Indonesia, despite impassioned appeals, including from Australian parliamentarians and sympathetic Indonesians. To ensure the committee's access to the best evidence and information internationally, the secretariat assisted with the committee's extensive engagement with overseas-based witnesses, typically using videoconferencing, and contributions from foreign governments and their diplomatic representatives.

The 20th anniversary of the Treaties Committee

On 18 March 2016, the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties held a seminar in the Main Committee Room of Parliament House to mark its 20th anniversary. The chair and deputy chair of the committee gave presentations, as did the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and various academic experts. The committee secretariat organised the event and presented a statistical overview of the committee's work.



Left to right: Deputy Chair and Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, the Hon Kelvin Thompson MP and the Hon Luke Hartsuyker (respectively), and committee member the Hon Melissa Parke MP at the seminar in March 2016 celebrating 20 years of the committee.

Information and communications technology projects

The improved use of ICT has been critical to increasing the efficiency of the Committee Office's work and enabling the committees and their many stakeholders to connect more effectively.

E-petitions

The department worked with the Department of Parliamentary Services in 2015–16 to develop the capacity for electronic petitions to be hosted on the Parliament of Australia website. This project is expected to be completed in time for commencement of the Forty-fifth Parliament. Subject to the House amending its standing orders to allow electronic petitions, the new system will make it easier for the public to petition the House, and also streamline secretariat support for the Petitions Committee.

SCID and Report Builder

The Committee Office continued to collaborate with the Department of the Senate on the Shared Committee Information Database (SCID), a data management and publishing tool. An exhibits module has been added to SCID that will provide greater flexibility in the recording of committee exhibits and allow staff to produce a comprehensive list of exhibits for committee reports.

Committee Office staff continued to test the new report template, Report Builder, carrying out several rounds of user acceptance testing during the reporting period. Report Builder will draw on information contained in SCID to include in committee reports and will produce reports in PDF, HTML and eBook format.

Videoconferencing facilities

In the past, the videoconferencing facilities available to committees even within Australia have often been unreliable. Moreover, tight travel budgets and time constraints have restricted committees' ability to take oral evidence from overseas witnesses and those in very remote parts of Australia.

Committee Room 1R3 in Parliament House in Canberra now has state-of-the-art Cisco-based videoconferencing facilities, which will be operational from the beginning of the Forty-fifth Parliament. A wide range of committees will benefit from the capacity to hold public hearings via videoconference with witnesses based in places where committees do not have the resources to travel.

Election period projects

Committee Office staff worked on a variety of projects during the election period following the dissolution of the House in May. These included:

- » updating and enhancing access to material in committee manuals
- » developing a discussion paper on committee secretariat staffing
- » reviewing the structure and content of committee reports
- » developing a system for committee member induction and training

- » coordinating the preparation and delivery of the induction seminar to new members before the Forty-fifth Parliament
- » streamlining the collection of the Committee Office's statistics
- » updating Committee Office guides for committee chairs, members and members' staff, and brochures and guidance material for prospective submitters to, and witnesses before, parliamentary committees
- » reviewing committees' experience with major email campaigns in the Forty-fourth Parliament with a view to coordinating their approach to these campaigns
- » planning for an event in 2017 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the House committee system
- » delivering a Committee Office training and development seminar before commencement of the Forty-fifth Parliament
- » enhancing the professionalism and consistency of committee papers across secretariats, including standardising and developing templates for committee business documents and developing standard first meeting papers and committee resolutions.

The department also supported several Committee Office staff to undertake secondment opportunities with external agencies over the election period. One staff member was placed with the Bundestag (German lower house).



Departmental staff attending the annual planning day, 28 October 2015.

Improving performance

During the year the Committee Office focused on capability development. It exercised limited recruitment and continued training and development, effective performance management, and process improvement, particularly in the area of ICT. As a result, the Committee Office achieved some enhanced capability during the year.

As noted earlier, the department prioritised opportunities to develop leadership qualities in its staff. Between April 2015 and September 2015, 12 Committee Office staff at various classification levels participated in Yellow Edge leadership development programs. In September 2015, three staff gave presentations to the senior executive on what they had learned from these courses.

Outlook

Committee activity will resume after the new parliament first sits in August 2016. The first priority will be to support re-establishment of committees in the new parliament, and to settle secretariat staffing. Significant recruitment activity is planned from early August, to restore staffing numbers to trend levels following some turnover at the end of 2015–16. This will be followed by continuing investment in staff training and development to ensure all staff have the knowledge and skills to support committees to a high standard.

The Committee Office will be supported in the new parliament by a number of new ICT applications. Report Builder will enable a more flexible and streamlined platform from which to draft and publish reports. The new videoconferencing facilities will enable committees to take evidence reliably from wider sources than travel budgets and committee members' schedules have previously allowed.

CommDocs will continue to offer a secure, paper-free environment for committee members. The anticipated introduction of electronic petitioning of the House will require changes to website information, Petitions Committee processes, and secretariat administration.

In introducing new technologies and developing existing platforms, the department is committed to comprehensive training for Committee Office staff and committee members. This will be an ongoing priority for the Committee Office.

Inter-parliamentary relations and capacity-building

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

The program's activities and projects in 2015–16 were coordinated primarily by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO) and the Parliamentary Skills Centre (PSC), with input from all four parliamentary departments. IPRO and the PSC are joint offices administered by this department, and IPRO receives part funding from the Department of the Senate.

IPRO manages incoming and outgoing delegation programs, membership of inter-parliamentary organisations, and the international interests and travel of members and senators. The PSC is responsible for all parliamentary strengthening and capacity-building programs of the Australian Parliament.

In 2015–16, the budget allocation for the activity was \$1.751 million and expenditure was \$1.944 million. Results against the performance criteria for the activity are summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

Performance summary

A comprehensive program of incoming and outgoing visits during the year strengthened bilateral links with several national parliaments. Activity declined in the second half of the year due to the prorogation of parliament, the second session of the Forty-fourth Parliament and the early dissolution of both Houses prior to a general election. The Australian Parliament continued to support the capacity-building of parliaments in the region and played an active role in the parliamentary associations to which it belongs.

Parliamentary engagement

During 2015–16, the department coordinated 23 official visits overseas, including bilateral visits to 11 countries; attendance at eight assemblies, conferences, workshops and seminars; and 11 other visits, including Presiding Officer visits and annual committee visits to New Zealand and the Asia–Pacific region (see Appendix 7). There were seven official visits by parliamentary delegations from other countries as guests of the Australian Parliament (see Appendix 8) and 30 other visits, including a range of capacity-building activities (see Appendixes 9 and 10).

A significant regional focus was maintained in the visits programs. Four of the seven official visits to Australia were from parliaments in our immediate region, including the annual visit by a combined delegation from ASEAN countries. Twelve of the 23 overseas visits were to countries in Asia or Oceania.

A priority for the outgoing visits in 2015–16 was to establish, or re-establish, links with parliaments in the region following their elections. The visits included a delegation to Australia's largest neighbour, Indonesia, following elections for both houses of its parliament; the first official Australian parliamentary delegation to Fiji in nine years, following the first elections in that country since a military coup in 2006; and an election observer mission to Myanmar to assist that country with its first openly contested poll since 1990.

In 2015–16, a parliamentary field visit was again included in the outgoing delegations program, following a successful trial in 2014. The destination for a field visit is chosen based on a policy issue, allowing a group of parliamentarians interested in a particular issue to broaden their knowledge and understanding and report back to the parliament.

The parliamentary field visit was made in October 2015 to the United States and Canada to examine energy security. The delegation noted in its report to parliament that 'field visits such as this allow parliamentarians the opportunity to look at an issue in some depth, and have mutual exchange of information with other countries on the issue at hand. It is a valuable opportunity that was appreciated by all participants.'

It is anticipated that two field visits will be a standard inclusion in the outgoing delegations program in non-election years, commencing in 2017.

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

Outgoing and incoming delegations gave positive feedback on the quality of the programs, both at debrief meetings and through correspondence. For example, Axel Voss MEP, leader of the European Parliament delegation to Australia in February 2016, expressed the delegation's appreciation for the 'very fruitful' program arranged for the visit and the 'outstanding [and] high-quality service' provided by departmental staff.

Parliamentary cooperation

The Australian Parliament maintained its strong commitment to regional and international parliamentary cooperation in 2015–16. Delegations attended the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, two Inter-Parliamentary Union assemblies, the Asia–Pacific Parliamentary Forum, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth. (For more detail see Appendix 7.)

Parliamentary strengthening

The PSC has responsibility for administering the parliament's parliamentary strengthening activities. With a small staff, through the generous support of members, senators and colleagues from throughout the parliamentary service, the centre enables the parliament to engage in substantial collaboration in capacity-building with Pacific nation and other parliaments.

The centre continued to coordinate activities under both the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program and the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project (funded under the Australian Government's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

Initiative). The major focus of the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program during the year was on capacity-building to support the re-establishment of the Fiji Parliament (in collaboration with the Victorian Parliament and the United Nations Development Programme). This program was extended until 30 June 2018. An agreement was made during the year to provide capacity-building support to the Parliament of Samoa in collaboration with the Tasmanian Parliament. The initiatives with the parliaments of Fiji and Samoa were made possible by funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

During the year, the major activities of the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project were the exchange of women members between Australian and Pacific parliaments; the annual Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Forum (which was held in Apia and considered women's economic empowerment); the attendance of Pacific parliamentary educators at the Australasian Parliamentary Educators' Conference in Wellington, followed by a workshop in Wellington for the parliamentary educators and Pacific clerks (to refine the gender equality learning program being developed by the project for use in Pacific parliaments); and scholarships for three Pacific parliamentary staff (from Nauru, Samoa, and Tonga), who undertook research attachments at the Parliamentary Library for a month.

The PSC continued to provide support for capacity-building programs while responding to requests for assistance from other parliaments and international organisations, including through collaborative work with colleagues in the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services. One highlight of professional development activities at the international level was the regular Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, which was coordinated by the PSC and took place over 10 days in February 2016. Participants were senior staff from the national parliaments of Fiji, France, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Nigeria, the People's Republic of China, Solomon Islands and Vietnam, as well as the European Parliament.

Departmental staff and colleagues from all parliamentary departments, through the coordination of the PSC, contributed to study programs for members and staff of a number of parliaments, including Myanmar, Pakistan, Samoa, United Arab Emirates and Vanuatu.

Improving performance

Late in 2014–15, the approval process for additional outgoing delegations (that is, ad hoc additions to the formal delegations program for each year) was replaced with a devolved process whereby the Presiding Officers were authorised to directly approve, on the Prime Minister's behalf, up to 12 additional delegation places in each calendar year.

This streamlined process meant that in 2015–16 the parliament responded more promptly to valuable opportunities for international engagement. Examples were international discussions on counter-terrorism measures by members of the parliament's Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, and participation by members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade at the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review of Australia's fulfilment of its human rights obligations. The latter visit allowed the parliament to respond positively to the current Inter-Parliamentary

Union Strategy and to a June 2014 resolution of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which emphasised the desirability of greater parliamentary involvement in the Universal Periodic Review process.

Following the restructure in 2014–15 of administrative support functions for the international program, attention turned in 2015–16 to better documenting rules and corporate knowledge to promote consistency in its administration. Updated manuals for delegation members and delegation secretaries were published, and work commenced on recording internal procedures in operational manuals for staff, with an expected publication date before the commencement of the Forty-fifth Parliament.

The digital app formerly used to provide briefing material to outgoing parliamentary delegations was replaced with an online portal that improves the speed at which international program staff can make new and updated information available to delegation members.

Outlook

As with the second half of 2015–16, incoming and outgoing delegation activity in the first half of 2016–17 will be relatively modest as a consequence of the federal election. A full program of delegation visits will resume from 2017. An indicative program of outgoing delegations for the Forty-fifth Parliament (2016–19) will be developed for the Presiding Officers' consideration and will continue to prioritise engagement with parliaments in the Asia–Pacific region.

An early priority for the 2016–17 incoming visits program will be the second annual MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia) Speakers' Consultation, to be hosted by the Australian Parliament. MIKTA is an informal consultative partnership between the five countries, based on regular meetings between their foreign ministers. Australia is the host country in 2016. The Speakers' Consultation will enable the presiding officers of the five parliaments to exchange ideas and discuss issues of mutual concern, building on links established at the first Speakers' Consultation, held in the Republic of Korea in 2015.

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

Members' services and corporate support

The members' services and corporate support activity includes:

- » providing a concierge service to members and their staff, as a primary point of contact for enquiries
- » paying members' salaries and allowances
- » providing the department with advice and support on financial and human resource management, as well as records management, publishing and office services
- » organising members' office accommodation, furniture and fittings; providing mail and courier services; and handling bookings for committee rooms and chamber galleries
- » maintaining and publishing key information about members and former members.

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

We liaise closely with colleagues from the Department of Finance and the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) on a range of matters.

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

The 2015–16 budget allocation for the activity was \$7.446 million and expenditure was \$8.488 million. Results against the performance criteria for the activity are summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

Performance summary

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

In 2014–15 there was a restructuring of security responsibilities at Parliament House. As a result, the AFP now has a key role on the Security Management Board and provides central oversight of all security arrangements at Parliament House. This approach was consolidated over the reporting period, with security-related matters being dealt with in a coordinated manner.

During the year, we continued to work on ICT projects to improve efficiency and service delivery. One example of this was the development of replacement support systems for the chambers, committees and members' services.

The office furniture replacement project continued in the reporting year. Following completion of its initial phase in October 2015, the project was extended to incorporate all members' staff offices in the House of Representatives wing. This work is well underway and will include the fit-out of 125 suites over two years.

Services and advice

Media services

The Serjeant-at-Arms and staff continued to work with the various media bureaus and the governing committee of the Parliamentary Press Gallery to ensure compliance with the rules for media-related activity in Parliament House and its precincts.

During the year, the Serjeant-at-Arms, the Usher of the Black Rod and their delegates liaised closely with the press gallery to balance media access, security and parliamentary requirements at major parliamentary events, including budget day and party room leadership ballots for the positions of Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Speaker.

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

During the year, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office responded to some 150 requests to film or photograph in the private areas of the building.



During a division. Left to right: Mark Coulton, MP, Chief Nationals Whip; Mike Gilby, Parliamentary Assistant; David Elder, Clerk of the House of Representatives; the Hon Tony Smith MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Claressa Surtees, Deputy Clerk of the House of Representatives; Trudi Elphick, Parliamentary Assistant; Jill Hall MP, Deputy Opposition Whip.

Information services

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

During 2015, the department continued to operate its drop-in centre every sitting Tuesday to enable members and their staff to get information or give feedback on any of the services it provided. Nine sessions were held, yielding eight queries. As in previous years, the sessions were staffed by senior departmental members and a customer service officer from DPS was invited to attend to increase the value of the service to members. No sessions were held during 2016 because of the very low take-up of the opportunity by members and it has been decided to discontinue the drop-in centre. Alternative ways of engaging with the issues of members and their staff will be pursued.

Accommodation services

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

During the year, the office arranged 28 office relocations as a result of ministerial changes and changes to office-holder positions. This number was significantly more than in 2014–15. The office worked closely with the chief government whip to ensure the relocations were completed quickly. The office also coordinated 428 requests to supply and move furniture (significantly more than in the previous year). The requests arose from movements of members to and from the ministerial wing.

All tasks were performed within agreed timeframes and to agreed standards, and to the satisfaction of the whips and individual members.

Given the high number of senators in the first Turnbull ministry (and therefore fewer members in the ministry), there was a shortage of accommodation for the extra backbench members in the House of Representatives wing. As a result, one backbench member was accommodated in a vacant senator's suite and one in the ministerial wing. Plans have been drawn up to convert two rooms of departmental office accommodation into members' suites, and it is expected that the work will be completed before the recommencement of sittings in 2017.

Maintenance, access and transport services

Maintenance requests for work in members' suites are coordinated by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, and include both emergency and routine work. During the year, the office coordinated 164 emergency requests, which were all attended to promptly. In addition, the office coordinated 155 routine maintenance requests for repairs or alterations to suites or common areas. We take a proactive approach by performing office shutdowns and inspections over the autumn and winter recesses so that issues can be identified, reported and addressed while parliament is not sitting.

In 2015–16 the office coordinated 1,126 requests for assistance with telephone faults, relocations, and allocations of telephone numbers. This is a significant increase on the previous year as a result of the ministry changes and the furniture replacement project. Faults reported were referred to telephone support in DPS within five minutes of receipt, and appropriate timeframes for resolution were agreed with the affected areas.

As the area responsible for access to members' suites, the office approved 615 requests by DPS for access to suites and to general circulation areas for maintenance and services.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office provides a Transport Office to coordinate transport services for members, including managing the COMCAR shuttle service during sitting weeks. The shuttle service provides a readily available, secure car-with-driver service in Canberra for members. In 2015–16 the Transport Office managed 8,172 bookings from members, compared to 10,335 bookings in 2014–15. (Figures exclude unbooked shuttle trips from the House of Representatives entrance.) This was a 20 per cent decrease in bookings on the previous year, which did not include an election period.

Parliament House security

The Serjeant-at-Arms represents the department on the Security Management Board. The board is established pursuant to section 65A of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* to provide advice to the Presiding Officers on security policy and the management of security measures for Parliament House. The board met eight times in 2015–16. The department was consulted on a major program of work to improve physical security for the building, which will continue through 2016–17.

The department is also represented on two other security-related consultative groups. The Incident Planning and Response Committee is chaired by the National Manager Protection (AFP) and attended by representatives of the parliamentary departments and several external agencies. It meets prior to meetings of the Security Management Board in order to provide specialist advice to the board. The Joint Management Group is chaired by the Security Manager Parliament House (AFP) and attended by representatives of the parliamentary departments, the Department of Finance and the AFP. This group meets weekly to consider security-related matters and coordinate responses at the operational level.

This year for the first time, in collaboration with the other parliamentary departments, the department submitted a compliance report under the government's Protective Security Policy Framework. Through the compliance-checking process, the parliamentary departments are able to benchmark themselves against the government's physical, information and personnel security requirements and seek to introduce best practice standards.

The department also established a business continuity network to coordinate work area contingency plans in the event of business disruptions. The department ran a desktop exercise in November 2015 for several work groups to test their responses in the event that they had to operate off-site. Further exercises are planned for other areas of the department. These exercises are planned in cooperation with other parliamentary departments to ensure coordinated responses in the case of emergencies.

Security screening

Certain guests are exempt from security screening on entry to Parliament House. Approvals for any other exemptions are jointly made by the Serjeant-at-Arms and the Usher of the Black Rod. During the year, exemptions were approved for 26 groups and individuals (compared to 40 in 2014–15).

Information and communications technology

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

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

Software and hardware services

Projects continued to develop ICT support systems for committees and members' services during the year. These systems included:

- » the Table Offices Production System (see page 16)
- » the Parliamentary Procedural Records System
- » the e-petitions system (see page 41)
- » the Shared Committee Information Database (see page 41).

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

The department continues to work with the Department of the Senate and DPS to determine ongoing support arrangements for the venue management system, following the completion of project activities.

The department also continues to use e-Trim to file and manage records electronically, while opportunities to upgrade and enhance the system are being investigated. With electronic recordkeeping now well established, the department is investigating ways of improving access to and searching e-Trim records across its intranets.

Internet and intranet services

In June 2016 the department launched new intranet portals for members and departmental staff. The new sites provide greater accessibility to information, in particular providing ready access to tailored committee information for members. The site has also adopted the standard technology used across all parliamentary websites and intranets, making them collectively more efficient to support.

The department developed a new web portal to provide electronic information for participants in outgoing delegations, resulting in significant cost reductions to the department, and worked with DPS to introduce a video-on-demand solution on the website to deliver information about the House and its committees.

Printing

The department's in-house printing service produced about 1.9 million impressions in 2015–16 (a decrease of 0.5 million on 2014–15). The decrease reflects the earlier than anticipated election period, which reduced the production of routine chamber documents and associated departmental printing requirements.

Parliamentary assistants program

The parliamentary assistants program, managed by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, entered its 16th year. Parliamentary assistants are university students who perform the duties of messengerial attendants for an average of 10 hours per week. Rosters are planned around student commitments and the requirements of the House.

Six students took part in the program in 2015–16: three were existing assistants, and three were new appointments. The new assistants came from New South Wales and Victoria, and all were studying at universities in Canberra. Former parliamentary assistants were also engaged in the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office to work at the front counter and in other areas of members' services.

Members' salaries

All processing of members' salaries and entitlements by the People Strategies Office was in accordance with legislation and administrative decisions. The Remuneration Tribunal determined an increase in members' salaries—Determination 2015/22—taking effect on 1 January 2016. Support was provided to two new members after their bi-elections. Annual expenditure on members' salaries and other entitlements was \$44.817 million.

Corporate support

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

- » the department's business continuity network was established and met, and work began on updating office-level business resumption plans for each work group
- » leadership training and development programs continued to be provided for staff at the parliamentary service level and for the Executive.

Outlook

In 2016–17 the department will continue to provide advice and services of a high standard to support the Speaker, members in Parliament House and the department.

We anticipate that important priorities for the members' services and corporate support activity during the year will be:

- » monitoring performance under the memorandum of understanding and related service-level agreement with DPS for the provision of ICT support
- » continuing the rollout of the venue management system in conjunction with the Department of the Senate and DPS
- » continuing the second phase of the furniture replacement project to install new furniture into members' staff offices
- » reviewing departmental performance information and reporting, in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*
- » progressing the implementation of e-Trim through the remaining areas of the department
- » further developing capability, including through the documentation of systems and processes and use of supplementary and back-up resources
- » drafting and negotiating a new enterprise agreement for departmental staff.



David Elder, Clerk of the House, places the dissolution notice of the Forty-fourth Parliament with the assistance of Donna Cattnach and Beverley Breen, parliamentary attendants.

Schools hospitality

The department receives a special appropriation to provide modest hospitality to school groups visiting Parliament House. School visits are coordinated by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, working in partnership with the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) and Visitor Services. In 2015–16 the administered appropriation for the schools hospitality activity was \$0.324 million, and expenditure (including accrued expenses) was \$0.317 million. Results against the performance criteria for the activity are summarised in Appendix 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 2.

Performance summary

In 2015–16 there was a decrease in the number of school students participating in educational tours of Parliament House, with 115,744 students recorded—down from 120,216 in the previous year. The number of students from the Northern Territory, Tasmania, Queensland and New South Wales decreased; all other states recorded higher numbers than in the previous financial year (see Table 8).

This reflects a return to more normal numbers after the high of 2014–15.

Table 8 Students visiting Parliament House, by location and year, 2011–12 to 2015–16

Year	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Other	Total
2011–12	1,637	66,036	899	17,389	5,059	1,676	17,312	4,706	80	114,794
2012–13	1,657	67,955	881	16,395	4,742	1,471	17,245	5,064	241	115,651
2013–14	1,859	62,597	835	18,193	5,390	1,581	17,766	5,488	–	113,709
2014–15	2,158	67,385	819	19,489	5,061	1,750	18,531	5,023	–	120,216
2015–16	3,004	64,438	654	16,056	5,849	1,621	18,950	5,159	13	115,744

All students visiting in 2015–16 participated in a guided tour and visited both chambers, 82 per cent (95,006) received hospitality and 76 per cent (89,087) participated in a PEO program. (See pages 28–30 for more information on the PEO's activities.)

Improving performance

From July 2015, bookings were taken on a rolling monthly basis for the following two calendar years. This new process was developed in conjunction with stakeholders to bring our booking schedule into line with the national cultural and educational institutions on the visits program and has been well received.

Outlook

By 30 June 2016, we had booked 106,775 students from 1,671 schools for the following 12 months. Last year at the same time we had 103,380 students booked from 1,578 schools.

