



Part 3

Management and accountability

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*The parliamentary department heads at the launch of the Australian Parliament's Strategic plan for the parliamentary administration. Left to right: David Elder, Clerk of the House; Richard Pye, Clerk of the Senate; Rob Stefanic, Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services; and Phil Bowen, Parliamentary Budget Officer.
Photo: David Foote, Auspic/DPS.*

Corporate governance

As Presiding Officer of the House of Representatives, the Speaker has a role in relation to the department that is in some ways analogous to that of a minister of state in relation to an executive government department. The Speaker oversees administration of the department and is accountable to the House in respect of that role. The Clerk, who is responsible for leading the department and for its day-to-day management, reports to the Speaker.

Governance structure

Legislation

The department is established under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* as one of four parliamentary departments that together support the parliamentary service. The department's operations are governed by the *Parliamentary Service Act* and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). Other legislation, including the *Fair Work Act 2009*, also applies to the operations of the department. Together, these Acts set out the Clerk's responsibilities for managing the department.

Executive and senior management

There were some changes in senior executive service (SES) staffing during the year, mainly due to the retirement in early 2017 of a long-serving SES Band 1 staff member and the establishment of an additional SES Band 1 position, the Clerk Assistant (Procedure), for an 18-month period.

As at 30 June 2017, the department's Executive comprised the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and four SES Band 1 staff: the Clerk Assistant (Table), the Clerk Assistant (Procedure), the Clerk Assistant (Committees) and the Serjeant-at-Arms. Each SES Band 1 is responsible for one or more of the department's offices (see Figure 1 on page 6). The roles and responsibilities of the Executive are described on page 7.

The senior management of the department consists of the Executive and managers at the Executive Band 2 level.

Departmental management committees

Executive

In 2016–17, the department's Executive held 11 formal meetings to consider a range of departmental management and administrative matters. As well as standing items on finance and people strategies, during the year the Executive discussed:

- » corporate reporting and business planning
- » the department's organisational structure
- » the department's approach to leadership development
- » changes to the members' survey and to the staff survey
- » a range of policies relating to financial compliance, information management and security, and employment and employees
- » matters relating to the negotiation of a new enterprise agreement for non-SES staff.

Audit Committee

The department's Audit Committee provides independent assurance to the Clerk on the department's risk, control and compliance framework, and its external accountability responsibilities.

In 2016–17, the committee was chaired by the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and its membership included another SES Band 1 officer and three independent members. At 30 June 2017, the independent members were Mr Tim Courtney of the Australian Electoral Commission, Ms Susan McNeilly of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, and Mr Dermot Walsh of the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The independent members contributed a valuable mix of skills, expertise and experience, complemented by an enhanced understanding, over time, of the department's operations and its operating environment.

The committee met four times in 2016–17. In the first half of the year, it considered the department's draft financial statements for 2015–16; the Australian National Audit Office's closing letter on its audit of the financial statements; and, for the first time, the annual performance statement that was proposed for the 2015–16 annual report. The committee recommended to the Clerk that he sign the financial statements and management response letter and include the annual performance statement in the annual report.

In addition, the committee was briefed on:

- » the status of ICT arrangements between the parliamentary departments, presented by representatives of the Department of Parliamentary Services
- » departmental ICT security, risk and services, presented by the director of the department's Parliamentary and Business Information Services Office.

The Serjeant-at-Arms attends committee meetings as an adviser, together with representatives of the Australian National Audit Office, the department's internal audit team and the Chief Financial Officer.

During the reporting period, the department's independent internal auditors, Bellchambers Barrett Pty Ltd, conducted the following audits:

- » a review of the framework of departmental policies and procedures
- » an assessment of the department's records management practices
- » a review of the department's performance measures and targets
- » a risk and fraud assessment and a review of the fraud and risk management framework.

As at 30 June 2017, a final internal audit plan for 2017–18 is in preparation. The plan will be provided to the Audit Committee for review.

Other departmental committees

Consultative Committee

The Consultative Committee is an important mechanism for communicating and consulting with staff on workplace issues. Chaired by the Deputy Clerk, the committee has four departmental representatives, two elected staff representatives and two union-nominated representatives.

The committee met six times during 2016–17. Standing agenda items for the meetings are:

- » implementation and monitoring of the enterprise agreement
- » proposals for change and developments affecting staff
- » reviews of implemented changes
- » reports on departmental activities.

Other matters discussed in the reporting period included:

- » the department's recruitment and staff selection processes
- » changes to the department's organisational structure
- » the department's health and fitness reimbursement.

Knowledge Management Steering Committee

The Knowledge Management Steering Committee is a forum to discuss issues in information and knowledge management and advocate for the sharing of departmental knowledge and skills. The committee has an advisory and monitoring role and may make recommendations to the Executive for decision and undertake roles as requested by the Executive. It is the department's Information Governance Committee under the National Archives' Digital Continuity 2020 Policy.

The committee is chaired by the Clerk Assistant (Table) and includes representatives from all areas of the department. In 2016–17 it met four times and discussed matters such as:

- » enhancements to internal information-sharing systems, including the departmental intranet
- » development of a departmental project management toolkit
- » the department's response to the Digital Continuity 2020 Policy.

Inter-parliamentary departmental collaboration

Meetings of heads of parliamentary departments

In 2016–17, the Clerk, the Clerk of the Senate, the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Parliamentary Budget Officer held four formal meetings. Matters discussed included:

- » amendments to the Parliamentary Service Act
- » Parliament House Open Day and the thirtieth anniversary of Parliament House
- » future directions for parliamentary ICT
- » security capital works

- » the parliamentary pass policy
- » enterprise bargaining.

During the reporting period, the four department heads endorsed two significant joint publications. The first was the Australian Parliament's *Reconciliation action plan 2016–18*, which articulates the four departments' vision for and commitment to working collectively to establish respectful, sustainable and enduring partnerships between the Australian parliamentary service and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



David Elder, Clerk of the House (third from left), and a representative from Reconciliation Australia (second from left) with representatives from the three other parliamentary departments at the launch of the Australian Parliament's Reconciliation action plan 2016–18, July 2016. Photo: David Foote, Auspic/DPS.

The second was the Australian Parliament's *Strategic plan for the parliamentary administration*, which brings together the key priorities across the whole of the parliamentary administration, identifying shared goals and formalising a collaborative approach to achieving optimal outcomes in providing support and services for the parliament.

Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group

In 2016–17, the Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group met four times to discuss matters of common interest across the parliamentary departments. Membership comprised the Serjeant-at-Arms, the Usher of the Black Rod, an Assistant Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, and the Assistant Parliamentary Budget Officer of the Corporate Strategy Branch of the Parliamentary Budget Office. Responsibility for chairing the group rotates annually.

Matters discussed over the reporting period included:

- » work health and safety policies across the four parliamentary departments
- » proposed amendments to the Parliamentary Service Determination 2013
- » proposed amendments to the Parliamentary Service Act
- » sunsetting of the Archives (Records of Parliament) Regulations 1995
- » parenting and nursing room facilities in Parliament House.

Other inter-parliamentary department forums

In 2016–17, the department was active in a number of other inter-parliamentary department forums that considered matters of common interest, particularly ICT and security. Departmental representatives participated in meetings of the following groups:

- » Parliamentary ICT Strategic Initiatives Steering Group—a forum for making decisions on ICT strategic initiatives for the parliament. The group was chaired by the Chief Information Officer of the Department of Parliamentary Services, and the department was represented by the Deputy Clerk.
- » Joint Management Committee—a committee to ensure oversight of ICT service delivery in accordance with formal agreements between the parliamentary departments. Responsibility for chairing the committee rotates on an annual basis, and the department was represented by the Serjeant-at-Arms.
- » Joint Management Group—a group to consider security-related matters. The group was chaired by a senior representative from the Australian Federal Police, and the department was represented by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.
- » Incident Planning and Response Committee—a committee to manage security and emergency incident planning and response operations. The committee was chaired by a senior representative from the Australian Federal Police, and the department was represented by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.

Departmental planning

The department continues to work on strengthening its corporate planning and performance reporting to comply with its statutory obligations and to improve transparency and accountability.

The corporate plan is the department's primary planning document. As required under the PGPA Act, the department's corporate plan for 2016–17 was published in August 2016. It covered 2016–17 and three forward years to 2019–20. The corporate plan sets out the department's purpose, the activities undertaken to achieve that purpose, and measures for assessing the department's performance. It also describes the environment in which the department operates and the department's risk management and oversight systems.

Program areas and individual offices in the department were invited to consider whether they would benefit from developing their own business plans with a more operational focus to complement the corporate plan.

As part of the department's comprehensive work management framework, each year individual staff members, together with their supervisors, must identify and agree on work objectives. The work objectives reflect the individual's role in their work area, but must also relate to any applicable program area or office business plan and, ultimately, to the corporate plan.

Departmental accountability and reporting

The department's main formal external accountability mechanisms are the Portfolio Budget Statements and the annual report, prepared pursuant to section 65 of the Parliamentary Service Act. The annual report for 2015–16 provided an assessment of the department's performance against the targets set in the 2015–16 Portfolio Budget Statements and the corporate plan, and presented the department's financial statements.

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

Managing risk

Risk assessment and management

The department's approach to risk and management of risk is underpinned by its Risk Management Policy and Framework 2015–17 and Risk Management Plan 2015–17.

The risk management policy and framework details the department's commitment to embedding systematic risk management into governance and planning processes. The policy defines the department's risk appetite and tolerance, and allocates responsibility for aspects of planning, mitigation, oversight and reporting to staff at various levels.

The accompanying plan identifies the key strategic risks for the department and the treatments to be applied.

The policy and plan are available to all staff via the departmental intranet. The department has a monitoring and reporting framework that requires regular reporting on risk and risk treatment to the Executive and annual reporting to the Audit Committee.

In April 2017, the department undertook a periodic risk assessment exercise facilitated by its internal auditors. Outcomes from the exercise will be used to update the risk management policy and plan for 2017–19.

Comcover benchmarking

In 2017, the department completed the Comcover risk management benchmarking program survey. The survey assessed risk management capability using a six-state maturity model.

Results from the 2017 survey indicate that the department achieved a risk maturity of systematic, an increase on the previous year's level of developed.

Business continuity

A departmental business continuity plan was in force throughout the reporting year, complemented by office-level business resumption plans. The department's business continuity plan is managed by the Serjeant-at-Arms and endorsed by the Clerk. The Business Continuity Network, which is responsible for business continuity governance

and oversight, met once in 2016–17. The department also conducted a scenario-based training exercise during the year involving the Clerk's Office. Work commenced on reviewing the business continuity plan and associated resumption plans to ensure that they are still relevant and up to date.

Preventing fraud

The department is committed to compliance with the provisions of section 10 of the PGPA Rule relating to preventing, detecting and dealing with fraud.

The department's Fraud Control Plan 2015–17 outlines strategies and processes for preventing and detecting fraud, and for investigating and reporting instances of fraud should they occur. The plan is available to all staff on the department's intranet, and all new staff are required to complete online training on financial management responsibilities and fraud control. The department's monitoring and reporting framework requires regular reporting to the Executive and the Audit Committee. No losses of public money and no instances of fraud were identified during the year.

In April 2017, the department undertook a periodic fraud risk assessment exercise facilitated by its internal auditors. Outcomes from the exercise will inform an updated fraud risk assessment and fraud control plan for 2017–19.

Statement of significant non-compliance with the finance law

The department did not identify any instances of significant non-compliance with the finance law during 2016–17. The finance law incorporates the PGPA Act, any rules and instruments created under the PGPA Act, and appropriation and supply acts.

Ethical standards and behaviour

The Parliamentary Service Values and Code of Conduct, which are set out in the Parliamentary Service Act, provide staff with a framework for ethical conduct. The department promotes sound ethical behaviour.

During induction, all new staff are advised about what it means to work in a values-based environment and how ethical standards apply to their day-to-day work.

Public interest disclosure

The Clerk, as the principal officer of the department for the purposes of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*, has established procedures and appointed authorised officers for facilitating and dealing with public interest disclosures relating to the department in accordance with that Act.

During 2016–17 the department continued to ensure that information on public interest disclosure procedures was available to all staff, and in 2016 an information session on the Act presented by the Commonwealth Ombudsman was open to all staff. During the year there were three authorised officers approved to handle public interest disclosures.

Privacy

While not an entity to which the *Privacy Act 1988* applies, the department abides by the principles of the legislation in its dealings with employees and the handling of their records.

Ecologically sustainable development and environmental reporting

The Department of Parliamentary Services is responsible for managing Parliament House and the parliamentary precincts. The Department of Parliamentary Services reports in accordance with section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* in its annual report, which is available from the Parliament of Australia website.

External scrutiny

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

Reports by the Auditor-General, the Commonwealth Ombudsman or parliamentary committees

The Auditor-General did not table any reports directly relating to the administration of the department or its operations. The Australian National Audit Office provided an unqualified audit report on the department's 2015–16 financial statements.

There were no investigations by the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2016–17 that involved the department.

During the reporting year, the Clerk contributed to or made submissions, and/or provided evidence, to:

- » the Queensland Legislative Assembly's Committee of the Legislative Assembly's inquiry into powers, rights and immunities of members of parliament
- » the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's foreign policy white paper
- » the New South Wales Legislative Council's Procedure Committee's inquiry into the rules for questions
- » the New South Wales Legislative Council's Procedure Committee's inquiry into rules for notices of motion
- » the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Publications' review of parliamentary printing standards
- » the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee's inquiry into the Parliamentary Business Resources Bill 2017 and the Parliamentary Business Resources (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2017
- » the New South Wales Legislative Council's Procedure Committee's inquiry into e-petitions
- » the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services' inquiry into whistleblower protections
- » the Senate Select Committee on a National Integrity Commission's inquiry into the establishment of a national integrity commission.

The department continued to support the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration's consideration of the department's funding requirements and budget position. During 2016–17 the committee met three times and tabled two reports: *Report no. 12: Annual report 2015–16* and *Report no. 13: Budget estimates 2017–18*. In the budget estimates report, the committee noted that the department was allocated supplementary funding of \$12.4 million over four years, commencing in 2017–18. The supplementary funding will be used to reinforce the department's procedural capacity and to provide additional support for the parliamentary committees administered by the department.

Judicial and administrative decisions

No judicial decisions or decisions of administrative tribunals or the Australian Information Commissioner during 2016–17 had, or are anticipated to have, a significant effect on the operations of the department.

Freedom of information

The department is excluded from the application of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, under section 68A of the Parliamentary Service Act.

Disability reporting mechanisms

The National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 sets out a 10-year national policy framework to improve the lives of people with disability, promote participation and create a more inclusive society. A high-level two-yearly report will track progress against each of the six outcome areas of the strategy and present a picture of how people with disability are faring. The first of those reports, *Progress report to the Council of Australian Governments 2014*, can be found at www.dss.gov.au.

Management of people

Staffing numbers

At 30 June 2017, the department had 153 employees—127 ongoing and 26 non-ongoing. As at 30 June 2016, the number of staff was 147, comprising 129 ongoing and 18 non-ongoing. Further information on staffing levels can be found in Appendix 1.

Investors in People Standard

The department has held accreditation against the Investors in People Standard since 2002 and was awarded 'Investors in People Silver' in 2015. Investors in People is an international quality framework that benchmarks the effectiveness of leadership and management practices. The standard defines what it takes to lead, support and manage people well for sustainable results.

Accreditation requires a genuine commitment from leaders, passionate employees and a focus on the ambitions of the department. One of the requirements to retain accreditation is to be reassessed against the criteria every three years by an independent assessor. The next accreditation will occur in 2018 and will involve assessment against the new Investors in People Standard: Leading–Supporting–Improving.

Staff survey

In June 2017, the department conducted its annual staff survey. The department has surveyed its staff for the past 12 years. During the reporting period, the department reviewed and benchmarked the survey with a view to modernising the terminology and gaining feedback on newly emerging themes.

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

The department has established three internal benchmarks based on the results of the survey. These benchmarks, or index scores, correspond to the total percentage of staff selecting 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' in response to specific sets of questions. The three benchmarks are as follows:

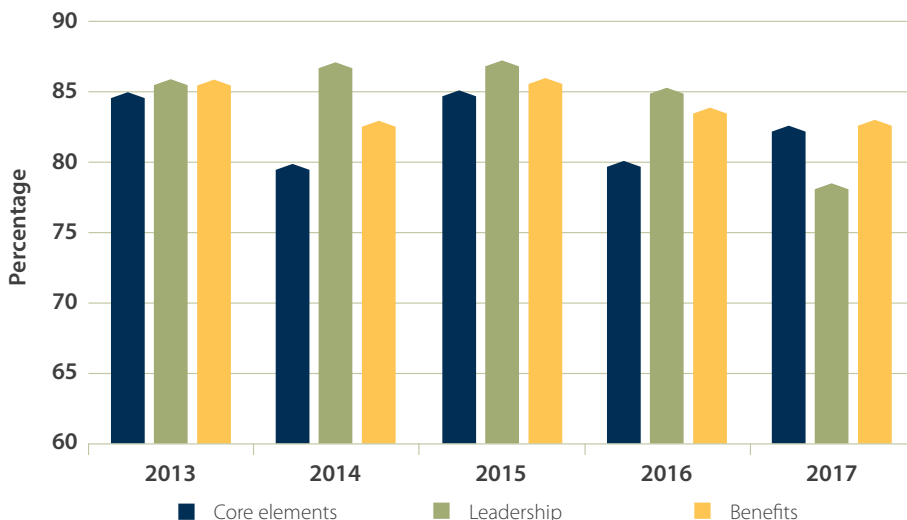
- » The 'core elements' satisfaction index measures the extent to which the department provided the core elements needed to attract, focus and keep the most talented staff (satisfaction rate of 82.6 per cent in 2017 and an average of 83.2 per cent over the last five years).
- » The 'leadership' satisfaction index measures the level of satisfaction of staff with their managers against the department's leadership statement (satisfaction rate of 78.5 per cent in 2017 and an average of 86.6 per cent over the last five years).
- » The 'benefits' satisfaction index measures the level of staff satisfaction with pay and working conditions (satisfaction rate of 82.9 per cent in 2017 and an average of 85.8 per cent over the last five years).

In the 2017 survey, the 'leadership' satisfaction index was segmented to obtain feedback from staff on their direct supervisor and on the Executive as a group. A new question on workforce planning was also added to provide guidance on potential future workforce changes.

As in previous years, most staff participated in the survey.

Figure 7 shows the performance of the satisfaction elements in the last five years. A satisfaction rating of 80 per cent or above is considered high.

Figure 7 Staff survey satisfaction elements, 2013 to 2017



People strategies: planning and delivery

Organisational reviews

The department conducts periodic organisational reviews to ensure that workloads in all areas are matched with the number of staff required to perform the work and that the classification levels or work-value requirements of individual jobs are appropriate to the work being conducted.

Recruitment of staff

The department advertised to fill 23 ongoing vacancies during 2016–17 (compared with four in 2015–16), of which 11 were filled by external applicants.

Retention of staff

Eleven ongoing and 11 non-ongoing staff left the department in 2016–17. The turnover rate was 8.5 per cent for ongoing staff (9.8 per cent in 2015–16). Appendix 1 includes details of separations.

Exit interviews with staff leaving the department continued to be conducted by senior executive service (SES) managers. Four such interviews were conducted during the year.

Graduate placement program

The department, in conjunction with the Department of the Senate, the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Parliamentary Budget Office, conducts the annual Parliament of Australia Graduate Program. The program involves three-month placements of people from the graduate programs of Australian Government agencies. An objective of the program is to promote the work of the parliament to agencies and the staff of those agencies. It assists graduates to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to make a significant contribution to the department and broader parliamentary service. At the completion of the program, participants return to their home departments with valuable experiences of parliamentary operations.

The program continued to draw a high level of interest from graduates from a range of agencies. Six graduates undertook placements in the department in 2016–17.

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



2016–17 Graduate Program participants Murray Colless (left), Laura Johnson and David Sandbach. Photo: Michael Masters, Auspic/DPS.

Alumni

The department formed an alumni association of former staff in 2008. On 30 June 2017, it had 213 members. The association issued two newsletters during the year and its board met once. On 18 November 2016, the association held its annual general meeting. Twenty-eight association members attended the meeting, and two co-chairs were elected.

Training and development

Table 9 shows the department's training and development expenditure as a percentage of salaries in 2015–16 and 2016–17. It also shows the average number of person-days spent on training and the average staffing level in both years. The average number of training days for staff remained the same at 3.1 days of off-the-job training per person per year. The fluctuation in staff training days generally reflects the stages of the parliamentary cycle.

Table 9 Expenditure on training and development programs, 2015–16 and 2016–17

	2015–16	2016–17
Expenditure as a percentage of annual payroll	0.8%	1.0%
Average training days per person	3.1	3.1
Average staffing level	153	153

Table 10 compares the average attendance of staff at training courses in 2015–16 and 2016–17. It also shows the average staffing level and total number of training days attended in 2016–17 for each classification.

Table 10 Average staff attendance at training courses, 2015–16 and 2016–17

Classification	Average staffing level	Total number of training days attended	Average number of training days attended	
	2016–17	2016–17	2015–16	2016–17
Senior Executive Service	6	28.3	2.8	4.7
Executive Band 2	23	51.5	2.1	2.2
Executive Band 1	44	98.3	2.1	2.2
Parliamentary Service Level 6	25	40.1	2.4	1.6
Parliamentary Service Level 5	7	14.6	2.1	2.1
Parliamentary Service Level 4	29	88.5	3.1	3.1
Parliamentary Service Level 3	8	23.3	1.0	2.9
Parliamentary Service Level 2	11	19.5	2.6	1.8
Not specified	–	115.7	–	–
Total	153	479.8	3.1	3.1

Leadership development

The department has invested in leadership development with a range of external providers for over a decade and has trend data from staff surveys on leadership for the entire period. Following the review of the department's leadership statement in 2016, the department worked with an external provider to redevelop leadership programs for staff. In 2016–17, programs were conducted for the SES and staff at Executive Bands 1 and 2 and Parliamentary Service Levels 4, 5 and 6.

Workplace diversity

The department's workplace diversity program aligns the department's workplace diversity strategies and actions with the Parliamentary Service Values. It outlines the department's commitment to increasing workforce participation rates in different diversity groups.

New staff continued to receive training, as soon as practicable after their commencement, in the prevention of discrimination, bullying and harassment.

During the reporting period, the Australian Parliament's *Reconciliation action plan 2016–18* was endorsed. (See page 71 for more information.)

In 2016–17 the department developed an Indigenous secondment program to provide opportunities for graduates from the Indigenous Australian Graduate Development Program to participate in three-month placements with the department. The program is an important part of the department's commitment to the career progression and professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. At the completion of the program, participants return to their home departments with valuable experiences of parliamentary operations.

The program attracted a high level of interest from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from a range of agencies. Two placements were undertaken in 2016–17.



2016–17 Indigenous secondees Shanece Liddy-Wilde and Nathan King. Photo: Michael Masters, Auspic/DPS.

Studybank

Seven staff participated in the department's Studybank program during the year (compared with 13 staff in 2015–16). Collectively, they received financial assistance of \$29,115 (\$25,389 in 2015–16), along with a total of 51.3 days of study leave on full pay.

Performance assessment

All eligible staff participated in the annual work performance assessment cycle, which was completed on 31 October 2016. The cycle consists of setting individual work objectives, conducting performance assessments, preparing individual development plans and providing feedback to supervisors. Information from the individual development plans is used to formulate the training program for the next calendar year.

Employment framework

The Department of the House of Representatives Enterprise Agreement 2012–15 covers all staff except SES. The department's SES staff are covered by determinations made under section 24(1) of the Parliamentary Service Act.

There is no provision in the enterprise agreement to remunerate staff based on performance. The Clerk did not make a determination under section 24(1) of the Act in 2016–17 to pay staff a monetary bonus.

On 22 September 2016, bargaining for a new enterprise agreement ceased following a decision of the full bench of the Fair Work Commission in relation to questions concerning the notices of employee representational rights for agencies undertaking bargaining. On 23 September 2016, a new notice of employee representational rights was issued to staff, recommencing the bargaining process for a new enterprise agreement.

Salary scales under the 2012–15 agreement are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11 Salary scales of staff covered by the 2012–15 enterprise agreement

Classification	Salary scale (\$)
Executive Band 2	132,608–140,509
Executive Band 1	102,457–114,283
Parliamentary Service Level 6	82,570–93,709
Parliamentary Service Level 5	76,320–80,758
Parliamentary Service Level 4	67,474–73,001
Parliamentary Service Level 3	61,044–65,576
Parliamentary Service Level 2	54,250–59,235
Parliamentary Service Level 1	47,955–52,473

Salaries expenditure

In 2016–17, departmental salaries and allowances totalled \$18.762 million (\$19.208 million in 2015–16).

Work health and safety

The department is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*. During the year, all reasonably practicable measures were taken to protect the health, safety and welfare of staff while at work, in line with the department's work health and safety policies.

Workstation assessments are conducted for staff on request. These include education on the correct set-up of workstations—for example, the height of the desk at both sitting and standing positions. Workstation information is provided in orientation sessions for new staff.

In October 2015, a work health and safety working group was established to review:

- » the approach taken by each parliamentary department to work health and safety issues
- » whether each department's approach was at best-practice levels
- » any benefits to be gained from a joint consideration of work health and safety issues at Parliament House.

A report on these matters was provided through the Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group to the parliamentary departmental heads confirming the appropriateness of the approaches of each department to work health and safety. The working group also provided a whole-of-parliament work health and safety risk assessment and made recommendations to further support work health and safety risk practices across the parliament. The working group continued to meet during the year to ensure recommendations were implemented.

In 2016–17, the department focused on implementing its work health and safety management system, which provides an evidence-based risk management approach to work health and safety considerations. The department aims to deliver high-quality and timely outcomes, providing leadership, direction, capability and governance, to nurture a safety culture. A rehabilitation management system was also developed to ensure injured and/or ill workers are supported to achieve an early, safe and sustainable return to work, and the procedures for managing safety within the department were reviewed.

The department's Comcare premium rate for 2016–17 was 0.43 per cent of total employee benefits, an increase from the 2015–16 rate of 0.42 per cent.

One compensation claim has lodged during the reporting period, under the injury group 'strain excluding back'.

During the year, there were no dangerous occurrences requiring notification under section 37 of the *Work Health and Safety Act*, no investigations were carried out, and no directions or notices were received by the department under section 191 of the *Act*.

Management of financial resources

Asset management

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

A stocktake of office machines and equipment and portable and attractive assets was completed in 2016–17. During the stocktake process, Finance Office staff conducted a visual assessment for impairment. A verification of impairment testing was undertaken in conjunction with asset counting.

During the reporting period, two items in the asset register were reclassified from the property, plant and equipment asset class to the heritage and cultural asset class due to their heritage value and cultural significance. These two items are the rosewood despatch boxes located in the House of Representatives Chamber. Also during the reporting period, two heritage and cultural items were removed from the department's register. The 1927 gold key to Old Parliament House and the 1988 gold key to Australian Parliament House were identified as belonging to the Department of Parliamentary Services. The carrying value of the assets at the date of adjustment has been recognised in other comprehensive income.

The department undertook a materiality assessment of the carrying value of its assets measured against fair value. The independent valuer's report concluded that there was no material difference between the carrying value and fair value.

The furniture replacement project continued during 2016–17. This project consists of replacing the office furniture in the staff areas of members' offices. At 30 June 2017, 65 per cent of the offices had been completed. The project is due for completion in July 2018. A combination of cash reserves and funding from the departmental capital budget has been used to replace these furniture items. The total estimated cost for this project is \$4.0 million. Actual expenditure at 30 June 2017 was \$2.7 million. The project is tracking in line with budget estimates.

Other minor asset purchases included replacement of televisions, fridges and task chairs in members' and departmental offices. The department adopts a 'break-fix' replacement policy for these items.

During 2016–17, the department finalised the development of the Parliamentary Procedural Records System; developed an electronic petitions system; and, in partnership with the Department of the Senate, continued to enhance the Shared Committee Information Database.

A review of the intangible assets category was conducted to verify assets in use. All software items were found to be in use.

There was no indication that any departmental assets were impaired to any extent approaching materiality.

Purchasing

An approach to market was conducted to replace the department's ageing print-room equipment. Arrangements were entered into to provide expertise associated with the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program and activities under the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project. The department accessed existing panel arrangements for the procurement of training and leadership development programs and recruitment.

The department continued its arrangement with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for the provision of legislative drafting services. The procurement of these services is provided on a fee-for-service basis.

The department continued to access whole-of-government contracts for the provision of travel and related services. Purchases of stationery and office supplies were made through the whole-of-government contract with Staples.

Consultants

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

Before engaging consultants, the department takes into account the skills and resources required for the task, the skills available internally, and the cost-effectiveness of engaging external expertise. The decision to engage a consultant is made in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 and associated instruments, including the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and relevant internal policies.

During 2016–17, 10 new consultancy contracts were entered into involving total expenditure of \$0.056 million. In addition, five ongoing consultancy contracts were active in 2016–17, involving total expenditure of \$0.215 million.

Annual reports contain information about actual expenditure on contracts for consultancies. Information on the value of contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website (www.tenders.gov.au).

Competitive tendering and contracting

The department's contracting activities have been disclosed through the government's AusTender system, as required. There were no instances during 2016–17 where contracts were let that did not provide for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor's premises, or where the Clerk exempted a contract from being published on AusTender.

Advertising and market research

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

The department did not conduct any advertising campaigns during 2016–17.

Procurement initiatives to support small business

The department supports small business participation in the Commonwealth Government procurement market. Participation statistics for small and medium enterprises and small enterprises are available on the Department of Finance's website at www.finance.gov.au/procurement/statistics-on-commonwealth-purchasing-contracts.

Consistent with paragraph 5.4 of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, the department's procurement practices to support small and medium enterprises include:

- » using the Commonwealth Contracting Suite for low-risk procurements valued under \$200,000
- » facilitating on-time payments by using electronic funds transfer or payment cards.

Legal services expenditure

Schedule 1, Part 1, paragraph 11.1(ba) of the Legal Services Directions 2017 requires the department to publicly disclose its legal services expenditure. During 2016–17, external legal expenditure was \$61,062 (\$64,794 in 2015–16). The department did not incur any internal legal expenses during 2016–17 (nil in 2015–16).