



Part 2

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Annual performance statement

Introductory statement

I, as the accountable authority of the Department of the House of Representatives, present the department's 2021–22 annual performance statement, as required under section 39(1)(a) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). In my opinion, this annual performance statement accurately reflects the performance of the department and complies with section 39(2) of the PGPA Act.

Claressa Surtees, Clerk of the House

Purpose

The department's purpose, as set out in its *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, is:

to support the House of Representatives, and the wider parliament, in the role of a representative and legislative body primarily by providing advice and services, and through engaging with the community and other parliaments.

Data sources

The results and analysis presented in this annual performance statement are based on data from several sources. These include an annual survey of members of the House of Representatives, analytics relating to departmental social media and publications, evaluations from external stakeholders, and internal records and reporting.

Members' survey

In March 2022 all members were invited to complete a survey, intended to gauge their views on, and satisfaction with, the services provided by the department. Members were advised that their responses could be anonymous, and would be de-identified before publication. The survey was available online and in hard copy, and responses were collected until 11 April.

The survey asked members to indicate whether they were satisfied with each of the following:

- » the quality and timeliness of chamber procedural support and advisory services
- » the quality and timeliness of advice, and the standard of report drafting for parliamentary committees
- » support for their House of Representatives office accommodation
- » support for their salary payments
- » support for transport coordination in Canberra during sitting weeks.

As was the case last year, the survey did not include questions about international relations activities due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the official delegation program.

Members were able to provide comments in response to each question. At the end of the survey, members were invited to comment on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on services, and on any aspect of the services provided by the department.

Twenty-one members completed the survey. This represents a response rate of 14% of the 150 members of the House at the time. Members were invited to add their name to the survey, and the majority of those who responded did so. The department notes that the 14% response rate for the members' survey is lower than recent years, recognising that the survey had to take place over a shorter period of time and earlier than usual due to the federal election timing.

Other data sources

In addition to the members' survey, feedback on the services provided by the department is sought from the Presiding Officers through interviews with their staff. Formal feedback is also received from participants in the department's seminar programs. A further data source is analytics relating to contact with the department's social media and publications. Internal chamber support service standards, internal records and exception reporting are also drawn on for reporting on the department's performance.

Activity information

The department monitors its work output by collecting information on specific activities throughout the year. No targets are set for outputs, as most are dependent on factors outside the direct control of the department, particularly the parliamentary cycle.

Comparisons with data from previous years provide a longitudinal perspective and an indication of the extent to which various outputs are affected by the parliamentary cycle.

Commentary

The department has a well-established performance framework that continues to mature. The department's purpose statement and performance measures are presented in summary in the department's *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, and in more detail in the department's *Corporate Plan 2021–22*.

The department is committed to considering its performance from the perspective of its key client groups. The department's purpose statement indicates that the department's support for the House of Representatives as a representative and legislative body is primarily delivered through the provision of advice and services. As recipients of the advice and services, members are the department's principal clients. Quantitative and qualitative data gathered from members via the members' survey provides crucial performance information. This data is supplemented by feedback provided by the Speaker's Office and President's Office.

Results and analysis

Activity 1: Chamber and Federation Chamber

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Level of satisfaction among surveyed members with the quality and timeliness of chamber support, procedural and statistical publications, analysis and advisory services.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 14; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

All respondents to the members' survey (100%) indicated satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of chamber procedural support and advisory services, and all respondents (100%) indicated satisfaction with the quality and availability of procedural and statistical publications, and the support available to obtain these. Comments made about chamber procedural support and advisory services were highly positive and included 'always very prompt and attentive' and 'always prompt and accurate'. In relation to procedural and statistical publications, one member noted that although they did not use them, their staff 'used them a lot'.

Criterion 2

Chamber support service standards met for sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber and processing of bills, votes, messages and other chamber documents with a high degree of accuracy and within timeframes.

Target: 100%.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 14; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target not met on one occasion.

All chamber support service standards were met, with one exception when the agreed timeframe for production of a chamber document could not be met due to extended chamber sittings. Processing of proposed legislation and other parliamentary business was completed, within agreed timeframes, and no significant errors were identified.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 14; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Number of sittings of the House	42	62	67	41
Number of meetings of the Federation Chamber	41	54	63	25
Number of bills introduced	155	248	184	141

a. Election year.

Analysis

In 2021–22 the department continued to provide a high standard of support to the Chamber and Federation Chamber. The activity information set out in the table above indicates activity levels consistent with the latter stages of the parliamentary cycle. The additional precautions to manage risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic ensured that the Chamber and Federation Chamber were able to operate safely.

There were fewer sitting days in 2021–22 than in 2020–21, reflecting that the House was dissolved on 11 April ahead of the federal election and did not sit again during the financial year. The Federation Chamber also met for fewer days than last year, largely because of the dissolution of the House but also in part because COVID-19 outbreaks meant that it did not meet as planned in August 2021.

All targets set against the performance measures for the House of Representatives Chamber and Federation Chamber support, as set out in the *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, were met, with the one exception mentioned above. The exception occurred when the sitting on 9 February 2022 extended into the following day, resulting in publication of the *Notice Paper* for 10 February on the morning of a sitting day, rather than the night before. Further, an information and communications technology (ICT) outage beyond the control of the department prevented continuous publication of the *Live Minutes* during the same extended sitting night.

The uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continued throughout the year. Physical distancing requirements and restricted travel presented logistical and procedural challenges for the House of Representatives, members and parliamentary staff. Agreements for certain sitting periods enabled those members who could not attend parliament due to travel restrictions the opportunity to contribute remotely to debate. Revised seating arrangements and certain hygiene measures were also maintained. It was pleasing that the chambers managed to operate when scheduled without interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Certain restrictions were lifted in 2022, and the department will continue to adapt to the changing COVID-19 circumstances and provide high-quality services and advice to ensure the continued, safe operation of the House of Representatives Chamber and Federation Chamber.

Activity 2: Committee support

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Level of satisfaction among surveyed committee members with the standard of administrative and procedural support provided.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 15; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

All respondents to this question in the members' survey (100%) indicated satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of advice and services to their committees. Comments made by members in the survey reflected a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of administrative and procedural support provided to committees, and included 'impeccable service and support', 'they were very patient', and 'above and beyond support over the 2021 Christmas period and January 2022'.

Criterion 2

Level of satisfaction among surveyed committee members with the standard of research and drafting support provided.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 15; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

Again, all respondents (100%) indicated satisfaction with the standard of research and drafting support provided to committees. Comments included 'impressed with the timeliness of the service and quality of the work', 'very impressed with the work of the committee staff and their support', 'excellent' and 'very professional'.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 15.

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Number of committee meetings ^b	511	571	620	407
Hours of meetings ^{b,c}	988	790	1,177	663
Number of committee reports ^b	85	55	61	82

a. Election year.

b. Excludes internal committees.

c. To the nearest hour.

Analysis

As is usual in an election year, the number and total hours of committee meetings decreased (there were 213 fewer meetings supported than last year) as committees completed the evidence-gathering stages of their inquiries. The number of reports presented, however, significantly increased (there were 20 more than last year) as committees sought to conclude those inquiries before the dissolution of the House, resulting in high workloads for departmental staff.

Feedback gathered through the members' survey indicates that members continue to be highly satisfied with committee support services, including advice and report drafting. All members responding to the survey indicated satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of advice and services to committees, and with the standard of research and drafting.

The department continues to provide training and development opportunities to committee support staff, which will help to ensure that parliamentary committees continue to be well served by secretariats staffed by the department.

Activity 3: Inter-parliamentary relations and capacity-building

Performance measures and targets

Criteria 1 and 2

Level of satisfaction of Presiding Officers and delegates with arrangements for official incoming delegations.

Level of satisfaction of Presiding Officers and delegates with arrangements for outgoing delegations.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 16; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criteria: Target met.

While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented official incoming and outgoing delegations for most of the reporting period, the Presiding Officers and their staff indicated that they were satisfied with the department's support for inter-parliamentary relations and capacity-building activities during the year. Two outgoing delegations were conducted just prior to the election being called in 2022.

Feedback was sought from delegates, who were satisfied with and thankful for the support provided to successfully conduct an overseas visit during a period when COVID-19 restrictions and requirements continued to have a significant impact on travel.

Criterion 3

Level of satisfaction among participants with capacity-building activities.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 16; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

Satisfaction levels for capacity-building activities coordinated by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office have previously been measured through an online survey of participants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no capacity-building programs were conducted at Parliament House during the year.

Instead, the International and Parliamentary Relations Office coordinated support to two virtual capacity-building projects sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme. This included a meeting between Australian and Fijian parliamentarians to share insights into committee practices, and support provided to the Tongan Parliament in May 2022 to assist with annual budget analysis processes. The International and Parliamentary Relations Office also facilitated a broad range of information-sharing requests and provision of equipment through the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program.

The Presiding Officers and their staff indicated they were satisfied with the department's support for capacity-building activities.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 16.

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Number of delegations managed	56	32	Program suspended	2
Number and nature of parliamentary capacity-building activities	28	14	24	21
» Occasions equipment supplied to Pacific parliaments	4	1	6	4
» Staff attachments and study visits	20	10	2 (virtual)	2 (virtual)
» Conferences, seminars and workshops	4	3	0	1
» Information-sharing requests facilitated	–	–	16	14
Number of virtual engagement activities	–	–	98	94
» Virtual meetings involving one or both Presiding Officers	–	–	29	9
» Virtual inter-parliamentary events/forums with Australian Parliament delegations	–	–	16	9
» Virtual events and webinars offered to parliamentarians	–	–	53	76

a. Election year.

Analysis

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a significant effect on the inter-parliamentary relations and capacity-building work of the parliament. The majority of international engagement was conducted by virtual means through the reporting period with in-person engagement opportunities recommencing in February 2022, shortly before the federal election.

The department continued to provide and support a broad range of opportunities for members to engage virtually with their international counterparts. As with the previous reporting year, almost 100 virtual engagement activities were offered. This reporting period also featured the parliament hosting virtual multilateral meetings. The former Speaker, the Hon Tony Smith MP, as President of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, held virtual meetings with counterparts across the region to progress organisational matters, and then President of the Senate hosted the 7th Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia (MIKTA) Speakers' Consultation virtually in February 2022. The offices of the Speaker and President indicated a high level of satisfaction with the support provided for this work.

The department also continued to provide secretariat support to the Australian Parliament's membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, including Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Activity 4: Community relations and awareness

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Community is aware of, and engages with, published information about legislative and other parliamentary processes.

Target: Interaction with published information about the work of the House increasing over time (percentage change on prior year).

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 17; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

Using subscription data and publication circulation data as the data sources, the numbers of engagements on the department's social media platforms were as follows:

- » Facebook: 8,777 followers (increase of 1.1%)
- » Twitter: 51,494 followers (increase of 5.1%)
- » YouTube: 12,733 subscribers (increase of 19%)
- » LinkedIn: 274 (increase of 40.5%).

Posts to the department's Twitter page received more than 2.1 million impressions during the year. The account's reputation as an authoritative source of parliamentary information continued to grow during the year, with procedurally based tweets shared on major media platforms.

Criterion 2

Clients are satisfied with seminars.

Target: 90% of seminar participants are satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 17; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

The department continued to offer seminars in various formats: in person at Parliament House, virtually by webinar or in a hybrid delivery format.

Feedback from participants was positive overall and achieved the target level of client satisfaction. Of all attendees, 95% were satisfied with the seminar content, level of detail, presenter and audio-visual elements, and 97% said the seminar met their objectives for attending.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 17.

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Community contacts with the department's publications				
» @AboutTheHouse Twitter account impressions	Over 4.6 million	Over 5 million	Over 4.4 million	2.1 million
» Website hits ^b	482,804	884,238	957,894	1.64 million
Number of seminar participants	Not reported	Not reported	55 in person 59 virtually	193 in person 320 virtually

a. Election year.

b. Defined as unique page views on the Chamber Documents page (including subpages) and the Powers, Practice and Procedure page (including subpages, with access to formal procedural publications including *House of Representatives Practice, Guide to Procedures, House of Representatives Standing Orders* and *Infosheet* series, as well as *Live Minutes* providing draft minutes of Chamber and Federation Chamber proceedings in real time).

Analysis

Ensuring that the wider community has access to information on the work of the House and its committees is an important activity for the department.

Engagement with the department's publications can vary depending on public interest in the parliament, as well as content produced during a sitting period. The department began new awareness and educational activities on its social media channels to engage new audiences.

This year saw steady growth across the department's community outreach channels, and strong growth for the YouTube channel for the second year in a row. This trend is in line with best practice research that suggests videos are the best digital content to engage an audience. Steady growth of the department's Twitter account continued; however, the number of impressions for this account decreased by 52% from last year. This is likely to be due to the election period, when there was reduced activity in the chambers, in committees and in parliamentary proceedings by members.

Interest in the information published to the Parliament of Australia website continued to grow, surpassing last year's already significant volume.

There continues to be strong demand for the department's seminar program. The department will continue to refine its publications and products for members of the public, further develop its feedback mechanisms, actively monitor satisfaction levels and continue to refine its offerings.

Activity 5: Members' and corporate support

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Speaker's level of satisfaction with the overall quality of non-chamber support services provided, including accommodation, office support, transport coordination, salary processing and other members' support services.

Target: Very satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 18; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

The data source is direct feedback from the Speaker's Office on the overall quality of non-chamber support services provided to the Speaker, the Speaker's Office and other members.

The Speaker's Office indicated that it was very satisfied with the support services provided by the department to the Speaker, the Speaker's Office and members.

Criterion 2

Level of satisfaction among members with the overall quality of non-chamber support services provided, including accommodation, office support, transport coordination, salary processing and other members' support services.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 18; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2021–22*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

The results of the members' survey indicate a high level of satisfaction for the non-chamber support services provided by the department. All respondents (100%) were satisfied with their accommodation, office support, salary payment services and transport coordination during sitting weeks.

Several comments made by members in the survey emphasise the high level of satisfaction with the non-chamber support provided to members; comments included 'extremely responsive', 'friendly service by attending staff', 'excellent' and 'very good'.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 18.

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Number of Parliament House accommodation and office support services	473	1,139	1,949	1,744
Number of transport coordination services provided to members	12,449	17,811	8,153	6,556

a. Election year.

Analysis

All performance targets relating to the delivery of services to members were exceeded. All feedback received from members indicates very high levels of satisfaction with support services provided to members by this activity area. The department continues to work closely with members to assist them to have any matters promptly resolved.

Activity 6: Schools hospitality

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Timely and accurate provision of advice to the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) about hospitality required by visiting school groups, in accordance with bookings.

Target: 100%.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 19.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

The data source is the number of students booked, combined with exception reporting from DPS and school groups. A total of 22,457 students toured Parliament House during the reporting period. Of those students, 15,891 requested and received hospitality. There were no reports during the year of hospitality not being provided to a school group that had requested it.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2021–22*, page 19.

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Number of visiting school students booked	124,831	86,315	34,353	22,457

a. Election year.

Analysis

The delivery of hospitality to schools at their request is a combined effort between the parliamentary departments. The department provides a booking service for school groups, and liaises with the Department of the Senate (which administers the Parliamentary Education Office) and with DPS (which provides tours for school groups as well as hospitality where this has been requested). Data about hospitality provision relies on exception reporting from DPS or school groups. In 2021–22 there were no reports of schools not receiving the hospitality they had requested.

The reduction in the number of visiting students with bookings made in the period reflects the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the closure of Parliament House to the public for most of the year. Throughout the year the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office managed thousands of cancellations and re-bookings for schools as travel restrictions constantly changed throughout the country.

Effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on services provided to members

As part of the members' survey this year, members were invited to comment on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the department's provision of services. While it was noted that the pandemic had been disruptive, the majority of comments received were positive about the department's response to the pandemic and the level of services and support provided. The department will continue to carefully review the services it provides against the risk management measures in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary of performance against purpose

The department's purpose is to support the House of Representatives, and the wider parliament, in the role of a representative and legislative body primarily by providing advice and services, and through engaging with the community and other parliaments.

The department is committed to the delivery of high standards of advice, service and support to the Speaker, members, parliamentary committees, other parliaments and the Australian community. While the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect the operations of the House of Representatives chambers and committees to a certain extent, the department, along with the other parliamentary departments, continued to provide the support, services and advice that enabled the House of Representatives, and the wider parliament, to fulfil the role of a representative and legislative body.

Based on feedback received, as well as performance information from a range of data sources, the department has fully met all but one of the targets outlined in its corporate plan. One target, related to chamber support service standards, was nearly met.

Activity information for 2021–22 reflects the latter part of a parliamentary cycle, and also once again highlights the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the department's operations. Some activities, such as international parliamentary delegations, transport coordination services and school visits, continued to be limited by the pandemic in ways not fully within the control of the department. The department continued to refine virtual modes of work in order to provide support and services to members, committees and engagement activities during periods when travel and in-person gathering sizes were restricted.

There was a decrease in sittings of the Chamber and meetings of the Federation Chamber, due to the dissolution of the House in April. However, the department continued to support all chamber sittings as increasing numbers of members were able to participate in the Chamber at the same time following revised COVID-19 risk assessments. This culminated in a very full final sitting week of the 46th Parliament which included the presentation of the budget and budget-in-reply speech and a virtual address to members of both Houses by the President of Ukraine.

Strategic priorities for the department in 2022–23 include supporting the commencement of a new parliament, such as through provision of information resources for a new Speaker and members newly elected to the House; an ongoing focus on developing knowledge of parliamentary practice and procedure; continuing the process of replacing or enhancing key ICT systems; and implementing a new human resources information management system and a self-service human resources portal.

Overall, the department assesses that it has fulfilled its purpose to support the House of Representatives, and the wider parliament, in the role of a representative and legislative body.

Financial performance

The work of the department is mainly funded by government appropriation, with a small amount of revenue generated from the sale of publications and from the department's seminar program. The department ended the 2021–22 financial year reporting total comprehensive income of \$0.340 million. The department incurred total employee benefits of \$20.521 million, \$1.679 million lower than the budget estimate reported in the 2021–22 Portfolio Budget Statements. Employee benefits were \$0.321 million lower than those incurred in 2021–22 (\$20.842 million).

Supplier expenses increased by \$1.010 million between 2020–21 (\$3.829 million) and 2021–22 (\$4.839 million). Expenditure in this area (\$4.881 million) was \$0.042 million lower than was budgeted in the 2021–22 Portfolio Budget Statements estimates. As was expected in the budget estimates, Committee Office domestic travel in support of hearings, along with incoming and outgoing official international delegation programs, were greatly reduced because of COVID-19 travel restrictions. Associated costs relating to catering, venue hire, meals and incidentals were also significantly reduced during the period. The department's financial position has remained strong with appropriation receivable totalling \$24.251 million and cash and cash equivalents of \$1.121 million. In addition, the department has \$2.480 million on term deposit due to mature on 10 October 2022.

An increasing requirement to better support videoconferencing, remote training and meetings, and working-from-home arrangements led to the department purchasing a further four Surface Hubs for use by staff and House-supported committees.

During the year, the department engaged a valuation specialist to perform a full revaluation of its property, plant and equipment class. The independent valuer's report concluded that there was \$0.792 million difference between fair value and the carrying value of the assets; this amount is reflected in comprehensive income.

The department's overall financial position continued to remain sound in 2021–22:

- » total assets increased by \$1.832 million from the prior year to \$32.010 million
- » total liabilities increased by \$0.852 million to \$8.086 million.

Estimates for 2022–23 indicate that the department has sufficient resources to continue to support members, the House and committees.

Entity resource statement 2021–22

	Actual available appropriations 2021–22 \$'000	Payments made 2021–22 \$'000	Balance remaining 2021–22 \$'000
	(a)	(b)	(a) - (b)
Departmental¹			
Annual appropriation ²	49,200	23,829	25,371
Total	49,200	23,829	25,371
Administered expenses			
Outcome ¹	678	71	607
Total	678	71	607
Total resourcing	49,878	23,900	25,978
Total resourcing and payments for the Department of the House of Representatives	49,878	23,900	

1. Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No. 1) 2021–2022, prior year departmental appropriation and section 74 retained revenue receipts.

2. Includes an amount of \$0.640 million in 2021–22 for the departmental capital budget. For accounting purposes this amount has been designated as 'contributions by owners'.

Third-party drawdowns from and on behalf of other entities

	\$'000
Payments made on behalf of the Department of Finance (disclosed in the respective entity's Resource Statement)	49,987

Chamber and Federation Chamber

The Clerk's Office, Table Office and Procedure 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 we 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 and amendments
- » 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
- » provide professional development resources and activities on parliamentary procedure.

Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 14); staff levels are shown in Table 12.

Performance summary

The focus of each office is 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 an 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.

Through the annual survey of members, feedback was received on the range and standard of the services provided, which was generally very positive. This result was largely consistent with comments received during the reporting period about the procedural resources available online and in hard copy, and the briefings on parliamentary topics of interest to members and their staff. The annual performance statement on page 14 provides more detailed analysis of the results of the survey.

Statistics on sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber in 2021–22 and the four preceding years are shown in Table 1.

There were 41 sitting days in 2021–22, 26 days fewer than in 2020–21. This reflects the impact of the dissolution of the House on 11 April ahead of the federal election. Legislative activity continued at a proportionally high rate: 141 bills were introduced (23% fewer

than the 184 introduced in 2020–21). The comparatively low number of meetings of the Federation Chamber (25 in 2021–22 compared with 63 in 2020–21) reflects not only the election year but also the restrictions due to the prevalence of COVID-19 in August 2021 which resulted in the Federation Chamber not meeting as scheduled.

Detailed information on the business of the Chamber and Federation Chamber is provided in Appendix 1 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, 2017–18 to 2021–22

	2017–18	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Number of sittings/meetings					
Sittings of the House	60	42	62	67	41
Meetings of the Federation Chamber	59	41	54	63	25
Hours of sittings/meetings					
Sittings of the House ^b	548	371	548	597	380
Meetings of the Federation Chamber ^b	231	130	185	232	75

a. Election year.

b. Excludes suspensions and rounded to the nearest hour.

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, the Leader of the House, 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; 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.

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have an impact on the work of the Chamber and Federation Chamber. Physical distancing requirements, room capacity restrictions and restrictions on travel again presented logistical and procedural challenges for the House in carrying out its essential work as a legislative and representative body. Again this year, regular advice addressing COVID-safe operations was provided to the Speaker and other key stakeholders to support the effective operation of the Chamber and Federation Chamber prior to each period of sittings.

Again, formal agreements, pursuant to resolution, for members to contribute remotely to parliamentary proceedings were presented in the House on several occasions. The agreements allowed members who could not attend Canberra, and parliament, because of travel restrictions due to the prevalence of COVID-19 to contribute remotely to debate and to ask or answer questions during Question Time via the official video facility. These agreements were limited to certain sitting periods.

Programming and coordination of business

During the year, we provided 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 and providing information about committee memberships and other matters
 - » 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 that describes the current item of business
- » 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 shows the number of questions in writing to ministers and answers that were processed by the House in the five years from 2017–18 to 2021–22.

Table 2: Questions in writing to ministers and answers to questions in writing, 2017–18 to 2021–22

	2017–18	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Questions in writing ^b	987	250	388	227	132
Questions answered ^c	945	206	346	161	64

a. Election year.

b. Excludes questions withdrawn.

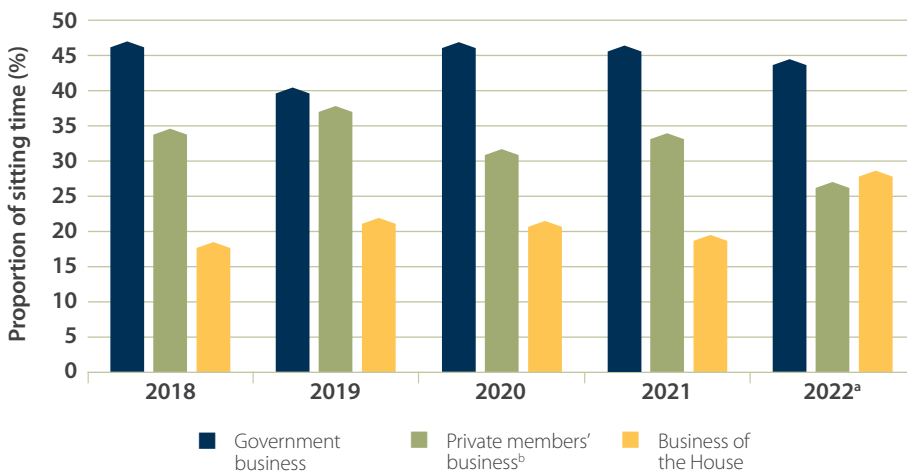
c. The responsibility for responding to questions in writing rests with the ministers to whom the questions are put.

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)
- » business of the House (matters potentially involving all members; for example, Question Time, debate on committee reports, and matters of privilege).

Figure 3 shows a longitudinal view of the proportion of sitting time the House (Chamber and Federation Chamber inclusive) devoted to each of these three types of business.

Figure 3: Government and private members' business and business of the House (Chamber and Federation Chamber), 2018 to 2022 (calendar years)



a. 2022 data is for January to June only.

b. 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.

Stabilising and replacing the Document Production System

The Document Production System (DocProdSys) is a legacy software system, operating in Windows 7, that is used to produce procedural scripts for use by members in the Chamber.

The department worked with DPS on two projects. The first project was to stabilise DocProdSys by modifying it to work in Windows 10 as a stop-gap measure; this project was not completed during the reporting period and may prove unviable. The second project, launched at the same time, was to replace the Windows 7 system with a completely new version working on a different architecture; this is progressing well and the new system is expected to be ready to use by the end of 2022.

Processing and drafting of bills

Processing legislation

Support for the legislative process in 2021–22 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 to the Parliament of Australia website bills, explanatory memorandums and proposed amendments, 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
- » preparing and delivering formal messages to the Senate; during 2021–22, we delivered 116 messages relating to the passage of bills (185 in 2020–21) and 11 other messages (23 in 2020–21)
- » preparing and issuing a Daily Bills List for each sitting day; the list provides cumulative information on the status of all bills before the parliament or assented to in the current calendar year.

Queries on the bills and legislation collection on the Parliament of Australia website totalled 1.6 million in 2021–22 (an increase from 1.4 million in 2020–21), representing 6% of the 26.8 million queries made via searches through ParlInfo – the database that includes all library publications as well as Hansard, bills, chamber and committee documents, and the parliamentary handbook.

During the year, 141 bills were introduced (23% fewer than the 184 introduced in 2020–21). Of these, 125 were initiated in the House of Representatives and 16 were received from the Senate (compared with 168 and 16, respectively, last year).

The House passed 105 bills in 2021–22 (156 in 2020–21), an average of 2.6 bills for each sitting (compared with an average of 2.3 bills per sitting last year).

There was a small reduction in the number of amendments moved during the consideration in detail stage: 676 in 2021–22 compared with 751 in 2020–21. Of the 552 amendments that were passed, one was proposed by a non-aligned member.

The House amended 15 (14%) of the bills it passed, compared with 21 (13.5%) in 2020–21. The department incorporated the amendments into the text of all 15 bills and reprinted them (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 nine House bills (25 in 2020–21). The House disagreed to a Senate amendment to one bill. The Senate did not insist on its amendment and agreement was reached by both Houses.

In total, 101 bills were finally passed by both Houses in identical form (153 in 2020–21), of which 84 were initiated in the House of Representatives and 17 were initiated in the Senate. After further processing by the Table Office, bills finally passed by both Houses in identical form were presented to the Governor-General for assent. Table 3 shows the number of bills introduced in the House and assented to in the five years from 2017–18 to 2021–22.

In total, during the reporting period the Table Office prepared seven third reading prints (19 in 2020–21) and 139 assent prints (140 in 2020–21). All documents accurately reflected the decisions of both Houses.

Table 3: Number of bills introduced in the House, and number of bills assented to, 2017–18 to 2021–22

	2017–18	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Bills introduced	222	155	248	184	141
Bills assented to ^b	128	148	153	153	101

a. Election 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 those documents comply with the Constitution and the standing orders. We also prepare copies for circulation in the chambers.

In 2021–22, 26 private members' bills were introduced (including two private senators' bills). Of the 676 amendments moved during consideration in detail, 125 were private members' amendments, one of which was agreed to. Table 4 provides chamber statistics for private members' bills and amendments for the past five years. The figures do not reflect all of the department's work in this area, as some material is drafted but 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. That arrangement continues to be mutually beneficial. The seconded officer provides drafting advice to members and supports the drafting of private members' bills and detail amendments.

Table 4: Private members' bills introduced and amendments moved by private members (Chamber and Federation Chamber), 2017–18 to 2021–22

	2017–18	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Bills introduced	35	30	35	28	26
Second reading amendments moved	45	37	110	105	55
Consideration in detail amendments moved	86	95	107	145	125

a. Election year.

Record of proceedings and House documents

Votes and Proceedings

The *Votes and Proceedings* – the official record of the proceedings of the House – 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* are prepared from the *Votes Officer's Minutes* – better known as the *Live Minutes* – an electronic draft record of the proceedings of the Chamber and Federation Chamber. The *Votes Officer's Minutes* are more detailed than the *Votes and Proceedings*, and are compiled progressively throughout a sitting. Because they are available in real time, they provide a practical means for members, staff and the public to follow House proceedings online. Internal and external users continued to rely on this service and provided positive feedback.

House Division Recording System

The House Division Recording System was in use for the whole of the 46th Parliament. It allows tellers to record members' votes electronically on a tablet. The division result is published immediately on announcement by the Speaker in the *Live Minutes*, to Hansard and on display screens located in the Chamber. A webpage publishes the results of divisions in real time and provides a searchable and filterable repository of divisions recorded in the system. During the reporting period, the system recorded 87 divisions.

As part of this project, display screens have been installed in each of the public galleries of the Chamber. In the next parliament the screens will display information on the event that is currently in progress, explanations of the significance of the question that is being determined by the House, and the results of divisions once they have been announced by the Speaker.

Documents

During the year, the Table Office processed all documents presented to the House and recorded their details in the *Votes and Proceedings* and the *Index to Papers Presented to Parliament*. Copies were made 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 are maintained by the Table Office. Tabling stock requirements continue to be reviewed considering the online availability of documents and the declining demand for hard copies.

In 2021–22, a total of 2,755 documents were presented to the House, a decrease from the 3,115 presented last year.

For each sitting, 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, listed by the number of sitting days remaining in which a notice of disallowance can be given.

Online Tabled Documents project

With colleagues from the Department of the Senate and DPS, Table Office staff progressed the Online Tabled Documents project to establish a system for the electronic receipt and storage of documents for tabling in the parliament, and their subsequent publication via the Parliament of Australia website. The system will streamline administrative handling of documents and, following presentation, make documents available online through a searchable database, providing an enhanced service for members and other interested parties. The first documents lodged in a beta version of the project were published on the Parliament of Australia website in this reporting period.

Research

The Procedure Office collects, analyses and disseminates procedural and statistical information on the work of the House. In 2021–22, the office:

- » maintained comprehensive procedural and statistical records
- » prepared advice for the Speaker and members on House practice and the operation of the standing orders
- » responded to requests for procedural and statistical information from various stakeholders including members, parliamentary staff and members of the public
- » published the *Biographical Dictionary of the House of Representatives*, in collaboration with the Australian National University
- » produced a range of publications on House statistics, practice and procedure.

The office also supported the House Standing Committee on Procedure (see page 38).

There was continued demand for the office's publications, while information requests were received from a variety of internal and external clients throughout the year.

Publications

Biographical Dictionary of the House of Representatives

This reporting period, the online *Biographical Dictionary of the House of Representatives* was published. The dictionary includes 64 biographies of Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks of the House since Federation. The department engaged the National Centre of Biography at the Australian National University to undertake the project. The department contributed thematic essays on the roles of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Clerk. The dictionary appears on the Australian Dictionary of Biography website and will also be published on the department's website.

Other procedural publications

The Procedure Office continued to produce a range of publications on the work of the House. Following each sitting fortnight, the Procedure Office published:

- » *House Review*, a plain-English analysis of significant events in the House
- » *Statistical Digest*, a statistical breakdown of the business conducted by the House
- » *Procedural Digest*, a technical record of the Speaker's rulings, precedents and other procedurally noteworthy items.

The office also published a range of other resources on the Parliament of Australia website, including:

- » *Last Week in the House*, listing key events in the previous sitting week
- » *Work of the Session* (also published in hard copy), providing comprehensive periodic information on the work of the House and its committees
- » the *Infosheet* series, comprising short guides on the workings of the House and parliament in an easy-to-read format.

In addition, the Procedure Office progressed work towards the publication of the next edition of *House of Representatives Practice* in coming years.

Collaboration

Collaboration with the Department of the Senate

The Procedure Office continued to work effectively with counterparts in the Department of the Senate, including through involvement with the Australian National Internships Program and the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program (see page 52).

Collaboration with other parliaments

The department continued its tradition of knowledge-sharing with colleagues from other parliaments. This included participation in study programs, and virtual delegation meetings and capacity-building work. The value of sharing experiences and ideas with other parliaments continues to extend beyond familiar procedural aspects and embraces challenges in common arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Procedural training and resources

Building staff procedural capacity remained a focus in 2021–22. The 'House main course' tutorial program, developed by the Procedure Office in collaboration with the Table Office, was delivered to a cohort of staff in July to November 2021, either in person or virtually depending on COVID-19 restrictions at the time. The course targets skills development for those staff currently working in (or interested in moving into) a chamber support area of the department.

In the first half of 2022, a new course was conducted to provide an introduction to the chamber environment and an overview of most aspects of House procedure which shape events in the chamber and committees. This eight session course, Introduction to Procedure, is designed principally for new staff and those who are new to a role.

Updates were made to the CATTalogue, a procedural training resource comprising a series of educational videos on key House principles and procedures and available to all staff through the department's intranet.

The department continued to support staff to develop expertise in parliamentary law, practice and procedure in the following ways:

- » debriefs following each sitting week or fortnight, focusing on matters of procedural interest (available to all staff in chamber support roles, and open to other staff when physical distancing requirements allowed)
- » induction and coaching for 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 preparing House procedures and the *Daily Program*, and processing bills and documents – once trainee staff have sufficient experience, the use of shadowing allows chamber support staff to finish work earlier on some sitting nights, and provides a backup to enable business continuity in the event of staffing absences or turnover
- » participation in parliamentary conferences (again this year delivered online)
- » participation in the Parliamentary Law, Practice and Procedure course, offered by the University of Tasmania under the auspices of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table (ANZACATT)
- » participation in the online Professional Development Certificate in Parliamentary Management (McGill School of Continuing Studies, Canada).

Parliamentary committees

The department continued to provide effective secretariat and advisory support to five House committees and one joint committee dealing with the powers and procedures of the House. Committees supported by the Chamber and Federation Chamber activity area in 2021–22 were as follows:

- » standing committees
 - » Selection Committee
 - » Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration
 - » Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests
 - » Standing Committee on Procedure
 - » Standing Committee on Publications
- » joint committee
 - » Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings.

In 2021–22, those committees held 36 meetings and produced 16 reports. Details of meetings and reports are set out in Appendixes 2 and 3.

Selection Committee

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

- » selecting and programming private members' business and committee and delegation business
- » selecting items of private members' business and committee and delegation business for referral to the Federation Chamber or return to the House
- » considering all bills introduced and determining whether to refer bills directly to House or joint committees for inquiry.

At the end of the 46th Parliament, the committee had 12 members: the Speaker (as chair), the chief whips of the three largest parties, four government members, three opposition members and one non-aligned member. The committee met nine times during the reporting period and presented nine reports.

Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration

The Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration considers estimates of the funding required for the operation of the department each year and matters relating to the provision of facilities in Parliament House affecting the House, its committees or its members, including ICT, the administration and funding of security measures and works in the parliamentary precincts. Together with the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations, Staffing and Security, the committee may consider estimates of the annual funding required for the operation of DPS.

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

Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests

The Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests met nine times during the reporting period, and presented four reports to the House. These related to an application for the publication of a response to references made in the House, legal action in the Federal Court of Australia and possible issues of parliamentary privilege, a complaint regarding the Member for Pearce's alteration to his statement of registerable interests, and the operations of the committee in connection with the registration and declaration of members' interests during 2021. The committee also issued revised explanatory notes on the Statement of Registrable Interests, which were distributed to members and published on the Parliament of Australia website.

On 29 November 2021, the House agreed to a resolution requiring each member who had undertaken the Safe and Respectful Workplaces training program, administered by the Department of Finance, to provide a statement declaring they had undertaken the program, and that statements be maintained in a register and published online. In response, the department developed the online Members' Training Program Register, for which the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests has the same powers it has in relation to the Register of Members' Interests.

The department supported the online publication of statements, and continued to support the online lodgement of registrable interests and notifications of alterations in accordance with the resolution of the House on the registration of members' interests.

Standing Committee on Procedure

The Standing Committee on Procedure inquires into and reports on the practices and procedures of the House and its committees. In 2021–22 the committee met 12 times and completed an inquiry into the maintenance of the standing orders.

Standing Committee on Publications

The House Publications Committee considers documents presented to the House that are not covered by the resolutions of the House (of 28 March 2018) and Senate (of 8 February 2018) – or for which the House and Senate have not already made a determination – and recommends to the House whether they should be included in the Parliamentary Papers Series. The committee may confer with the Senate Publications Committee, forming the Joint Committee on Publications. Neither the House Publications Committee nor the Joint Committee on Publications were required to meet during the reporting period.

Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings

The *Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946* requires Australian Broadcasting Corporation (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 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 meet during the reporting period.

Improving performance

The chamber support areas have provided, and will continue to provide, tailored, responsive support to the Speaker, members and other stakeholders in the uncertain circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The department continues to leverage technology for improved performance in supporting the Chamber and Federation Chamber, including through DocProdSys, the Online Tabled Documents project and the Gallery Screens project.

Developing the procedural capacity of staff through both formal and informal means is a continuing priority for the department. Engagement with procedural development initiatives remained high throughout the year.

Outlook

During the reporting period, the focus of the chamber support areas has been on continuing to deliver high-quality services to meet the needs of the Speaker, members and others, to assist the House in fulfilling its representative and legislative roles. Demand for advice and support is expected to remain high with the arrival of new members at the commencement of the 47th Parliament and as the House continues to respond to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Opportunities presented by the migration to Windows 10 and Office 365 are being explored, as are replacements to legacy ICT systems and the digitisation of *Notice Papers* dated back to the first parliament.

The Procedure Office will continue to offer a range of procedural development activities for staff, including a revised series of lunchtime seminars. It will also explore the opportunities presented by technology to engage with stakeholders, including through improved presentation of statistical information.

Committee support

The Committee Office supports parliamentary committees in their investigatory work of examining policy and legislation, and of scrutinising the executive government. In 2021–22, the Committee Office comprised 10 secretariats that supported 15 House committees and 12 joint committees (see Table 5). Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 16); staff levels are shown in Table 12.

Table 5: Committees of the 46th Parliament supported by the Committee Office

House committees	Joint committees
Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources	Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts	Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Standing Committee on Economics	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training	Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy	Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport	Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia
Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs	Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth
Standing Committee on Industry, Innovation, Science and Resources	Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities	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	Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme
Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue	Joint Select Committee on Road Safety
Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention	
Select Committee on Regional Australia	
Select Committee on Social Media and Online Safety	

Note: Five House internal committees (Selection, Appropriations and Administration, Privileges and Members' Interests, Procedure and Publications) and the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings are supported by other areas of the department, and are discussed under *Parliamentary committees* on pages 36 to 38.

Committee Office activity

In 2021–22, the Committee Office's support for the diverse work of committees involved:

- » facilitating committees' private meetings, public hearings and site inspections
- » providing procedural and inquiry-related advice to committees and stakeholders
- » fielding inquiries from stakeholders about the purpose and progress of inquiries
- » promoting committee inquiries and reports
- » conducting research and analysing evidence received by committees
- » drafting chairs' reports
- » facilitating the adoption and presentation of committee reports.

Overview

The anticipated dissolution of the House in April 2022 compressed the workload of the Committee Office during the year, as committees sought to conclude their inquiries and present reports. On the final sitting day of the 46th Parliament, 31 March 2022, committees supported by the department presented 24 reports. During 2021–22, 82 reports were presented (see Appendix 3), an increase of more than 34% on the previous year.

This year, in-person committee meetings increased as COVID-19 travel restrictions eased; however, the Committee Office continued to experience pandemic-related challenges, such as the frequent cancellation or postponement at short notice of scheduled hearings. A variety of communications solutions continued to be used by departmental staff to ensure that witnesses and members could meet virtually if they were unable to meet in person. Public hearings continued to be broadcast on the Parliament of Australia website.

Despite the challenges, the Committee Office was able to successfully support all committees within its remit. The Committee Office received positive feedback from members through several channels, including statements made in the House when reports were tabled, meetings between the Clerk Assistant (Committees) and individual chairs to review the performance of secretariats, and the Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs (see page 45).

Positive feedback on the work of secretariats was also received during filmed interviews with retiring members of the 46th Parliament. The footage will be used for the orientation of new members, in departmental seminars and in presentations to visiting parliamentarians and staff.

During the year, committees conducted inquiries on a diverse range of topics, including the following:

- » Homelessness: the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs presented the final report of its inquiry into homelessness in August 2021, which followed an interim report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on homelessness. The inquiry received extensive evidence, including from individuals with lived experience of homelessness. The committee's report made

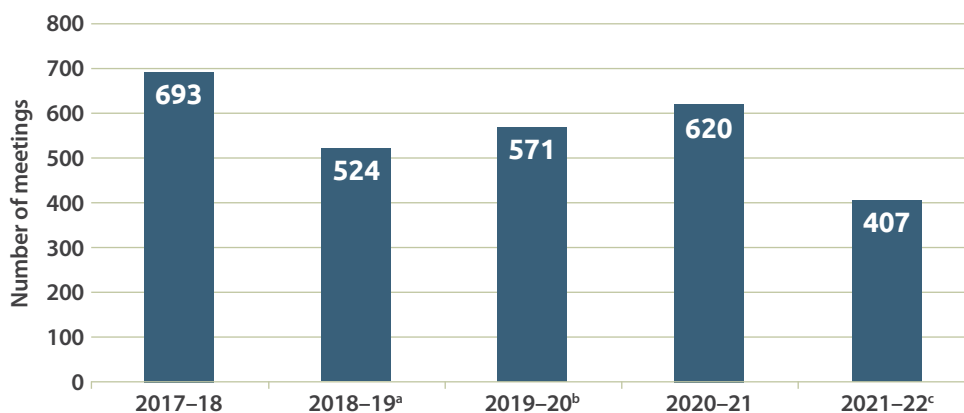
35 recommendations, which propose a renewed approach to preventing and addressing homelessness in Australia.

- » Climate change: the Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy received an unusually high number of bill inquiry referrals during the year. Most notably, its review of a private member's bill proposing significant climate change reforms, including a legislated 'net zero by 2050' emissions reduction target, attracted extensive public interest; about 2,000 written submissions and a further 4,500 email contributions were received. This placed particular demand on the secretariat's administrative resources.
- » Economics: in response to the downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Standing Committee on Economics expanded its oversight of the banking sector to include scrutiny of how banks and financial institutions were supporting Australians facing associated financial hardship. Additionally, the committee continued its regular scrutiny of the Reserve Bank of Australia during a time of unprecedented monetary policy and also inquired into the potential negative impacts of common ownership and capital concentration on market competition.
- » Infrastructure: the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities inquired into government infrastructure procurement processes, given the central importance of effective infrastructure to Australia's future productivity and as the COVID-19 pandemic threw Australia's supply chain vulnerabilities into sharp relief. Sovereign security, gender equality in the workplace, the importance of long-term planning, and understanding the difference between lowest price and genuine value became central inquiry themes.
- » Intelligence and security: the secretariat to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security had a high workload again in 2021–22, supporting a large number of concurrent inquiries and oversight activities, an international delegation, and the continued management of secure facilities and information on behalf of the committee.
- » Social media and online safety: the Select Committee on Social Media and Online Safety was established in December 2021. The committee held 11 hearings between late December and early March and heard from witnesses including Google, Meta, Snap, TikTok and Twitter, as well as advocates for vulnerable groups and individuals who have experienced online abuse. The committee also conducted virtual site visits, including to TikTok's Transparency and Accountability Centre, and met with members of the European and United Kingdom parliaments who have worked on online safety matters to compare international approaches. The committee's report, presented in March 2022, made 26 recommendations for government action.

Committee activity decreased during the reporting period compared with last year. Scrutiny committees supported by the Committee Office held 407 meetings, as outlined in Appendix 2.

Figures 4 and 5 present the number of committee meetings held and reports presented, supported by the Committee Office, for the past five years. These figures highlight the sustained workload of committees.

Figure 4: Number of committee meetings supported by the Committee Office, 2017–18 to 2021–22

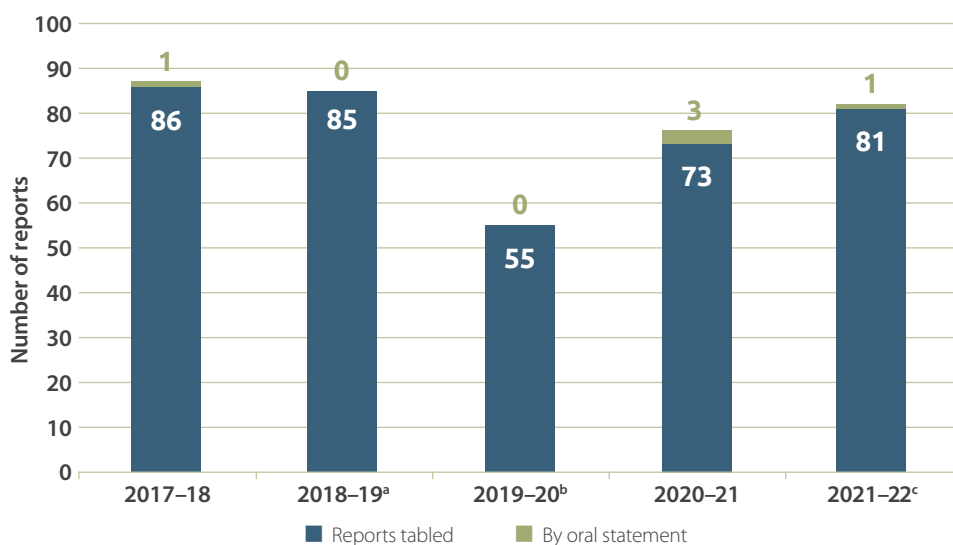


a. The 45th Parliament ended with the dissolution of the House on 11 April 2019.

b. The 46th Parliament opened on 2 July 2019.

c. The 46th Parliament ended with the dissolution of the House on 11 April 2022.

Figure 5: Number of reports tabled by committees supported by the Committee Office, 2017–18 to 2021–22



a. The 45th Parliament ended with the dissolution of the House on 11 April 2019.

b. The 46th Parliament opened on 2 July 2019.

c. The 46th Parliament ended with the dissolution of the House on 11 April 2022.

Petitions Committee

The Standing Committee on Petitions facilitates the receipt and progression of petitions through the House. The committee can also conduct inquiries and undertake activities on any matter relating to petitions and the petitions system.

The committee continued to receive a high volume of petitions. Table 6 shows the number of in-order petitions presented to the House, and the number of signatories, for the past five years. In 2021–22, 703 petitions were presented, compared with 628 last year. The number of signatures received was 2,858,683, compared with 1,218,579 last year. The committee also presented nine reports summarising the petitions and ministerial responses being presented.

The largest petition in 2021–22 was EN3285, with 163,744 signatures. It asked the House to reject the Biosecurity Amendment (Enhanced Risk Management) Bill 2021, saying that in its present form it does not offer adequate protections or limitations of overreaching use against certain classes of people, such as the unvaccinated.

Table 6: Petitions and signatories to petitions, 2017–18 to 2021–22

	2017–18	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a
Number of petitions presented	424	190	498	628	703
Number of signatories	371,491	199,084	804,854	1,218,579	2,858,683

a. Election year.

Government responses to committee reports

The government is required 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 tabling. This resolution was adopted by the House on 29 September 2010.

During 2021–22, 62 reports presented by committees supported by the Committee Office contained recommendations that required a government response. Of these 62 reports:

- » government responses to seven reports were received within the six-month timeframe
- » 26 reports have not received a response within the six-month timeframe
- » the six-month timeframe has not elapsed for the 29 remaining reports awaiting a response.

A total of 15 responses to reports presented in previous financial years were also received.

Information and communications technology

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, secretariats continued to work remotely when necessary, with committees frequently using videoconferencing and teleconferencing facilities to conduct proceedings. The expansion of the department's Surface Hub technology enabled the Committee Office to have more mobile videoconferencing facilities.

The Committee Office also worked with DPS and the Department of the Senate on a redevelopment of Report Builder, the template for drafting committee reports which is integrated with the Shared Committee Information Database. Through the database, Report Builder links committee and inquiry information, and enables web publishing of reports. The redeveloped Report Builder is expected to be ready to use in 2022–23.

Improving performance

In 2021–22, the Committee Office finalised reviews of the following:

- » training and orientation programs for staff
- » process for managing inquiry risk
- » business resumption plan
- » guidance documentation and manuals.

Committee Office staff also worked on a variety of projects during the election period following the dissolution of the House in April 2022, most of which are expected to be finalised in early 2022–23. Projects include:

- » development of guidance to effectively manage high-risk inquiries and protect the wellbeing and mental health of staff and vulnerable inquiry participants
- » coordinating the preparation and delivery of the orientation seminar for new members ahead of the 47th Parliament
- » full reviews of the Procedure and Practice Manual, Administrative Manual and Minutes Style Guide for committee staff
- » updating guides for committee chairs, members and their staff
- » standardising committee resolutions, and developing comparative guides to House and Senate committee procedures for the benefit of staff supporting joint committees
- » reviewing the emerging use of Microsoft Teams to support committee activities, with a view to standardising practice.

The department supported several Committee Office staff to undertake secondments with external agencies over the election period, providing staff an opportunity to develop new skills and fresh perspectives.

The Committee Office will continue to explore new ways to improve the services provided to committees. Training programs for new staff will continue, with an emphasis on developing knowledge of parliamentary and committee procedure.

Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs

The Clerk Assistant (Committees) supports the Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs – an informal group of the chairs and deputy chairs of House-supported investigatory committees, chaired by the Deputy Speaker.

The liaison committee met in February 2022 to discuss areas of common concern across committees, and areas where greater consistency and more information may be valuable to chairs and deputy chairs. The liaison committee will reconvene as soon as practicable in the 47th Parliament, to enable early engagement with newly appointed chairs and deputy chairs.

Outlook

In early 2022–23, the Committee Office will prepare for the commencement of the 47th Parliament, and the establishment of committees and staffing of new secretariats. The level of committee activity is expected to increase over the year.

The Committee Office will continue to provide a high level of professional support to members. To enable this, the professional development of our staff will remain a key priority.

Inter-parliamentary relations and capacity-building

The Australian Parliament's international program supports engagement and cooperation with parliaments internationally, with a focus on parliamentary relations in the Asia-Pacific region.

The program's activities and projects in 2021–22 were coordinated by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office, which is jointly funded by the department and the Department of the Senate, with input from all four parliamentary departments.

Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 17); staff levels are shown in Table 12.

Performance summary

Virtual engagement continued to feature strongly in the 2021–22 international program. The Presiding Officers and parliamentarians participated in a broad range of virtual meetings and inter-parliamentary forums, and virtual activities were conducted through to the federal election. Notably, in early 2022, two outgoing delegations took place, the first since the delegation program was suspended in March 2020. In February 2022, a delegation of committee representatives visited the United States of America and the United Kingdom to hold discussions with counterparts, and in March 2022, a delegation attended the 144th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Indonesia.

Parliamentary engagement

Presiding Officer-led diplomacy is an important element of the Australian Parliament's international program, and the two new Presiding Officers, elected in late 2021, continued this role. The International and Parliamentary Relations Office provided advice, planning assistance and briefing coordination to support the newly elected Presiding Officers as they hosted over 30 meetings to establish connections with diplomatic representatives and regional counterparts.

Throughout 2021–22, the Presiding Officers led various initiatives supported by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office; for example:

- » The former Speaker of the House, the Hon Tony Smith, as President of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, hosted a virtual multilateral meeting with counterparts and representatives from Canada, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, the Republic of Korea and Thailand.
- » The President of the Senate, Senator the Hon Slade Brockman, hosted the 7th Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia (MIKTA) Speakers' Consultations virtually in February 2022.



The 7th Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia (MIKTA) Speakers' Consultations in February 2022, hosted by the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon Slade Brockman. Image: Department of the House of Representatives.

Also throughout 2021–22, Australian parliamentary delegations participated in seven virtual multilateral inter-parliamentary forums, including the:

- » 42nd Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in August 2021 (hosted by Brunei Darussalam)
- » 67th North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Parliamentary Assembly in October 2021 (hosted by Portugal)
- » 11th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership meeting in November 2021 (hosted by Cambodia)
- » 29th Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum in November and December 2021 (hosted by the Republic of Korea).

Broader bilateral engagement activities included virtual meetings between parliamentary friendship groups and their international counterparts in the parliaments of Croatia, Israel, Poland and the European Union. A highlight of the year was a live virtual address in the House of Representatives Chamber to the parliament by the President of Ukraine on 31 March 2022.



The former Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Tony Smith, addressing the 29th Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum hosted virtually by the Republic of Korea in December 2021. Image: The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.

Parliamentary cooperation and capacity-building

During 2021–22, the Australian Parliament maintained its strong commitment to regional and international parliamentary cooperation, including sharing information on practices and procedures, and providing support.

In January 2022, the International and Parliamentary Relations Office coordinated the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table (ANZACATT) professional development seminar (see below).

In May 2022, parliamentary staff from the departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate participated virtually in the annual United Nations Development Programme mission to provide support for the budget processes of the Parliament of Tonga.

Under the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships Fund – an initiative to support parliamentary strengthening in the Pacific region – annual bid processes were completed and the Australia Region Management Committee approved requests from the parliaments of Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Support for information technology infrastructure featured strongly in 2021–22, with Pacific parliaments seeking support to improve their onsite and virtual broadcast capabilities.

Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table professional development seminar

In January each year, ANZACATT holds a multiday professional development seminar, open to members of the association and other parliamentary officers nominated by the Clerk of their House. This year the Australian Parliament hosted the seminar, coordinated by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office. It was held virtually because of COVID-19 travel restrictions. Parliamentary officers from all Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions participated in the seminar, which also included presentations and question and answer sessions from parliamentary colleagues from Canada, Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and Wales.

Improving performance

In May 2022, the International and Parliamentary Relations Office completed a successful 12-month trial of new software, which provides improved capabilities and efficiencies in the planning and coordination of whole-of-parliament events and delegation activities. A project to replace an end-of-life database servicing the International and Parliamentary Relations Office is nearing completion and is expected to be live at the commencement of the 47th Parliament.

Outlook

With the reopening of international borders for travel and the commencement of the 47th Parliament, a return to full in-person engagement and the resumption of delegation exchanges are expected.

Community relations and awareness

The department promotes the work of the House through a range of activities aimed at different sectors of the community. Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 19); staff levels are shown in Table 12.

Performance summary

During 2021–22 the department continued to use its communication channels to increase community engagement and awareness of the work of the House and committees. The department's seminar program was delivered through a mixture of in-person, online and hybrid seminars, with participation restored to pre-pandemic levels, minimising disruptions due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The department continued its work to support the school visits program and in providing support to the Parliamentary Education Office. The My First Speech competition remained on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic and is expected to resume in 2022–23. After a pause in intake due to the pandemic, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Internships component of the Australian National Internships Program continued in 2021–22 but had reduced numbers in 2022 because of the election period.

Media and publications

Social media remains an important engagement and information distribution tool for the department, with all channels increasing in audience in the reporting period.

The department's Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn accounts provide valuable information to the general public, and through these platforms the department continued to receive positive feedback.

During the reporting period, the department's Facebook subscriber base increased by 1.1% to 8,777 subscribers and its Twitter following increased by 5.1% to 51,494 followers. The House's YouTube account, used for publishing replays of Question Time and an 'About the House' series of short videos, had the largest growth of 19% in the reporting period and now has more than 12,733 subscribers.

In April 2022, the department transitioned the *About the House* e-newsletter to the 'About the House News' page on the Parliament of Australia website. A final e-newsletter edition was distributed, encouraging subscribers to continue following the department's social media channels and subscribe to the news page.

The department continues to issue media releases on behalf of committees, the Speaker and the Clerk of the House. In total, the department issued 169 media releases during the reporting period, a decrease of 38% on last year's figure. During the reporting period, the 'About the House News' page and all its subpages received a total of over 111,000 unique page views. This is a decrease from last year, which saw a more than doubling of page views, but compares favourably to the 72,000 page views in 2019–20. The decrease may be explained in part by the election period break.

Seminars

The department's seminar program includes a series of seminars covering the parliament, the budget, the legislative process and the work of parliamentary committees. Additionally, customised seminars can be delivered to individual government departments or other stakeholders on request. The program is designed to raise awareness of the work of the House, particularly among employees of government agencies.

In 2021–22, the department improved its capacity to deliver seminars in person, online and in hybrid form, using Microsoft Surface Hubs. It delivered 13 seminars to 513 participants in total – 193 attending in person and 320 via webinar. Of the 13 seminars, eight were custom seminars attended by around half the participants. Participation in the general seminar program returned to pre-pandemic levels.

My First Speech competition

The My First Speech competition invites students in years 10 to 12 to imagine themselves as a newly elected member of the House of Representatives and write a 3-minute speech on issues they are passionate about. The competition is usually held annually; however, again this year it was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Australian National Internships Program

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Internships component of the Australian National Internships Program operates under an agreement between the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University and the Australian Parliament's Presiding Officers. It enables students from across Australia to undertake a placement with a member or senator as part of their formal course of study. During their placements, students complete a research project on a subject agreed by their host. This report is assessed by the university and counts towards the student's degree.

In 2021–22, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, interns were able to undertake their placements remotely if required. In the second semester of 2021, there were 23 placements with members and senators and two with the Parliamentary Library. In the first semester of 2022, seven interns undertook placements with senators and members. This lower number can be attributed to the election period.

The department worked with colleagues in the Department of the Senate to facilitate the program and deliver an orientation session for interns. The department continued to have a representative on the Australian National Internships Program's advisory board and parliamentary steering committee.

Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program

Under the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program – arranged through the Minister for Defence Personnel in conjunction with the Department of Defence – a small number of Australian Defence Force representatives usually spend a week at Parliament House, hosted by a member or senator. The departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate, which work together to support the program and provide orientation sessions on the work of the chambers and committees, collaborated in anticipation; however, COVID-19 restrictions prevented the program from proceeding this year.

Parliamentary Education Office

Jointly funded by the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives, the Parliamentary Education Office delivers parliamentary education services on behalf of the Australian Parliament to students, teachers, and others across Australia. To date, more than 2.3 million students have expanded their knowledge of the Australian Parliament through participating in a Parliamentary Education Office program.

In addition to operational management by the Department of the Senate, the Parliamentary Education Office is guided by an advisory committee, comprising interested members and senators. The committee meets three times a year and reports to the Presiding Officers.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Parliamentary Education Office in 2021–22 was 10.8 (compared with 11.1 in 2020–21).

Education programs: onsite, outreach and digital

The Parliamentary Education Office is a leader in civics and citizenship education in Australia and delivers education programs for teachers and students onsite at Parliament House, in classrooms across Australia and digitally through videoconferencing.

School visits to Parliament House continued to be significantly impacted in this reporting period due to COVID-19 restrictions. For schools able to visit Parliament House, all programs were conducted in a COVID-safe manner. For those schools unable to visit Parliament House, a videoconferencing program was offered. In 2021–22, 19,468 students from 347 schools across Australia participated in onsite Parliamentary Education Office programs, a 32% decrease on 2020–21 participation numbers.

In 2021–22, the Parliamentary Education Office conducted six outreach sessions to 133 preservice teachers in the Australian Capital Territory. While travel to other jurisdictions continued to be hampered by COVID-19 restrictions, this approach allowed the outreach program to continue being delivered, and provided opportunities for educators who, despite geographical proximity, have not previously connected with the Parliamentary Education Office. The outreach program is planned to resume in full in 2023.

The number of students and teachers taking part in the videoconferencing program increased significantly this reporting period, with 34,182 participants – about a 3.8-fold increase on 2020–21 participation rates. In the reporting period, the Parliamentary Education Office also upgraded the existing videoconferencing studio and established a second studio, paving the way for the office to enhance its provision of digital education programs about the Australian Parliament.

Content: online and print

The Parliamentary Education Office website provides information about parliament and curriculum-aligned teaching resources for all Australian teachers and students. In 2021–22, the website attracted a total of 1.5 million users (representing 3.14 million unique page views).

The Parliamentary Education Office also produced and distributed a range of publications during the reporting period, including a new teaching booklet for teachers of politics and legal studies, and new classroom posters illustrating key aspects of our system of government such as the Australian Constitution.

Services for members and senators

The Parliamentary Education Office provides dedicated support to encourage and assist members and senators to engage with schools and students. Members and senators are offered a complimentary annual allocation of education and information materials for students, teachers and others in their communities. Members and senators can also request a tailored brochure, *Representing You*, to assist them when explaining their work as an elected representative. In 2021–22, 111 parliamentarians requested their allocation (compared with 126 last year). The unusual circumstances of lockdown and the reduced ability to visit schools may explain the slightly lower take-up than in pre-pandemic years.

Parliamentary Education Office outlook

In the coming year, the Parliamentary Education Office will continue to follow all relevant health and other advice to safely deliver education programs for Australian teachers and students. An important part of this work will be to further enhance and promote videoconferencing programs and other services as a method to engage students and teachers who are unable to visit Canberra.

Through high-calibre digital and print content, the Parliamentary Education Office will continue to provide quality parliamentary education services for parliamentarians, teachers and students across the country.

Outlook

The department will continue to adapt its community relations and awareness activities in response to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.

The increase in the number of subscribers across the department's social media channels indicates a continued strong interest by the public in the work of the House of Representatives. Despite the decrease in the number of website page views, the popularity of news articles increased, indicating the transition from the e-newsletter to the 'About the House News' page has been successful.

In the forward period, the department aims to update and develop new departmental communication strategies to ensure the goals are in line with stakeholder expectations and best practice. The department will undertake new outreach activities to increase awareness of the work of the department across the Australian community and Australian public service. The department will continue to identify opportunities to work with the other parliamentary departments on various communication activities, as well as to improve the Parliament of Australia website. The department will maintain its improved capacity to deliver seminars in person, online and in hybrid form, to ensure flexible delivery and maximum reach of its education program into the future.

Members' and corporate support

Members' and corporate support is provided by the Finance Office, the People Strategies Office and the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, all of which report to the Serjeant-at-Arms, and the Information Management Office which reports to the Clerk Assistant (Procedure). The offices liaise with the Department of Finance and DPS to provide comprehensive services to departmental staff as well as to members and their employees, including:

- » providing advice and support on financial and human resource management, as well as records management, publishing and office services
- » paying members' salaries and allowances
- » organising members' office accommodation, furniture and fittings
- » providing mail and courier services, and a booking service for committee rooms and chamber gallery seating
- » maintaining and publishing key information about members and former members.

Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 21); staff levels are shown in Table 12.

Performance summary

Working with the Department of the Senate, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Australian Federal Police and DPS, this program area provides the Speaker and the Speaker's Office with timely advice and support on matters such as:

- » control and management of the precincts
- » arrangements in the chambers and their associated galleries
- » ceremonial aspects of the work of the House of Representatives.

To facilitate the safe operation of the House, COVID-safe arrangements remained in place and were adjusted as necessary to comply with travel and other restrictions and in accordance with advice from health authorities. At times Parliament House was closed to the public and some passholders; also, employees who were not required to work from the office were encouraged to work remotely during the sittings. All building occupants were encouraged, and at times required, to wear masks, including in the Chamber and Federation Chamber. Perspex screens were installed on the Chamber Table.

At times seating was limited in the Chamber, and ministers and shadow spokespersons who were allocated seats behind the frontbench were asked to remain at their allocated seats when speaking, rather than moving to the despatch boxes. For most sittings, remote participation in proceedings, using the official video facility, remained an option for members unable to be physically present in the Chamber.

During budget week arrangements were again tailored in response to COVID-19 health settings and the demands of the parliamentary agenda. All members were able to sit in the House, and the public galleries returned to full-capacity seating. Masks were mandatory in the Chamber and galleries due to increased attendance that week. With these changed circumstances, there were no arrangements in place for members to make contributions remotely.

Also during budget week, His Excellency Mr Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, addressed the House by video link on screens located next to the Speaker and around the Chamber. The President of the Senate and all senators were invited to attend the House as guests for the address. This was the 16th address by a foreign head of state or government to a meeting in the House of Representatives Chamber with members and senators, and the first such address made by video link and from a war zone.



His Excellency Mr Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, addresses the House of Representatives (by video link) on 31 March 2022. Image: David Foote, Auspic/DPS.

Media services

During the year, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office continued to work with the various media bureaux and the governing committee of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery to ensure compliance with the rules for media-related activity in Parliament House and its precincts.

The Serjeant-at-Arms and Usher of the Black Rod and their delegates liaised closely with the press gallery to balance media access, security and parliamentary requirements on a daily basis and at major events, including the delivery of the budget and budget-in-reply speeches, the address by the President of Ukraine and the new members' seminar.

The Serjeant-at-Arms and delegates work with members' and ministers' offices, representatives of the press gallery, the Australian Federal Police and the Parliamentary Security Service to ensure that media events in the precincts are conducted in compliance with the media rules and with minimum inconvenience to all.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office responded to 111 requests to film or photograph in the private areas of the building.

Information for members

As part of the department's commitment to keep members and their employees informed about developments in the House, three editions of the members' bulletin *House Update* were published during the year. Informal drop-in centres, with a senior officer available to answer procedural and administrative queries, were offered to members every sitting Tuesday.

A drop-in session was held for members not contesting the next election. At this session, officers from the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, Department of Finance, Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority, National Archives of Australia and DPS provided practical information for departing members.

The department assisted with preparations for, and support during, the new members' seminar. The Information Management Office prepared a new landing page for new members on the members' intranet site, House Connect. It also provided assistance in preparing the Members' Handbook which, for the first time, is available in an additional format (a website in SharePoint).



New members attend the new members' seminar, 28 June 2022. Image: Penny Bradfield, Auspic/DPS.

Accommodation services

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

The change of government, following the general election, led to about 100 suite moves. This project involved several stages. Before the election, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office assisted

with clearing suites of members not contesting the election. Following the election, the office assisted with clearing suites of those members who had not retained their seats, and moving former ministers from the ministerial wing to the House of Representatives wing, and moving new ministers to the ministerial wing.

It also entailed changing assistant minister suites in the House of Representatives wing and the placement of new members into vacant suites.

Maintenance, access and transport services

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office coordinates requests for maintenance, including routine and high-priority work, in members' suites and departmental offices. During the year, the office coordinated 325 high-priority requests, all of which were attended to promptly. In addition, the office coordinated 81 routine requests for repairs or alterations to suites or common areas. The office takes a proactive approach by performing office shutdowns and inspections at the commencement of each long recess so that issues can be identified, reported and addressed while parliament is not sitting.

The office coordinated 446 requests for assistance with telephone faults, relocations and allocations of telephone numbers (compared with 909 requests in 2020–21). 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.

The office approved 992 requests by DPS and contractors working on behalf of DPS to access suites and general circulation areas for works related to general maintenance, services and projects. This represents a 31% decrease on last year (1,444 requests).

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office operates a Transport Office, which delivers a parliamentary shuttle service during sitting periods. The shuttle provides a readily available, secure, car-with-driver service in Canberra for members. In 2021–22, the Transport Office managed 2,872 bookings from members, compared with 4,575 bookings in 2020–21 (figures exclude unbooked shuttle trips from the House of Representatives entrance). This represents a 37% decrease in bookings on last year, reflecting the reduced number of sitting weeks in 2021–22.

Parliament House security

The Security Management Board, established pursuant to section 65A of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, advises the Presiding Officers on security policy and the management of security measures for Parliament House. The board met four times during the reporting period. The Serjeant-at-Arms represents the department on the board.

The department is also represented on two security-related consultative groups, both chaired by the Australian Federal Police:

- » The Incident Planning and Response Committee is attended by representatives of the parliamentary departments and several external agencies, and meets before meetings of the Security Management Board in order to provide specialist advice to the board.

- » The Joint Management Group is attended by representatives of the parliamentary departments, the Department of Finance and the Australian Federal Police, and meets weekly to consider security-related matters and coordinate responses at the operational level.

The department has a business continuity network to coordinate contingency plans for work areas in the event of business disruptions; again this year there was a particular focus on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office progressed work to update the business continuity framework for the department, in consultation with directors.

Security screening

Certain guests are exempt from security screening on entry to Parliament House. Approvals for any other exemptions are made jointly by the Serjeant-at-Arms and the Usher of the Black Rod. During the year, five exemptions were sought, but not all planned visits went ahead due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Information and communications technology

The majority of the department's ICT and ICT security capacity is provided by DPS under the parliamentary ICT service-delivery framework. The framework is underpinned by a memorandum of understanding and service-level agreement between the parliamentary departments.

In support of this arrangement, the department continued to participate in a range of ICT advisory and management committees.

The Strategic ICT Group, comprising senior parliamentary staff, provides strategic advice on ICT strategy, policy and risk. It considers the priorities for DPS capital expenditure on replacing or upgrading parliamentary business systems and closely monitors the service-level agreement. It met four times in the reporting period. The Clerk Assistant (Procedure) is the department's representative on the committee.

The Clerk Assistant (Procedure) also represents the department on the ICT Portfolio Board. This board makes key decisions to ensure the effective delivery of prioritised and funded ICT projects, including new ICT systems and enhancing existing applications.

The department continued to work closely with DPS to ensure staff could effectively access departmental ICT systems to work remotely in support of the parliament.

ICT within the department is coordinated by the Information Management Office.

Digital strategy

The overarching vision and direction for the future delivery of digital services for the parliamentary departments is outlined in the Australian Parliament Digital Strategy 2019–2022. The strategy is a high-level statement of intent which is intended to:

- » provide a reference to guide all digital decision-making, particularly investment and architectural design
- » set enterprise ICT direction and priorities for the parliament that align with business needs

- » establish an agreed understanding of digital direction and priorities in support of the parliament's business.

To complement the broad parliamentary strategy, the department has produced the Department of the House of Representatives Digital Strategy 2021–2024. It is intended to bridge the gap between shared objectives and additional priorities and business needs of the department. The strategy will provide a framework to support a clear approach to a wide range of ICT challenges and opportunities.

The department's strategy identifies four priority themes: technology reform; capability uplift; data and information management; and harnessing opportunities and reducing risk.

Parliamentary assistants program

The parliamentary assistants program is managed by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. Parliamentary assistants are university students who perform the roles of messengerial attendants for an average of 10 hours per week, with rosters planned around student commitments and the requirements of the House.

Eight students took part in the program in 2021–22: two were continuing assistants (from the Australian Capital Territory), and six were new appointments (four from New South Wales and two from Victoria). All of the assistants are studying at the Australian National University.

Members' salaries

Members' salaries and entitlements are processed by the People Strategies Office in accordance with legislation and administrative decisions. All respondents to the 2022 members' survey said that they were satisfied with support for salary payments.

During the year, the department became aware of a classification error, which it subsequently reported to the Department of Finance and the Australian National Audit Office. An additional layer of checking has been added to the processing of office holder salaries and the process will be monitored during the next reporting period.

Outlook

In 2022–23, the department will continue to provide advice and services of a high standard to support the Speaker, members in Parliament House and the department. Priorities for the members' and corporate support activity during the year include:

- » continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing support for special arrangements for sittings of the Chamber and Federation Chamber, meetings of parliamentary committees and general departmental operations
- » modernisation of human resources systems and software, with a view to providing improved services to members and departmental employees, and greater efficiency of processes within the People Strategies Office
- » activity associated with the opening of the 47th Parliament, including ceremonial arrangements and assisting new members and office holders to understand the range of services provided by the department.

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 and the Visitor Engagement section of DPS. Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 22).

Performance summary

In 2021–22, 22,457 school students participated in educational tours of Parliament House, down from 34,353 in 2020–21 and 86,315 in 2019–20 (see Table 7). The reduction was due to the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although fewer students visited Parliament House during 2021–22, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office continued to be busy managing cancellations and rescheduling bookings for school visits.

Table 7: Students visiting Parliament House, by location and year, 2017–18 to 2021–22

Year	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA	Total
2017–18	3,030	64,366	788	17,131	5,896	1,942	20,810	5,125	119,088
2018–19	2,904	69,333	715	17,766	6,340	1,784	21,054	4,935	124,831
2019–20	1,230	46,660	444	14,883	4,565	1,730	12,695	4,108	86,315
2020–21	2,443	24,963	0	1,241	681	2	5,017	6	34,353
2021–22	1,229	17,609	0	674	0	0	2,945	0	22,457

All visiting students participated in a guided tour and visited both the House and Senate chambers; 71% (15,891) received hospitality and 87% (19,468) participated in the Parliamentary Education Office program (see pages 53 to 54 for more information on the activities of the Parliamentary Education Office).

Outlook

Together, the parliamentary departments continue to manage school participation at Parliament House in line with COVID-safe practices. As at 1 July 2022, 98,308 students from 1,303 schools had been booked for the following 12 months, noting that these figures remain subject to change due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

