



Part 1

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*Recipients of service pins at
the Departmental Conversations.*

Image: Department of the House of Representatives.

Clerk's review

During 2023–24, the 47th Parliament passed the mid-point of its three year parliamentary cycle.

The year has been a time of returning, post COVID-19, to a familiar rhythm in many respects, but with change. For the department, a new Corporate Governance Office was established to oversee our governance functions and provide dedicated coordination of risk management and legislative compliance. For the parliamentary service, the four departments agreed a new principle-based Memorandum of Understanding for ICT services to assist the parliamentary service to deliver efficient and effective services in support of the Parliament, committees, and parliamentarians, while providing a comprehensive ICT governance framework. The MoU is an important achievement as the majority of the capacity for ICT and ICT security for the parliamentary service is provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services under the parliamentary ICT service-delivery framework.

Supporting Members and the work of Parliament

The department supports Members of the House of Representatives in carrying out their legislative and committee roles. We provide advice and services to enable the House of Representatives Chamber and Federation Chamber to meet and conduct business, to enable House and certain joint committees to conduct and report on inquiries, and to support the Parliament's national, international and regional relationships. We also provide services to increase public knowledge and awareness of and access to the work of the House of Representatives and the Parliament through media resources and promotion.

Elevated levels of services have continued in the year. For legislation, 161 bills were introduced and 129 bills were assented to. We supported 62 sittings of the House and 58 meetings of the Federation Chamber, which is similar in number to other years. The duration of meetings for the two chambers was again high, with employees supporting 810 hours in total (930 including suspensions). As an innovation this year, we introduced QR codes on the daily program to provide Members with a new avenue to access business documents for the chambers.

Also in the Chamber, we supported addresses to Members and Senators, from the Hon James Marape MP, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, and His Excellency Ferdinand R Marcos Jr, President of the Republic of the Philippines. We also assisted three new Members who were sworn in following by-elections in the electorates of Fadden, Dunkley and Cook, bringing to 39 the total number of new Members in the 47th Parliament.

The 27 committees supported by the department met 609 times for a total of more than 1000 hours, and 95 reports were presented, with Members debating most reports in the House or Federation Chamber. In terms of public engagement, our activities have returned to pre-pandemic levels, while retaining options for adaptable, and virtual, participation in a wide range of activities.



Prime Minister Hon. James Marape, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea addresses Parliament. Image: David Foote, AusPic/DPS.

Parliamentary Environment

Integrity and conduct issues continued to have added focus in the parliamentary environment through ongoing implementation of the recommendations of *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*. For a third year, the department has dedicated significant resources in collaborating with colleagues in other agencies. The Parliamentary Workplace Support Service is now established as a statutory agency to continue with an expanded role, including in providing services to the department in supporting work health and safety, complaint resolution, and education and training.

During the period we contributed to events marking significant occasions for the Parliament and the House of Representatives. We joined with colleagues across the parliamentary service in welcoming over 7,000 members of the public to Open Day, and celebrating the 35th anniversary of the opening of Parliament House. We also supported, recognition of the 30th anniversary of the operation of the Federation Chamber.

The department has considerable expertise in developing and delivering training which addresses the unique professional development requirements of employees supporting the work of the parliament. This year, for the first time since 2019, we resumed hosting our well regarded in person capacity building program, the Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, with participants from 10 national parliaments in Asia, the Pacific and around the world.

Our people and the parliamentary service

The department also provided a range of in-house parliamentary capability development programs that enrich the expertise of our own employees, which were complemented through our longstanding professional body, the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table (ANZACATT). These are critical programs which strengthen the department as a parliamentary steward and institution, through specialist parliamentary professional development simply not available outside of a parliamentary environment.

The department faces ongoing challenges to recruit and maintain a professional workforce in a competitive employment environment. The new enterprise agreement and some of the learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic have reinforced that wellbeing and flexible working are fundamental aspects of our professional parliamentary workforce. The department's commitment to work health and safety draws on internal services and services provided by the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service.

For the first time since 2017, the department was able to commence enterprise bargaining in 2023. Even though a non-APS agency, the department was expected to incorporate common terms and conditions from APS bargaining, into our negotiated outcomes with departmental employees. The resulting enterprise agreement was overwhelmingly endorsed by employees, and formally commenced in April 2024.



The Swearing In of the new member for Fadden, Cameron Caldwell, Queensland. Liberal Party of Australia. Image: David Foote, AusPic/DPS.

Looking ahead

We plan to refresh the department's workforce planning, and have scheduled a program to review or develop numerous policies following commencement of the department's enterprise agreement, with work to conclude in the second half of next year. The expanded

payroll team is assisting in implementing the government's decision, legislated in May this year, for all parliamentarians to be paid fortnightly instead of monthly. At the end of 2023–24, the department established new salary payment services for all Members, and fortnightly salary payments are to commence from the beginning of the 2024–25 financial year.

The People Strategies Office is leading the department's work with the other parliamentary departments to develop a new Parliamentary Service Determination (due to expire on 1 October) which will implement, as appropriate, changes to the APS governance framework from the Public Service Regulations 2023. Our dedicated corporate governance team will be developing new options for measuring departmental performance to enhance our reporting.

In the next year, further changes are proposed to the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service. An Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission is to be established to investigate allegations about breaches of behaviour standards and codes of conduct affecting Commonwealth parliamentary workplace participants, including our employees.

We are persisting in seeking improvements to the department's collection and reporting of statistical information on the House of Representatives. Further projects are being developed to replace critical legacy ICT systems for the Table, Committee and Serjeant-at-Arms offices. The replacement systems will deliver improvements and efficiencies for the department. Also in relation to ICT, we are participating in trials of Artificial Intelligence software across the parliamentary service, and will continue to investigate and monitor potential benefits for our future services.



Parliamentarians of the 47th Parliament stand with the Ukrainian Ambassador to Australia, Vasyly Myroshnychenko, in the House of Representatives chamber, Parliament House. Image: David Foote, AusPic/DPS.

As the parliamentary cycle moves into its third year, the Parliament is now in the inevitable concluding phase, with elections due in 2025. I expect that the work of the House will continue at a high pace initially, and that the first half of 2024–25 will include committees being focussed on finalising their inquiries and reports ahead of the anticipated general election. I remain confident that the work undertaken by the department in building capability and flexibility in service delivery, improvements in governance and overall efficiencies, will continue to enable our employees to provide the high levels of support for Members, the House of Representatives and the Parliament.

Claressa Surtees
Clerk of the House



Staff prepare for Parliament House Open Day. Image: Department of the House of Representatives.



Staff in discussion during Departmental Conversations. Image: Department of the House of Representatives.

Departmental overview

The department's purpose as set out in its Corporate Plan 2023–24 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.

Role and functions

The *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* provides for a non-partisan parliamentary service to serve the Australian Parliament. The Department of the House of Representatives is established by and operates under the Act, together with three other parliamentary departments: the Department of the Senate, the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) and the Parliamentary Budget Office.

During 2023–24, parliamentary operations returned to their pre-pandemic state. Throughout this transition, the department continued to provide the highest standard of support for the work of the House of Representatives, its members and committees, and some joint committees (comprising members of the House and the Senate).

The department continued to strengthen its services to increase public knowledge and awareness of the work of the House and the Australian Parliament, and to encourage interaction. Parliamentary engagement activities saw a return to in-person engagement, and the department continued to assist the House and the parliament in maintaining institutional relationships with state, territory and international counterparts.

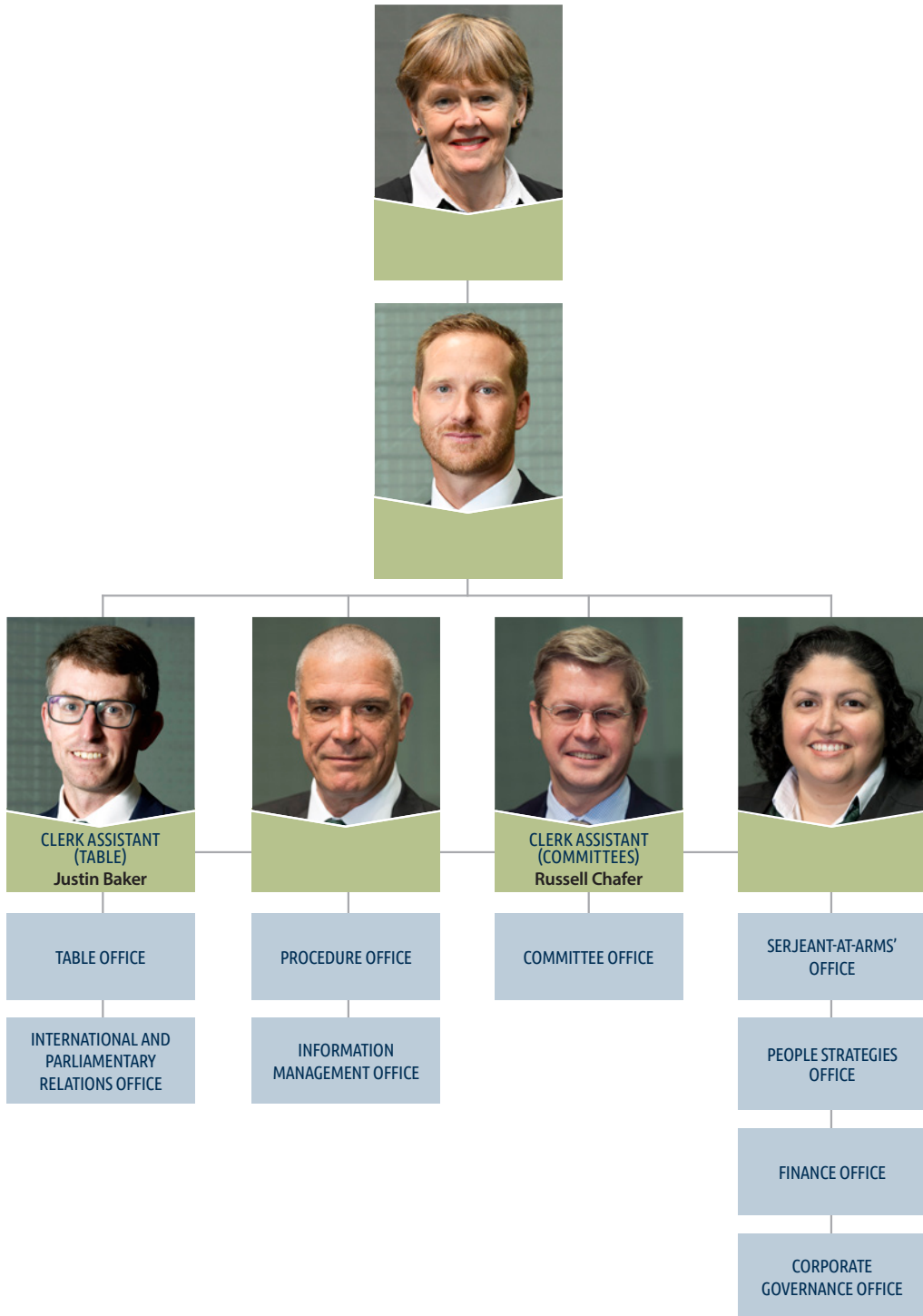
Departmental structure

The department is managed by its Executive: the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Clerk Assistant (Table), Clerk Assistant (Procedure), Clerk Assistant (Committees) and Serjeant-at-Arms.

In 2023–24, a new Corporate Governance Office was established to oversee the department's governance functions and provide dedicated coordination of its risk management and legislative compliance activities.

Figure 1 shows the departmental structure as at 30 June 2024.

Figure 1: Departmental structure as at 30 June 2024



Roles and responsibilities of the Executive

Clerk

The Clerk, as the accountable authority, is the most senior official of the department. The Clerk is principal adviser to the Speaker and members on House and committee proceedings, parliamentary privilege and other parliamentary matters. The Clerk leads some 192 departmental staff members, who provide administrative and procedural advice and services to the House and parliamentary committees, and support the parliament's international and domestic engagement. With the heads of the other three parliamentary departments, the Clerk leads the parliamentary service.

Deputy Clerk

The Deputy Clerk is the second most senior official of the department. The Deputy Clerk is responsible for advising and assisting members, their staff and departmental staff on matters of parliamentary practice and law, and for overseeing the drafting of private members' bills and amendments. The Deputy Clerk assists the Clerk in managing the department, and performs the duties of Clerk during the Clerk's absence.

Clerk Assistant (Table)

The Clerk Assistant (Table) is responsible for the Table Office, which provides programming, procedural and legislative support to the Chamber and Federation Chamber of the House. The Clerk Assistant (Table) is also responsible for the areas of the department that support the parliament's program of international delegations and parliamentary strengthening.

Clerk Assistant (Procedure)

The Clerk Assistant (Procedure) is responsible for the Procedure Office, which provides procedural research, publications and services explaining the work of the House and its institutional role, and the Information Management Office. The Clerk Assistant (Procedure) also contributes to the House's parliamentary strengthening activities related to parliamentary procedure.

Clerk Assistant (Committees)

The Clerk Assistant (Committees) is responsible for the Committee Office, which provides support services to House committees and some joint committees. Services include procedural, research, analytical, drafting and administrative support.

Serjeant-at-Arms

The Serjeant-at-Arms is responsible for the corporate areas of the department, which provide support and services to members and departmental staff. The Serjeant-at-Arms has a key role in managing ceremonial, access and security matters relating to the House.

Outcome and program structure

The department’s outcome and program structure for the year is set out in the *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24*.

The department has one outcome:

- » Advisory and administrative services support the House of Representatives to fulfil its representative and legislative role.

The department has two programs:

- » Program 1: Departmental – supports five activities
- » Program 2: Administered – supports one activity.

Figure 2 shows the department’s outcome and program structure, and the activities under each program.

Figure 2: Outcome and program structure, 2023–24

