



# 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 2023–24 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.

**Claessa Surtees, Clerk of the House**

## Purpose

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.

## 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.

Please note the data used to assess performance measure results is currently collected through a combination of automated and manual processes. As with any manual process, there is a risk of errors or inconsistencies in the collection process. Noting this risk, the department has established quality assurance processes to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the data supporting the results reported, as it continues to take steps to automate data collection processes in the future.

### **Members' survey**

In May 2024 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 30 June. 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 participation in official parliamentary delegations

- » support for their House of Representatives office accommodation
- » support for their salary payments
- » support for transport coordination in Canberra during sitting weeks.

Members were able to provide comments in response to each question.

Thirty-five members completed the survey. This represents a response rate of 23%. The response rate in previous years has been 15% (2022–23), 14% (2021–22), and 28% (2020–21). Members were invited to add their name to the survey, and 25 of those who responded did so.

It is noted that there are limitations to statistically valid conclusions drawn from low survey response rates. The department continues to consider approaches to strengthening its evidence base for performance results.

### **Other data sources**

In addition to the members' survey, feedback on the services provided by the department is sought from the Presiding Officers or their staff, via email or interview. 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 2023–24*, and in more detail in the department's *Corporate Plan 2023–24*.

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	Target	Result
<b>Activity 1: Chamber and Federation Chamber</b>		
Level of satisfaction among surveyed members with the quality and timeliness of chamber support, procedural and statistical publications, analysis and advisory services.	90% satisfied	Target met
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 high degree of accuracy and within timeframes.	Standards met on all occasions	Target met
<b>Activity 2: Committee services</b>		
Level of satisfaction among surveyed committee members with the standard of administrative and procedural support provided.	90% satisfied	Target met
Level of satisfaction among surveyed committee members with the standard of research and drafting support provided.	90% satisfied	Target met
<b>Activity 3: Inter-Parliamentary Relations and Capacity Building</b>		
Level of satisfaction of Presiding Officers and delegates with arrangements for official incoming delegations.	90% satisfied	Target met
Level of satisfaction of Presiding Officers and delegates with arrangements for outgoing delegations.	90% satisfied	Target met
Level of satisfaction among participants with capacity building activities.	90% satisfied	Target met
<b>Activity 4: Community Relations and Awareness</b>		
Community is aware of, and engages with, published information about legislative and other parliamentary processes.	Interaction with the work of the House increasing over time (% change on prior year)	Target met
Clients are satisfied with seminars.	90% satisfied	Target met
<b>Activity 5: Members' and Corporate Support</b>		
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.	Very satisfied	Target met

Activity	Target	Result
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.	90% satisfied	Target met
<b>Activity 6: Schools Hospitality</b>		
Timely and accurate provision of advice to the Department of Parliamentary Services about hospitality required by visiting school groups, in accordance with bookings.	100%	Target met

## 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.

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 14; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24*, page 16

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

All but one member (97%) responding to the survey indicated satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of chamber procedural support and advisory services.

Feedback from members was positive, noting the quality and professionalism of support provided. One member noted access to a legislative drafter as a very valuable resource, but that the size of the crossbench was creating greater demand for the service.

All respondents indicated satisfaction with the quality and availability of procedural and statistical publications, and the support available to obtain these. Members also noted that the procedural and statistical publications were informative, and easy to access.

#### 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%

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 14; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24*, page 16

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

The chamber support service standards for the Chamber and the Federation Chamber relate to the timeliness and accuracy of chamber procedures and the publication

of chamber documents. Standards in relation to products and services within the department's control were met on all occasions. Events in Progress (EIP) captions were unavailable for brief periods during two sitting weeks, due to ICT/hardware issues outside of the department's control. On one occasion the daily program was delayed due to events outside of the department's control, but was still made available 30 minutes before the House met.

## Activity information

**Source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 14

**Table 1: Activity 1 information**

	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
Number of sittings of the House	67	41	68	62
Number of meetings of the Federation Chamber	63	25	62	58
Number of bills introduced	184	141	186	161

a. Election year.

## Analysis

The department continued to provide a high standard of support to the Chamber and the Federation Chamber in 2023–24, as the Parliament maintained high activity levels. The department provided tailored and responsive support to the Speaker, members and other stakeholders.

The House sat for 62 days in the period, including extended sitting hours, which is consistent with recent non-election years. The Federation Chamber continued to be used to a greater extent compared with previous parliaments, with 58 meetings for the year following on from 62 in 2022–23. The number of government bills referred to the Federation Chamber has increased from 12 in 2020–21 to 78 in 2023–24, demonstrating its increased workload. The department also provided support for complex debate management motions throughout the reporting period.

Legislative activity continued to be high, with 161 bills introduced in the period. While this is a slightly lower number (15.5%) than the 186 bills introduced in 2022–23, it was coupled with a high volume of proposed amendments which impacted the workloads of the Table and Clerk's Offices.

Targets set against the performance measures for the House of Representatives Chamber and Federation Chamber support were met. The department will continue to work with the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) on a program of projects to modernise the bespoke ICT infrastructure including the Table Offices Production System (TOPS), the Bills System and Events In Progress, that support the work of the House.

## Activity 2: Committee services

### 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.

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 15; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24*, page 17

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

Ninety-four per cent of respondents to this question in the members' survey indicated satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of advice and services to their committees. Comments made by members in the survey reflected satisfaction with the level of service and professionalism, although some members indicated concerns relating to time pressures. Some suggestions for improvement related to ICT systems support, which the department has only partial control over due to a reliance on shared services with the Department of Parliamentary Services.

#### Criterion 2

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

**Target:** 90% satisfied.

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 15; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24*, page 17

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

Ninety-seven % of respondents indicated satisfaction with the standard of research and drafting support provided to committees. While one respondent expressed concerns with drafting delays, other members noted the accuracy of research.

### Activity information

**Source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 15

**Table 2: Activity 2 information**

	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
Number of committee meetings <sup>b</sup>	620	407	624	546
Hours of meetings <sup>b,c</sup>	1,177	663	1,194	999
Number of committee reports <sup>b</sup>	61	82	45	61

a. Election year.

b. Excludes internal committees.

c. To the nearest hour.

## Analysis

Committee activity continued at a pace broadly reflective of the current stage of the parliamentary cycle. A total of 546 committee meetings were conducted in the reporting period, for a total of 999 hours, which was a decrease from 2022–23. A range of inquiries initiated at the beginning of the Parliament were finalised and 61 reports were presented, up from 45 in 2022–23. New inquiries were adopted, including several with short timeframes for reporting.

Feedback gathered through the members' survey indicates continued overall satisfaction with committee support services. Satisfaction with advice and services provided improved on results in 2022–23 (94% as compared to 79%), following increased engagement with committee members regarding their expectations. Satisfaction with report drafting remained high.

The department continued to explore avenues for strengthening its support for the work of committees, including working with DPS on a trial of videoconferencing systems at hearings outside of Parliament House and on the integrated ICT system Report Builder. It also ran updated training programs for staff, including scenario-based sessions. In addition to supporting fast-moving priorities as an election approaches, the department will continue to prioritise staff development in 2024–25.

## Activity 3: Inter-Parliamentary Relations and Capacity Building

### Performance measures and targets

#### Criteria 1, 2 and 3

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

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

Level of satisfaction among participants with capacity-building activities.

**Target:** 90% satisfied.

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 16; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24*, page 17

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

Feedback from the Presiding Officers indicated a high degree of satisfaction with advice provided and outgoing delegation planning by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO). Feedback provided by senior stakeholders involved in visits conducted by IPRO indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the support for delegations, including visit conduct and outcomes.

Comments from the members' survey indicated all those responding who had been in an outgoing parliamentary delegation were satisfied with the support they received. Comments indicated that members felt well supported for their visits.

Capacity building activities in the year included participating in the annual United Nations Development Programme mission to provide support for the budget processes of the Fijian



Parliament and working with parliamentary counterparts in the Pacific region to coordinate the annual round of Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships Fund bids. The 2023–24 annual round provided support to seven Pacific parliaments in collaboration with their state and territory parliamentary twins.

### Activity information

**Source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 16

**Table 3: Activity 3 information**

	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
Number of delegations managed	Program suspended	2	22	42
Number and nature of parliamentary capacity-building activities	24	21	20	14
» Occasions equipment supplied to Pacific parliaments	5 <sup>b</sup>	4	4	7
» Staff attachments and study visits	2 (virtual)	2 (virtual)	5	2
» Conferences, seminars and workshops	1 <sup>c</sup>	1	1	1
» Information-sharing requests facilitated	16	14	14	4
Number of virtual engagement activities	98	94	26	27
» Virtual meetings involving one or both Presiding Officers	29	9	1	1
» Virtual inter-Parliamentary events/forums with Australian Parliament delegation	16	9	1	-
» Virtual events and webinars offered to parliamentarians	53	76	24	26

a. Election year.

b. Corrected from previous Annual Reports due to duplication in data.

c. Corrected from previous Annual Reports due to transcription error.

### Analysis

There was a high tempo of incoming and outgoing delegations across the year. The department supported 29 outgoing delegations covering 30 different countries and 13 incoming delegations. The incoming delegations included Guest of Parliament visit by Her Excellency Ms Tie Ning, Vice Chair of the National People's Congress, People's Republic of China.

The reporting period also featured the first Pacific Guest of Parliament visits conducted under new hospitality arrangements. Speaker-led delegations from Fiji and Papua New Guinea were successfully conducted in the first half of 2024.

The department continued to provide secretariat support to the Australian Parliament's membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, including Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. The department also continued to support the parliament's involvement in the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Feedback from the Presiding Officers and stakeholders involved in the parliament's international program indicated 100 per cent satisfaction with the support provided by the department. Feedback from Inter-Parliamentary Study Program (IPSP) participants in March 2024 also indicated a high degree of satisfaction with program delivery. This was the first IPSP held since 2019.

## 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 the work of the House increasing over time (% change on prior year).

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 17

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

- » **Facebook:** 8,959 followers (increase of 0.7%)
- » **Twitter/X:** 51,311 followers (decrease of 0.8%)
- » **YouTube:** 19,775 followers (increase of 18.2%)
- » **LinkedIn:** 496 followers (increase of 18.4%)

The department saw subscriber growth across social media platforms in 2023–24, although increases were more significant for the less established channels for the department, YouTube and LinkedIn. This corresponds with the department's strategy to broaden its reach. Subscribers grew by 3.8% across all reported platforms.

There was also an increase in views of House of Representatives pages on the Parliament's website, rising to 1.79 million website hits from 2022–23's total of 1.41 million. This increase is reflective of the mid-point of the parliamentary cycle.

#### Criterion 2

Clients are satisfied with seminars.

**Target:** 90% satisfied.

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 17

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

The department continued to offer seminars with flexible attendance options, in person at Parliament House or virtually by webinar. Two seminars were conducted in the reporting period, with 112 participants. Twenty-eight % of seminar participants provided feedback.

Feedback from participants was positive, achieving the target level of client satisfaction. All attendees providing feedback were satisfied with the seminar content, level of detail, presenter and audiovisual elements. All attendees providing feedback also stated that the seminars met their objectives for attending.

## Activity information

**Source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 17

**Table 4: Activity 4 information**

	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
<b>Community contacts with the department's publications</b>				
» Website hits <sup>b</sup>	957,894	1.64 million	1.41 million <sup>c</sup>	1.79 million
Number of seminar participants	55 in person 59 virtually	193 in person 320 virtually	54 in person 41 virtually	23 in person 89 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).

c. In August 2023, the department moved to the GA4 Google website analytics platform as the previous version is no longer supported. Website hits for 2022–23 are presented using GA4 data to ensure consistency with future reporting.

## Analysis

Ensuring the wider community has access to information on the work of the House, its committees and certain joint committees remains 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 sitting periods. The department again successfully conducted the My First Speech competition in 2023–24, with an increase in entries from 2022–23.

There was a substantial increase in website hits, reflecting the higher level of activity at the mid-point of the parliamentary cycle. Growth across the department's community outreach channels was positive overall, although there was a relative plateau in more established channels. The increased reach for YouTube and LinkedIn reflects the department's strategy to broaden its audience. As indicated in the department's 2022–23 Annual Report, the department is focusing its reporting on social media platforms with more robust metrics.

Two seminars conducted during the reporting period showed an increased level of attendance from the level recorded in 2022–23, rising to 112 from 95. The department implemented a revised approach to seminars following a significant decrease in attendance figures from 2021–22. It was noted that an increased number of external participants took part in the seminars in the reporting period. The department will continue to monitor this increased reach in future reporting periods, and will work to ensure the flexible delivery and maximum reach of its education program into the future.

## 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.

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 18: *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24*, page 17

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

The data source for this measure is direct feedback from the Speaker and/or 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 indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the support services provided by the department to the Speaker, 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.

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 18: *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24*, page 17

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

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

Some comments made by members related to maintenance services, which were confirmed to have been appropriately actioned by the department but which relied on service delivery by other agencies. Members also noted strong and timely support regarding payroll services, however comments continued to indicate some confusion about the role of the department (which is responsible for members' payroll only) and the role of other agencies, as was seen in 2022–23. Comments in relation to transport coordination were generally positive, but again demonstrate the complexity of delivering services that are provided by the department in sitting weeks, and another agency in non-sitting weeks, using the same COMCAR vehicles. The department continues to be alert to ways in which feedback on transport and other services can be suitably directed, and promptly addressed.

## Activity information

**Source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 18

**Table 5: Activity 5 information**

	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
Number of Parliament House accommodation and office support services	1,949	1,744	1,198	1,140
Number of transport coordination services provided to members	8,153	6,556	8,347	7,559

a. Election year.

## Analysis

All performance targets relating to the delivery of services to members were met or exceeded. With very limited exceptions, members indicated satisfaction with the overall quality of non-chamber support services provided, including accommodation, office support, transport coordination, salary processing and other members' support services.

During the reporting period, the department successfully actioned a legislative change to move members' pay from a monthly to fortnightly cycle, with effect from 1 July 2024. It also coordinated seven members' suite moves, corresponding with House membership and shadow ministry changes. This occurred alongside promptly actioning 335 high-priority requests for assistance in suites and departmental offices to the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office.

A new Transport Office process was initiated during the period which allowed members and their staff to complete a booking request form in lieu of phoning the Transport Office. This process has been well received, particularly at peak times.

The Speaker also reported a high degree of satisfaction with support services provided by this activity area, noting that no concerns were raised with him by members during the reporting period. 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 about hospitality required by visiting school groups, in accordance with bookings.

**Target:** 100%

**Measure source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 19

**Result against the performance criterion:** Target met

This measure is assessed based on the number of students booked, combined with exception reporting from DPS and school groups. A total of 99,249 students toured Parliament House during the reporting period. Of those students, 68% (67,377) requested

and received hospitality. There were no reports during the year of hospitality not being provided when requested.

### Activity information

**Source:** *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, page 19

**Table 6: Activity 6 information**

	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
Number of visiting school students booked	34,353	22,457	96,084	99,249

a. Election year.

### Analysis

The delivery of an educational experience 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 when requested). Data about hospitality provision relies on exception reporting from DPS or school groups. There were no reports in 2023–24 of schools not receiving requested hospitality.

The number of visiting school students has stabilised following reductions due to COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions in previous years.

## 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. Throughout the year, 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, and on performance information from a range of data sources, the department has met all targets outlined in the 2023–24 Corporate Plan.

Activity information for 2023–24 reflects a very busy second year of the 47th Parliament, continuing from the high levels seen in 2022–23. The sittings of the House, increased usage of the Federation Chamber compared to previous parliaments, and the number and hours of committee meetings continued apace. Committee hearings continued to embrace flexible attendance, occurring in-person, by videoconference, or a hybrid of both. Incoming and outgoing parliamentary delegations, coordinated by the department, continued to return to pre-pandemic activity levels.

By-elections in Fadden, Dunkley and Cook resulted in new members commencing during the reporting period. The size of the crossbench continues to impact the nature and frequency of the advice and services sought from the department, particularly where many are without the support of a political party. Activities to support individual members, such as drafting private members' bills, and detailed amendments and second reading amendments for government bills, have risen to a volume that the department has not experienced in recent Parliaments.

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.



*Serjeant-At-Arms and attendants group photo in the Chamber. Image: Paul Furness, AusPic/DPS.*

# 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 2023–24 financial year reporting total comprehensive income of \$1.921 million. The department incurred total employee benefits of \$22.378 million, \$1.368 million lower than the budget estimate reported in the 2023–24 Portfolio Budget Statements. Employee benefits were \$1.116 million higher than those incurred in 2022–23 (\$21.262 million) due to a pay increase in November 2023 and lower levels of staff vacancies than in 2022–23.

Supplier expenses increased by \$0.281 million between 2022–23 (\$4.221 million) and 2023–24 (\$4.502 million). Expenditure in this area was \$0.741 million lower than the budget estimate reported in the 2023–24 Portfolio Budget Statements estimates. The department's financial position has remained strong with appropriation receivable totalling \$25.146 million and cash and cash equivalents of \$5.600 million.

During the year, the department engaged a valuation specialist to perform a desktop assessment of its property, plant and equipment classification assets. The independent valuer's report concluded that there was \$0.088 million difference between fair value and the carrying value of the assets; this amount is reflected in comprehensive income. Asset additions during the year related to the purchase of mobile drawer units. Several televisions and refrigerators were replaced during 2023–24 due to end of useful life.

The department's overall financial position continued to remain sound in 2023–24:

- » total assets increased by \$1.629 million from the prior year to \$34.359 million
- » total liabilities increased by \$0.348 million to \$7.787 million.

Estimates for 2023–24 indicate that the department has sufficient resources to continue to support members, the House and committees.



## Entity resource statement 2023–24

Table 7: Entity resource statement

	Actual available appropriations 2023–24 \$'000	Payments made 2023–24 \$'000	Balance remaining 2023–24 \$'000
	(a)	(b)	(a) - (b)
<b>Departmental</b>			
Annual appropriation <sup>1</sup>	56,908	25,522	31,386
<b>Total</b>	<b>56,908</b>	<b>25,522</b>	<b>31,386</b>
<b>Administered expenses</b>			
Outcome <sup>1</sup>	1,008	233	775
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>775</b>
<b>Total resourcing</b>	<b>57,916</b>	<b>25,755</b>	<b>32,161</b>
<b>Total resourcing and payments for the Department of the House of Representatives</b>	<b>57,916</b>	<b>25,755</b>	<b>32,161</b>

1. Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No.1) 2023–24, prior year departmental appropriation and section 74 retained revenue receipts.

### Third-party drawdowns from and on behalf of other entities

Table 8: 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)	53,405

# 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 12); staff levels are shown in Table 19.

## 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
- » 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 results on pages 12 to 25 provide more detailed analysis on the results of the survey. Statistics on sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber in 2023–24 and the four preceding years are shown in Table 9.

There were 62 sitting days in 2023–24, six fewer than in 2022–23, but consistent with the patterns of the House.

Legislative activity continued to be robust, as reflected on page 32. There was a minor decrease in the number of bills introduced (15.5% less than in 2022–23), which demonstrated a return to ‘normal’ post the decreases caused by COVID-19 and the election in 2021–22 and the subsequent high-level of activity in the next year. The Federation Chamber similarly returned to a normal operational level.

There was an increase in the number of amendments moved during the consideration in detail stage (13% more than in 2022–23), and a small increase in the number of asset prints prepared by the Table Office (123 compared to 106 in 2022–23). The department was also required to support 12 sittings past 8 pm and nine sittings that went past 8.30 pm, six of which resulted from motions to vary the usual arrangements.

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 9: Performance summary, Chamber and Federation Chamber, 2019–2020 to 2023–24**

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
<b>Number of sittings/meetings</b>					
Sittings of the House	62	67	41	68	62
Meetings of the Federation Chamber	54	63	25	62	58
<b>Hours of sittings/meetings</b>					
Sittings of the House <sup>b</sup>	548	597	380	637	582
Meetings of the Federation Chamber <sup>b</sup>	185	232	75	264	228

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, and proposals to amend the Constitution; privilege matters; and requirements of the House for the registration of members’ interests.

## End of COVID-19 special arrangements

The Speaker made a statement on 1 August 2023 that the temporary practice adopted in 2020, that questions before the House be phrased in such a way as to minimise the movement of members across the Chamber during divisions, would cease. While the House had by then largely reverted to pre-pandemic arrangements, this ended the last of the procedural practices put in place for the Chamber to enable COVID-safe operations.

## Programming and coordination of business

During the reporting period, 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 and equipment
- » 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 10 shows the number of questions in writing to ministers and answers that were processed by the House in the five years from 2019–20 to 2023–24.

**Table 10: Questions in writing to ministers and answers to questions in writing, 2019–20 to 2023–24**

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
Questions in writing <sup>b</sup>	388	227	132	238	413
Questions answered <sup>c</sup>	346	161	64	106	454

a. Election year.

b. Excludes questions withdrawn.

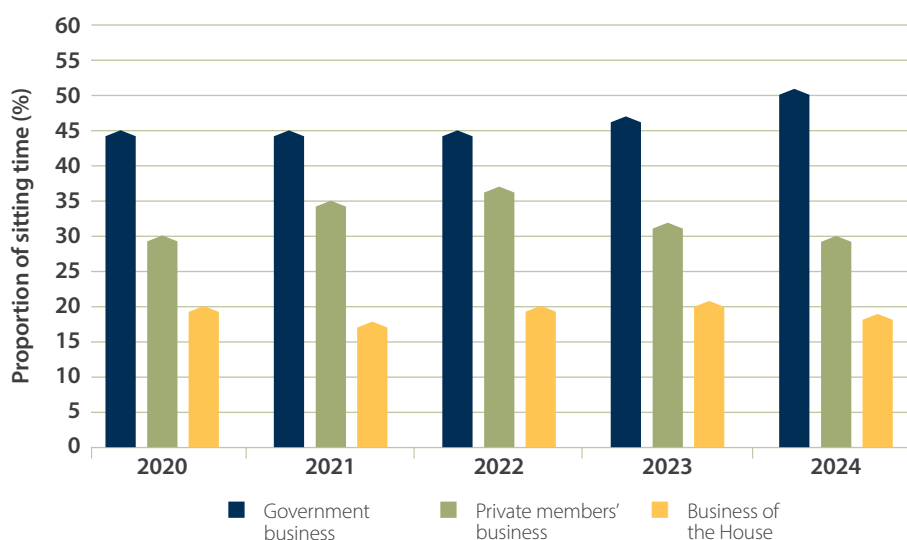
c. The responsibility for responding to questions in writing rests with the ministers to whom the questions are addressed.

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), 2020 to 2024 (calendar years)**



## Processing and drafting of bills

### *Processing legislation*

Support for the legislative process in 2023–24 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 2023–24, we delivered 174 messages relating to the passage of bills (182 in 2022–23) and 18 other messages (43 in 2022–23)
- » 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.

During the year, 161 bills were introduced (15.5% less than the 186 introduced in 2022–23). Of these, 150 were initiated in the House of Representatives and 11 were received from the Senate (compared with 179 and 7, respectively, last year).

The House passed 127 bills in 2023–24 (150 in 2022–23), an average of 2.0 bills for each sitting (compared with an average of 2.2 bills per sitting last year).

There was a small increase in the number of amendments moved during the consideration in detail stage: 802 in 2023–24 compared with 709 in 2022–23. Of the 521 amendments that were passed, crossbench members proposed 19.

The House amended 17 (13.4%) of the bills it passed, compared with 18 (12%) in 2022–23. The department incorporated the amendments into the text of all 17 bills (18 in 2022–23) 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 42 House bills (32 in 2022–23).

In total, 129 bills were finally passed by both Houses in identical form (113 in 2022–23), of which 123 were initiated in the House of Representatives and six 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 11 shows the number of bills introduced in the House and assented to in the five years from 2019–20 to 2023–24.

In total, during the reporting period the Table Office prepared 123 assent prints (106 in 2022–23). All documents accurately reflected the decisions of both Houses.

**Table 11: Number of bills introduced in the House, and number of bills assented to, 2019–20 to 2023–24**

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
Bills introduced	248	184	141	186	161
Bills assented to <sup>b</sup>	153	153	101	113	129

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 and amendments and second reading (in-principle) amendments to government bills, 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 2023–24, 25 private members' bills were introduced (five were private senators' bills). Of the 802 amendments moved during consideration in detail, 300 were private members'

amendments, 19 of which were agreed to. Table 12 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 to government bills.

**Table 12: Private members' bills introduced and amendments moved by private members (Chamber and Federation Chamber), 2019–20 to 2023–24**

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
Bills introduced	35	28	26	22	25
Second reading amendments moved	110	105	55	30	30
Consideration in detail amendments moved	107	145	125	493	300

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 record 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 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. The system recorded 238 divisions during the reporting period.

As part of this initiative, display screens were installed in each of the public galleries of the Chamber. Since the start of the 47th Parliament the screens have displayed 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 in the House and recorded their details in the *Votes and Proceedings* and the *Index to Papers Presented to the House*. 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 2023–24, a total of 2,888 documents were presented to the House, a decrease from the 3,643 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, ordered by the number of sitting days remaining in which a notice of disallowance can be given.

### **Online Tabled Documents project**

The Online Tabled Documents system is a joint initiative with the departments of the Senate, Parliamentary Services and the Prime Minister and Cabinet for the electronic receipt and storage of documents for tabling in the parliament, and their subsequent publication via the Parliament of Australia website. During the year several external agencies began using the system before its full-scale release across the Commonwealth, scheduled for the second half of 2024.

## **Research**

The Procedure Office collects, analyses and disseminates procedural and statistical information on the work of the House. In 2023–24, 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
- » 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**

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

- » *House Review*, a plain-language 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 committees
- » the *Infosheet* series, comprising short guides on the workings of the House and parliament in an easy-to-read format.

In addition, the office progressed work towards the publication of the next editions of the *House of Representatives Practice* and *Guide to Procedures* that are planned for release in the 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 49).

### ***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.

## Procedural training and resources

Building procedural capacity amongst members and their staff remained a priority during the year. A series of information sessions targeted at members' staff and crossbench members specifically were held during sitting weeks in August and September 2023, covering amendments, the Federation Chamber, participation in committees and parliamentary privilege.

In May and June 2024 individual tailored procedural sessions were offered to members' staff. Sessions were held in members' Parliament House offices and covered an array of procedural and administrative matters such as the order of business in the House, how business moves between the House and the Federation Chamber, amending motions and bills, lodging notices and accessing drafting support. These sessions will continue on request in 2024–25.

Building departmental staff procedural capacity also remained a priority in 2023–24. A fourth iteration of the 'Taste of Procedure' lunchtime discussions series commenced in July 2023. The series of 11 discussions is part of a package of learning opportunities for departmental

staff, developed by the Procedure Office in collaboration with the Table Office, and presented by senior chamber support staff.

In addition to the discussion series, a more complex series of six 90-minute procedural tutorials commenced in April 2024. These tutorials aim to encourage and develop the interest and skills of staff who might consider performing roles directly supporting sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber as Clerks at the Table.

Updates continued to be made to certain procedural training resources. This includes a series of educational videos on key House principles and procedures, which are available to all staff through the department's intranet. Updates reflected changes to standing orders in the 47th Parliament and changes in the House's membership including key officeholders.

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 (open to all staff)
- » 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
- » participation in the Parliamentary Law, Practice and Procedure course, offered by the University of South Australia under the auspices of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table (ANZACATT)
- » participation in the ANZACATT Professional Development Seminar
- » participation in a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association program at the Parliament of Sri Lanka
- » participation in a knowledge exchange program hosted by the United Kingdom Parliament.

## Parliamentary committees

The department continued to provide effective secretariat and advisory support to six 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 2023–24 were as follows:

- » standing committees
  - » Selection Committee
  - » Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration

- » Standing Committee on Petitions
- » 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 2023–24, those committees held 63 meetings and produced 34 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.

The committee consists of 14 members: the Speaker (as chair), the chief government whip, chief opposition whip, six government members, three opposition members and two crossbench members. The committee met 13 times during the reporting period and presented 13 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 10 times and presented three reports.

### ***Standing Committee on Petitions***

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 13 shows the number of in-order petitions presented to the House, and the number of signatories, for the past five years. In 2023–24, 636 petitions were presented, compared with 577 last year. The number

of signatures received was 984,251, compared with 735,717 last year. The committee also presented 16 reports summarising the petitions and ministerial responses being presented.

The largest petition in 2023–24 received 185,795 signatures. It related to the conflict in the Middle East.

**Table 13: Petitions and signatories to petitions, 2019–20 to 2023–24**

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 <sup>a</sup>	2022–23	2023–24
Number of petitions presented	498	649	614	577	636
Number of signatories	805,561	1,239,054	2,707,274	735,717	984,251

a. Election year.

### **Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests**

The Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests met twice during the reporting period and presented one report to the House. This related to the operations of the committee in connection with the registration and declaration of members' interests during 2023.

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

The department also supported the online publication of the following two registers, in accordance with resolutions of the House:

- » the Members' Training Program Register, comprising statements provided by members declaring that they have undertaken the Safe and Respectful Workplaces Training Program administered by the Department of Finance
- » the Register of Members' qualifications, comprising statements and other material provided by members relating to their qualifications under sections 44 and 45 of the Constitution.

### **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 2023–24 the committee met 20 times. The committee presented a report on its Inquiry into recommendations 10 and 27 of *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review of Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* in August 2023.

### **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 to consider documents or other matters 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.

The department continues to leverage technology for improved performance in supporting the Chamber and Federation Chamber, including through the BRAD application and the Online Tabled Documents 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 reporting period.

## **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 remained high this year.

Replacements for legacy ICT systems, including the Table Offices Production System (TOPS), the Bills System and Events In Progress are expected to result in further improvements and efficiencies as the Table Office continues its transition to a Microsoft Windows 11 and cloud-based ICT environment.

The Procedure Office will continue to offer a range of procedural development activities for members and their staff and for departmental staff. During the year it continued work with DPS on a project to improve 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. As at 30 June 2024, the Committee Office comprised 10 secretariats that supported nine House committees and 11 joint committees (see Table 14). Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 12); staff levels are shown in Table 19.

**Table 14: Committees of the 47th Parliament supported by the Committee Office as at 30 June 2024**

House committees	Joint committees
Standing Committee on Agriculture	Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water	Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Standing Committee on Economics	Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training	Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport	Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Resources	Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport	Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs	Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
	Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth
	Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

**Note:** The Committee Office also supported the former Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services during 2023–24.

**Note:** Six House internal committees (Selection, Appropriations and Administration, Petitions, 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 39.

## Committee Office activity

In 2023–24, 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

During 2023–24, 95 reports were presented (61 by scrutiny committees, see Appendix 3).

Following on from changes made during the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of committee proceedings have continued to be conducted virtually during the period, either as a wholly virtual forum or a hybrid forum of members and witnesses participating in-person and virtually in public hearings, briefings and meetings.

The Committee Office was able to successfully support all committees within its remit, with induction and support processes well-established for incoming committee chairs and members, as well as staff.

The Clerk Assistant (Committees) Office continued its support of secretariats, as well as supporting the Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs (see page 44). The Clerk Assistant (Committees) Office also assisted in the compilation of the Speaker's Schedule of Outstanding Government Responses to Committee Reports.

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

- » The House Standing Committee on Agriculture completed its inquiry into food security in Australia, tabling its report on 7 December 2023. The committee held 24 public hearings which included hearings in almost every state and territory capital city. As part of the inquiry, the committee conducted site visits at some unique locations including salmon and kelp farms in Okehampton Bay in Tasmania, grow houses and farmers markets in South Australia, grain silos in Western Australia, and agricultural crops and livestock at Go Go Station in Fitzroy Crossing.
- » The Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services presented its final report on 30 November 2023. The committee's goal was to conduct a first-principles review of Australia's employment services system, including the policies and programs designed to assist the unemployed towards employment. The inquiry was marked by high levels of stakeholder engagement, including relevant government departments, policy experts, advocacy groups, private employment services providers and numerous individuals with lived experience in Australia's

employment services system. The committee received 321 submissions (and 59 supplementary submissions), held 14 public hearings and conducted 51 site visits. The committee visited every state and territory in Australia, including each capital city and multiple regional cities and towns. The committee also undertook a delegation to Europe in September-October 2023 to engage with the employment services systems in selected countries, including Ireland, the Netherlands and Denmark.

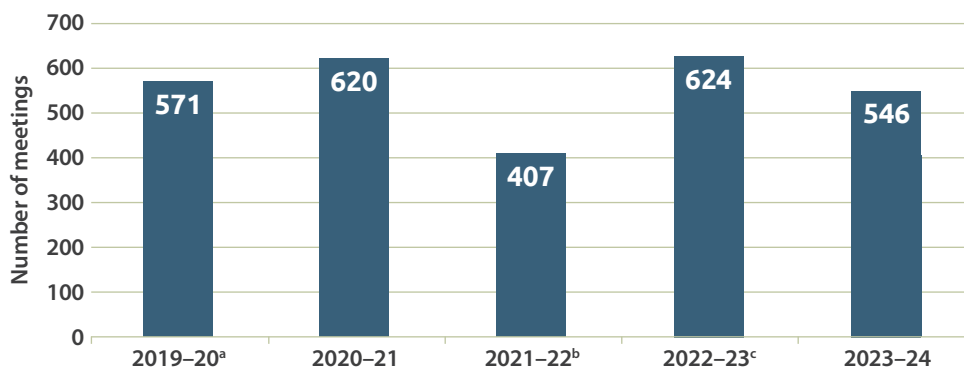
- » The House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport inquired into the state of diabetes mellitus in Australia. The committee received 473 submissions (and 22 supplementary submissions), held 15 public hearings across the country, where it heard from 206 witnesses in total. Notably, the committee also engaged an Indigenous Language Interpreter for witnesses giving evidence in language at a public hearing in Darwin. The committee's final report is due for presentation in July 2024.
- » The House Standing Committee on Agriculture conducted an inquiry into the Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024 during June 2024. The committee adopted the inquiry on 4 June 2024 and presented its advisory report on 21 June 2024. It held two public hearings in Canberra and Muresk, Western Australia, which took evidence from a range of stakeholders representing industry, government, local communities and animal welfare groups. It received over 13,000 contributions, including submissions, short statements, form letters and campaign emails. The public hearing in Muresk generated significant public and media interest, with over 2,000 people attending the hearing on the day to either give evidence or observe proceedings.

Committee activity stayed at a similar level during the reporting period compared with last year, with some exceptions which broadly relate to the parliamentary cycle. The number of meetings slightly decreased in comparison to the previous reporting period, while there was an increase in the number of committee reports presented. This trend is consistent with the current stage of the parliamentary cycle in addition to a number of inquiries entering a drafting phase of work or being finalised by way of presentation of final reports.

Scrutiny committees supported by the Committee Office held 546 meetings, as outlined in Appendix 2. Figures 4 and 5 present the number of meetings held and reports presented by committees 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, 2019–20 to 2023–24**

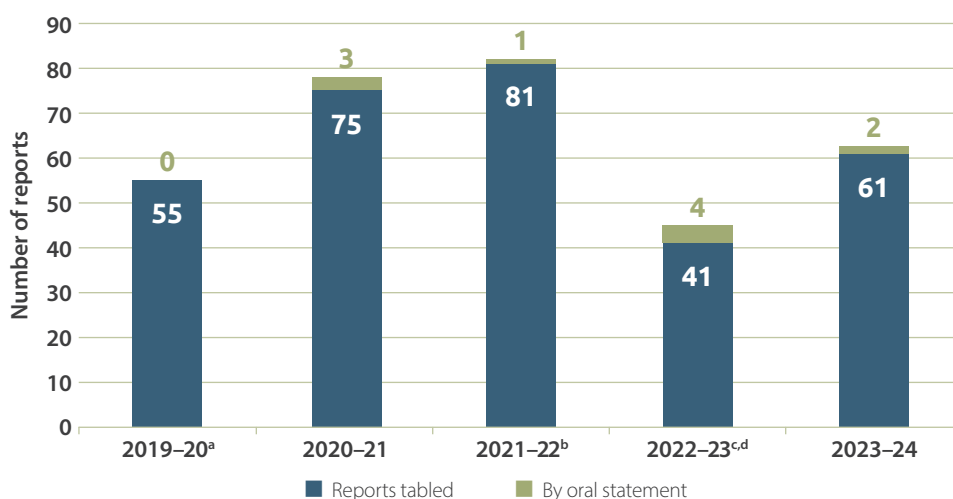


a. The 46th Parliament opened on 2 July 2019.

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

c. The 47th Parliament opened on 26 July 2022.

**Figure 5: Number of reports tabled by committees supported by the Committee Office, 2019–20 to 2023–24**



a. 46th Parliament opened on 2 July 2019.

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

c. The 47th Parliament opened on 26 July 2022.

d. From 2022–23 reports by statement figures include statements made under House standing order 143(c) and reports by statement made by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security or the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit.

## Information and communications technology

The Committee Office continued to work with DPS and the Department of the Senate on the deployment and post-deployment support for Report Builder, the template for drafting committee reports which is integrated with the Shared Committee Information Database.

The Committee Office has also worked with DPS in completing the trial of video conferencing systems at hearings outside of Parliament House.

## Improving performance

In 2023–24 the Committee Office continued to update and deliver an internal training program for new and existing staff. The department's Executive facilitated three scenario-based sessions for Committee Office staff at all levels, as part of the department's ongoing 'Being professional in the parliamentary service' training series. Fundamental training is provided to new and interested staff, and the in-depth training needs of longer-term staff are catered for in bespoke sessions presented under the Committee Training and Development program.

## 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 2024 to discuss areas of administrative interest, including:

- » updates on a trial project for video broadcasting of away public hearings and on enhancements to video conferencing and video display facilities in Australian Parliament House committee rooms
- » general administrative issues and support standards for committees
- » committee work from the 47th Parliament and potential future changes.

## Outlook

The Committee Office will continue to meet fast-changing priorities and workloads for committee business, particularly as the next election approaches. Committees are likely to remain busy until the election period. The Committee Office will continue to provide a high level of professional support to members and new and existing committees. Staff recruitment and training and development will continue to be a priority for the coming year, in addition to completing project work during the election period.



*Public hearing in Yarrabah, Queensland for the Inquiry into Diabetes by the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport. Image: Department of the House of Representatives.*

# Interparliamentary relations

The Australian Parliament's international program supports engagement and cooperation with parliaments internationally, with a focus on parliamentary relations in the Indo-Pacific region. The program's activities and projects are 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 12); staff levels are shown in Table 19.

## Performance summary

The Presiding Officers' delegation program continued to develop and strengthen inter-parliamentary relationships in 2023–24 with 29 international outgoing delegations visiting 30 different countries. The outgoing delegation program enabled Australian parliamentarians to exchange ideas, information and experiences with international counterparts and for the Australian Parliament and Australian perspectives to be represented in multilateral forums where contemporary issues were debated.

## Parliamentary engagement

The International and Parliamentary Relations Office provided advice, planning assistance and briefing coordination to support the Presiding Officers as they met with diplomatic representatives, received international visitors and led international delegations.

The Australian Parliament maintained its strong commitment to international engagement, receiving 13 parliamentary delegations, hosting an inter-parliamentary study program and putting Australian parliamentary perspectives on discussion and debates at 12 multilateral inter-parliamentary assemblies.

Throughout 2023–24, the Presiding Officers led various parliamentary diplomacy initiatives supported by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office. Examples include:

- » Hosting incoming Guest of Parliament delegations from the People's Republic of China, Fiji and Papua New Guinea.
- » Attendance at the Pacific Islands Parliaments Group (PIPG) Conference in Tonga in August 2023, to mark the occasion of the Australian Parliament joining the PIPG.
- » Bilateral meetings with over 20 Presiding Officer counterparts during delegation visits and in the margins of interparliamentary events throughout the year.

Parliamentary committees also conducted international exchanges and fact-finding missions with six committees travelling overseas:

- » Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade visit to Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (July 2023)
- » Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security visit to New Zealand (August 2023)

- » Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services visit to France, Republic of Ireland, Netherlands and Denmark (September to October 2023)
- » Joint Standing Committee on Treaties visit to India and Singapore (December 2023)
- » Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience visit to New Zealand (April 2024)
- » Standing Committee on Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water visit to the Republic of Korea and Japan (June 2024).

## Parliamentary capacity building

In July 2023, parliamentary staff from the departments of the House of Representatives, the Senate and the Parliamentary Budget Office participated in the annual United Nations Development Programme mission to provide support for the budget processes of the Fijian Parliament.

The International and Parliamentary Relations Office also coordinated the annual round of Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships Fund bids providing support to parliamentary counterparts in the Pacific region. In 2023–24 support was provided to seven Pacific parliaments (Bougainville, Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga) in collaboration with their state and territory parliamentary twins.

In March 2024, the Australian Parliament hosted an inter-parliamentary study program for parliamentary officials. The program was attended by representatives from 10 national parliaments and provided a collaborative forum to share experience and insights using Australian parliamentary practice as the comparative framework.

## Improving performance

In March 2024, the department received additional funding to support greater regional engagement. The funding will increase the number of visits hosted annually and enable more impactful projects to be identified and conducted under the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program.

## Outlook

The office is fully staffed following recent recruitment rounds and is in a good position to support the high pace of parliamentary engagement activities that comprise the International Program.

# 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 12); staff levels are shown in Table 19.

## Performance summary

During 2023–24 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.

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 was successfully held again in 2023, with entries from across Australia.

The Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program and Commonwealth Parliamentary Internships component of the Australian National Internships Program both had intakes during the year.

## Media and publications

Social media remains an important tool to engage with people and distribute information for the department. While Facebook subscriber numbers remained steady, engagement on posts was positive. LinkedIn and YouTube once again showed strong subscriber growth and engagement.

During the reporting period, the department's Facebook subscriber base increased to 8,959 subscribers. The House's YouTube account, used for publishing replays of Question Time and an 'About the House' series of short videos, now has 19,775 subscribers, an increase of 18%. This builds on the strong growth of 31% in 2022–23. Subscribers to the department's LinkedIn page, started in September 2022, increased by 18%. The department now has 496 subscribers. Importantly, more candidates for vacancies within the department now state LinkedIn is where they learnt about the position.

The department continues to issue media releases on behalf of committees, the Speaker and the Clerk of the House. The department issued 105 media releases during the reporting period, a decrease on last year's figure of 190. The 'About the House News' page and all its subpages received a total of 219,935 page views. This is an increase from last year's 152,403 views.

## 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 2023–24, the department delivered two seminars to 112 attendees – 23 attending in person and 89 via webinar. The seminar offering was reshaped during the year to reflect demand and feedback from participants.

## 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 90 second speech on an issue that they are passionate about. The competition attracted 240 entries, compared to 171 in 2023.

## Australian National Internships Program

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

In the second semester of 2023, there were 21 placements with members and senators. In the first semester of 2024, 20 interns undertook placements with senators and members. The department worked with colleagues in the Department of the Senate to facilitate the program and deliver an orientation session for interns.



*My First Speech 2024 award presentation at Parliament House, Canberra. Image: Department of the House of Representatives.*

## 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 – 46 Australian Defence Force representatives spent a week at Parliament House in September 2023, hosted by a member or senator. The departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate work together to support the program and provide orientation sessions on the work of the chambers and committees.

## Parliamentary Education Office

The Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) delivers parliamentary education services on behalf of the Australian Parliament to students, teachers and others across Australia. Since 1988, approximately 2.5 million people have expanded their knowledge of the Australian Parliament through participating in a PEO program. The PEO is administered by the Department of the Senate and jointly funded by that department and the Department of the House of Representatives.

The PEO is guided by the PEO Advisory Committee. The committee is comprised of members and senators, is co-chaired by the Deputy Presiding Officers and meets three times a year.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the PEO in 2023–24 was 13.8 (compared with 14.2 in 2022–23).

### ***Education programs: onsite, digital, outreach and Teacher Professional Learning***

The PEO delivers programs to students at Parliament House and in classrooms across Australia through digital delivery and outreach. The PEO also delivers Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) programs, both in-person and digitally.

In 2023–24, the PEO experienced sustained demand for onsite programs with approximately 2,100 programs delivered, similar to the previous period.

In response to strong demand for digital programs, the PEO expanded the number of programs offered from 15 to 20 per week during the reporting period. As a result, more than 379 digital programs were delivered, representing a 6% increase from the previous period.

The PEO also recommenced its outreach program in 2023–24, delivering programs to more than 850 students from 15 schools in New South Wales and the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory outreach program was undertaken in collaboration with the Museum of Australian Democracy and the Australian Electoral Commission.

For other outreach, the PEO also delivered TPL programs to approximately 30 teachers and pre-service teachers at Western Sydney and Charles Darwin Universities. These programs provide professional learning for teachers and pre-service teachers to support the delivery of informative and engaging civics and citizenship programs for students.

In total the PEO delivered 25 TPL programs in 2023–24, the same number as the previous period, with nine delivered in collaboration with stakeholders including the National Archives of Australia, the High Court of Australia and the Queensland and South Australian Parliaments' Education Offices

### **Content: online and print**

In 2023–24, interest in PEO the website, [peo.gov.au](http://peo.gov.au), including its subsite [ausconstitution.peo.gov.au](http://ausconstitution.peo.gov.au), remained strong, with more than 1.4 million users (representing over 3.5 million unique page views – an increase of 6% from the previous period) accessing high-quality information about Australia’s system of government and the Australian Parliament.

To ensure the website [peo.gov.au](http://peo.gov.au) continues to meet the needs of users, in collaboration with the Senate Public Information Office, a review of the navigation, functionality and layout of the website was initiated during the reporting period.

In 2023–24, approximately 80 teachers participated in an evaluation of the PEO’s teacher packs. Their feedback indicated there was demand for PEO print resources to be digitised and made available on the PEO website. As a result, the following print resources are now available for free download on the PEO website:

- » *Australian Constitution pocket edition*
- » *Rights, power, action: a practical classroom guide for teaching Australia’s system of government*
- » *Teaching civics and citizenship: a classroom guide*
- » *Your Parliament*
- » *PEO Poster Packs.*

### **Services for members and senators**

The PEO provides a complimentary annual allocation of resources to senators and members to support their engagement with teachers, students and community groups. In addition, in-person and virtual briefings on PEO content, programs and bespoke resources are provided to parliamentarians on request.

During the reporting period, the PEO continued to support parliamentarians’ engagement with visiting school groups and the Speaker’s Parliament in Schools program through the provision of print products, bespoke resources, and briefings for parliamentarians and staff.

In this reporting period, the PEO also provided secretariat services to support three Advisory Committee meetings and commenced a project to enhance digital programs through the incorporation of short senator and member videos.

### **Parliamentary Education Office outlook**

In the coming year, among other initiatives, the PEO will:

- » continue to strategically manage its ability to meet demand for its onsite, digital and outreach programs within resources, particularly as the demand for digital programs continues to rise
- » implement a parliamentarians engagement activity to mark the International Day of Democracy in September 2024
- » develop online modules to enhance the TPL program; and
- » conclude and implement the outcomes of the website review.



## Outlook

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. The department's website engagement increased by 25% from the previous reporting period, which reflects the level of activity and public interest at this point in the parliamentary cycle. The department will continue to deliver outreach activities to increase awareness of the work of the department across the community and Australian public service. An increase in Indigenous engagement activities will be a goal for the department over the next reporting period. The department will continue to identify opportunities to work with the other parliamentary departments on various communication and engagement activities, as well as improve the Parliament of Australia website. The department will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of products designed to inform the public about the work of the House and to ensure flexible delivery and maximum reach of its education program into the future.



*National Apology and Recognition for Thalidomide Survivors and their families. Image: AusPic/DPS.*

# Members' and corporate support

Members' and corporate support is provided by the Finance Office, the People Strategies Office, the Corporate Governance 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 parliamentary and government agencies 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 Parliament House office accommodation, furniture and fittings
- » providing mail and courier services, and a booking service for committee rooms, courtyards and chamber gallery seating
- » maintaining and publishing key information about members and former members.

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

Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 12); staff levels are shown in Table 19.



*Celebrating 30 years of the Federation Chamber. Image: AusPic/DPS.*

## Performance summary

Two foreign leaders were invited to address the House of Representatives during 2023–24. On 8 February, the Hon. James Marape MP, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, addressed the House. On 29 February, His Excellency, Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr, President of the Republic of the Philippines, addressed the House. The House invited senators to attend both addresses. Each occasion involved extensive engagement with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and with Senate colleagues, particularly in the lead-up to each visit as ceremonial and protocol matters were worked through.

Arrangements were made to welcome three new members following by-elections – the Member for Fadden, Mr Cameron Caldwell MP; the Member for Dunkley, Ms Jodie Belyea MP; and the Member for Cook, Mr Simon Kennedy MP. This followed the resignation of the Hon Stuart Robert, the death of Ms Peta Murphy, and the resignation of the Hon Scott Morrison, respectively.

When new members are sworn in following a by-election, briefings are arranged by the Clerk's Office, providing information from senior departmental officials on members' responsibilities and the services available to assist them in their role. We collaborate with other service provision and security agencies, who also contribute to the briefing program.

A Budget speech was delivered on 14 May 2024. Budget week arrangements allowed for invited visitors to attend the public galleries to view the Budget and Budget reply speeches, and there was significant take-up of seats in the public galleries on each occasion. These events involve extensive liaison with the Speaker's Office, the Parliamentary Security Service and the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery.

## Media services

As the Speaker's delegates on media matters, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office continued to work with the various media bureaus 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 office also worked 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 complied with the media rules and with minimum inconvenience to all.

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. This included the delivery of the Budget and Budget reply speeches, two Addresses to Parliament and the national apology for all Australians impacted by the Thalidomide tragedy.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office assessed and responded to 237 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, four editions of the members' bulletin House Update were published during the year. These bulletins complemented the procedural updates and information sessions provided by the department (see page 35).

## Information about members

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office maintains a system called the Parliamentary Information Portal (PIP), containing information about members and former members. This information is used by other areas of the department, such as the Table Office, in supporting the activities of the House. The data is also used as a source for information published on the Parliament of Australia website. During the year, high-level discovery work commenced on a project to replace the PIP. Once high-level discovery has been completed (modelling business process and user requirements), detailed discovery will be undertaken to inform functional and system requirements.

## Accommodation services

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

During the reporting period, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office coordinated seven members' suite moves, following changes in the membership of the House and the shadow ministry. The office also coordinated the moves of five workgroups as part of a departmental review of the use of accommodation in the House of Representatives wing.

## Maintenance, access and transport services

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office coordinates requests for maintenance, including routine and high-priority work, in members' Parliament House suites and departmental offices. During the year, the office coordinated 335 high-priority requests, all of which were attended to promptly. In addition, the office coordinated 56 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 requests for assistance with telephone faults, relocations and allocations of telephones. Faults reported were referred to telephone support in DPS, and appropriate timeframes for resolution were agreed with the affected areas.

During the reporting period, DPS transitioned all departmental telephones to a Microsoft Teams telephony system. This new system will continue to be progressively rolled out to all members' suites.

The office approved 1,131 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 7% decrease on last year (1,213 requests).

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office operates a Transport Office, which uses vehicles provided by the Department of Finance's COMCAR service, to deliver a parliamentary shuttle service during sitting periods. The shuttle provides a readily available, secure, car-with-driver service in Canberra for members.

In 2023–24, the Transport Office managed 7,559 bookings from members, compared with 8,393 bookings in 2022–23 (figures exclude unbooked shuttle trips from the House of Representatives entrance). This represents a 10% decrease in bookings on last year, possibly reflecting a return to regular business demand after the busy first year of a new government.

## 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 and routinely considered policy matters and advice to the Presiding Officers out of session. 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.

## 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 approximately 15 hours per week, with rosters planned around student commitments and the requirements of the House. Fourteen students took part in the program in 2023–24: eight were continuing assistants, and six were new appointments. The assistants are studying at the Australian National University; the program is open to all Canberra-based students.

Parliamentary assistants have typically engaged in the program for one or two years. With more students undertaking combined or honours degrees, and with ongoing interest from participants to continue their employment in the parliamentary environment, the department has trialled the extension of the program for a third year, for selected applicants. The third-year program provides participants with six-month placements in various parts of the department. The program has given participants exposure to a broader range of the department's functions, and enabled the department to retain skilled, well-trained, and enthusiastic staff who show considerable potential.

## Payment of salaries and allowances

In addition to paying the salary and entitlements of departmental staff, the People Strategies Office processes members' salaries and certain allowances in accordance with legislation and administrative decisions. The 2024 members' survey included a question about corporate support services for members, including payment of salaries. Responses indicated that there were no concerns from members in this regard.

The department continues to focus on improving efficiencies and strengthening controls in relation to the payment of salaries and allowances. During the year, the structure of the People Strategies Office was adjusted to include a dedicated payroll team.

The passage of the *Parliamentary Business Resources Legislation Amendment (Review Implementation and Other Measures) Bill 2024* by both Houses on 16 May will result in changes to the timing of members' pay. From 1 July 2024, members will be required to be paid fortnightly, rather than monthly. The department recognised the increased risks associated with legislative compliance, service delivery, financial controls and business continuity, particularly as members' pay would need to occur on the same schedule as departmental pay processes. This highlighted a need for additional staff to process and check more frequent payments to members, and provide additional focus on control frameworks and system and process improvements.

## Information and communications technology

The Information Management Office coordinates the department's ICT. The majority of the department's ICT and ICT security capacity is provided by DPS under the parliamentary ICT service-delivery framework. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the parliamentary departments underpins the framework. The original memorandum was deemed no longer fit-for-purpose as it provided the basis of a shared services arrangement agreed in 2018. A new principle-based MoU was signed by the heads of parliamentary departments in May 2024. The on-going agreement provides a comprehensive ICT governance framework and paths of escalation for unresolved matters. In support of this arrangement, the department continued to participate in a range of ICT advisory and management committees during the reporting period.

The Strategic ICT Group (SIG), 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 projects and met five times in the reporting period. The Clerk Assistant (Procedure) is the department's representative in the group.

Ten monthly service delivery meetings were held during the reporting period. The department continued to work collaboratively with DPS to ensure service delivery issues were addressed promptly and in a satisfactory manner.

The parliamentary departments received funding in the 2024–25 Budget to modernise core parliamentary applications. This is aimed at replacing aging, bespoke systems supporting the chamber and Federation Chamber, parliamentary committees and parliamentarians. Implementation of these projects will occur in stages over the next two years. Successful delivery of modern, fit-for-purpose applications will help ensure the department is equipped to support the work of the House of Representatives and wider parliament into the future.

New, joint governance forums have been established to oversee this program of work, and the department is represented at the working group and board level.

## 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 2023–2027. 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.

Underpinning the strategy is a capability roadmap, developed by DPS with input from other parliamentary departments. This roadmap is intended to ensure the goals articulated in the Digital Strategy are met.

## Outlook

In 2023–24, the department will continue to provide advice and services of a high standard to support the Speaker, members and the department. Priorities for the members' and corporate support services during the year include:

- » ongoing support for sittings of the Chamber and Federation Chamber, meetings of parliamentary committees and general departmental operations
- » implementation of new requirements for the fortnightly payment of members' salaries and allowances
- » strengthening human resources processes and systems
- » embedding a more coordinated approach to satisfy the department's governance, planning and reporting obligations
- » preparing for the forthcoming election period, including collaborating with other parliamentary and government agencies where required, to support the House's ceremonial, administrative and accommodation needs.

# School 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 12).

## Performance summary

In 2023–24, 99,249 school students participated in educational tours of Parliament House, representing an increase from 96,084 in 2022–23 (see Table 15). This increase continues the trend of visitor numbers returning towards pre-pandemic levels.

**Table 15: Students visiting Parliament House, by location and year, 2019–20 to 2023–24**

Year	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA	Total
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
2022–23	2,803	67,675	132	5,497	2,659	459	15,842	1,017	96,084
2023–24	2,846	64,888	385	8,620	3,780	1,449	13,397	3,884	99,249

All visiting students participated in a guided tour and visited both the House and Senate chambers: 68% (67,377) received hospitality and 78% (77,803) participated in a Parliamentary Education Office program (see pages 49 to 50 for more information on the activities of the Parliamentary Education Office).

## Outlook

Together, the parliamentary departments continue to manage school participation at Parliament House. As at 3 July 2024, 99,103 students from 2,722 school groups had been booked for the following 12 months, noting that these figures remain subject to change.

The department will continue to work with the Department of the Senate and DPS to implement proposed changes to the system for school bookings, to provide enhanced services to parliamentarians and schools, and more efficient processes for staff.