



PART  
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SECRETARY'S  
REVIEW

I am pleased to present my first Secretary's Review following my appointment on 14 December 2015.

The 2015–16 financial year was a year of significant improvement and consolidation for the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS). Many important reforms to our processes and governance were finalised, implemented and embedded into our corporate practice. A number of these reforms were in direct response to the critical findings of audits and reviews of our performance in the first half of 2014–15. The reforms have been important to enable us to be more transparent in the way we conduct our business, more accountable and more strategic in our decision-making. Above all the reforms aid us in being more responsive to the needs of the Parliament and our parliamentarians.

Significant pieces of corporate work undertaken during 2015–16 included:

- ▶ the adoption of a new Fraud Control Policy in July 2015, supported by quarterly reporting to the DPS Executive, and mandatory fraud awareness training for all DPS employees
- ▶ the release of a DPS Information Management Framework, Strategy and Policy in October 2015, to guide best-practice management of our records
- ▶ a DPS Governance Framework, finalised in November 2015, to document the structures, systems, processes and culture that support our operations
- ▶ the implementation of an updated Performance Management Scheme that ensures our individual work plans are more closely aligned to our strategic aims, and
- ▶ the introduction of a new Learning and Development Framework to help boost our organisational capability.

In 2015–16 we also continued to develop our ability to report meaningfully against our Key Performance Indicators, with regular monthly reporting to the DPS Executive, the finalisation of a new Feedback Policy and the first annual survey of building occupants, to measure satisfaction with an array of DPS-provided or DPS-facilitated services.

## SUPPORTING THE WORK OF PARLIAMENT AND PARLIAMENTARIANS

Supporting the functions of Parliament and enabling senators and members to perform their work as parliamentarians is core business for DPS. Increasingly, information and communications technology (ICT) is transforming how we can provide this support. Over the course of 2015–16 a number of ICT solutions, some custom-built, were delivered for the parliamentary environment. These included:

- ▶ the ParlWork app, which gives parliamentarians instant access to live chamber business information via their mobile devices
- ▶ more secure, reliable and faster WiFi access to the Parliamentary Computer Network from electorate offices and Commonwealth Parliament Offices
- ▶ videoconferencing facilities to allow committee members and witnesses to more easily participate in parliamentary committees from remote locations
- ▶ a new Senators' and Members' Services Portal
- ▶ completion of the two-year project to install hearing loop technology in the chambers, the Great Hall and 23 other locations around Australian Parliament House (APH), and
- ▶ an enhanced webcasting capability for live and on-demand webcasting of proceedings via computers and mobile devices.

## MAINTAINING THE BUILDING & PRECINCTS

Maintaining the building and its precincts is a critical aspect of DPS' custodianship. For parliamentarians and the many other building occupants, APH is a working building and must be fit for purpose at all times. Parliament House is also one of the nation's most loved buildings, an icon of Australian democracy and an architectural achievement of national and international significance. Everything, from the weave of the carpet to the style of the furniture, is integral to the overall design intent of the building. As APH approaches its third decade, DPS faces significant challenges to update and upgrade many aspects of the building's infrastructure that are reaching the end of their serviceability. Building works undertaken during the year included a continuation of the upgrade of fire safety systems and the commencement of a program of lift upgrades.

As the design and construction of APH bears the aspiration of a 200 year lifespan, it is critical that any changes we make are well considered and conducted with a consistency of quality and durability required of a building of such status. Since my commencement in this role I have continued to build on the early work done by Dr Dianne Heriot as Acting Secretary, to re-establish a strong, ongoing relationship with key members of the original design team who also represented Romaldo (Aldo) Giurgola, the principal design architect, in regard to his moral rights in APH. Mr Giurgola sadly passed away in May 2016. Dr Heriot and I have worked diligently to foster a better working relationship with those who now administer on behalf of Mr Giurgola's estate the moral rights in relation to design matters for the building and its precincts – Ms Pamille Berg AO and Mr Hal Guida. This involves meeting regularly with Ms Berg and Mr Guida and ensuring that they are consulted at the earliest stage when DPS has a building-related issue to resolve. This early consultation will ensure that we are able to respect, work with and accommodate the original design intent of the architects. Importantly, I have recommenced the project to complete the Central Reference Document (CRD), which was discontinued in 2004. When complete, the CRD will provide a comprehensive account of the architect's intent in the design of the building and its surroundings, and will provide text to guide the daily management of APH. Following consultation with the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library, the Presiding Officers agreed that this work, and that of a new Archive unit, also established this year, would be managed by the Parliamentary Librarian, given the Library's expertise in research and information retrieval.

Following my appointment, I intended to expedite the finalisation of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and Design Principles (DP) documents. As at 30 June 2016, attempts were being made to seek to resolve a series of issues with the consultants engaged to produce the CMP and DP, following concerns raised by Mr Giurgola's moral rights representatives.

From early July 2016, I will elevate the importance of our Design Integrity and Archives Unit that will be attached to the Office of the Secretary. By doing this, it will ensure my ongoing close involvement and oversight of its functions. An Architectural Historian will be recruited to embed the original architects' design intent into the culture of DPS. I am also in the process of redefining the formal operational procedures to be used within DPS to strengthen the ongoing preservation of the integrity of APH.

## STRENGTHENING SECURITY

The current national terrorism threat level requires ongoing work to harden the physical security at APH. A new gate house and perimeter at the southern entrance was completed in June 2016 as well as the upgrade of security at 14 access points in the parliamentary precincts. Contracts for the next group of works were executed in the second half of 2015–16 and state of the art screening equipment was installed.

## WORKING TOGETHER

Upon my appointment, I committed to developing a strong and productive working relationship with the heads of each of the parliamentary departments – the Clerk of the Senate, Dr Rosemary Laing, the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Mr David Elder and the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Mr Phil Bowen PSM FCPA. Each of my colleagues has a critical role in ensuring the core business of the parliament operates effectively and it is important that we work as a partnership. The four department heads meet monthly to discuss various matters relating to governance, policy and operational matters of significance. DPS will work collegiately with the other parliamentary departments and will consult and communicate with them early and thoroughly in relation to matters that will impact upon them and upon senators, members and their staff.

## SERVICES FOR VISITORS

In addition to supporting parliamentarians and other building occupants, DPS is charged with making the Parliament and its work accessible to all Australians. Our knowledgeable and passionate Visitor Services Officers actively engage visitors with the important work and fascinating history of parliament, as well as with the building's architecture and art collections. In 2015–16 APH was awarded a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence for superior service for the second consecutive year. Research into teacher satisfaction with our services to visiting schools ranked APH third among Canberra's many attractions, up from seventh in 2012.

Overall visitor numbers in 2015–16 reached almost 726,000, with more than 200,000 individuals participating in a guided tour. The busiest day of the year, in terms of visitor numbers, was Open Day, on Saturday 19 September 2015, when 5,000 visitors explored the building and took advantage of the opportunity to see some of the private spaces not usually accessible to the public.

## PREPARATIONS FOR THE 45TH PARLIAMENT

While the business of the House ceased on 9 May 2016 for the 2 July 2016 Federal Election following dissolution of both Houses of Parliament, the work for DPS stepped up a gear to undertake work that would be otherwise disruptive to the operation of parliament. Significant maintenance work was undertaken such as painting of offices and corridors, replacement of carpet, reset of offices, refreshes of common areas, cleaning of all windows and preparation of induction materials and presentations to ensure new parliamentarians can operate effectively from their first day.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Upon my appointment, I immediately commenced a personal review of DPS with the purpose of achieving better services for parliamentarians and the parliamentary institution and to ensure appropriate stewardship of Parliament House. My review has been informed by many discussions with stakeholders and staff and by the considerable volume of material produced about aspects of DPS functions in recent years. Specifically, my analysis has covered areas such as the effectiveness of the current structure to support the core business of parliament; challenges with staff capability and culture; and opportunities for improvement and innovation. The review process will inform a vision for DPS and strategic themes that reframe gaps and issues into forward looking objectives for all DPS staff. The Vision Statement and Strategic Themes contained within the DPS Corporate Plan 2016-17, will be launched early in July/August 2016 to present a coherent and relevant direction for all DPS staff. The Corporate Plan 2016–17 sets out our planned activities for the year, aligning with our overarching responsibility to support the functions of Parliament and parliamentarians with professional services, advice and facilities. Together, these documents will guide the work of DPS in 2016–17 and into the future.

I thank the Presiding Officers for their support of me and of DPS over the past year. I also thank the heads of the other parliamentary departments – Dr Rosemary Laing, Mr David Elder, and Mr Phil Bowen – for their goodwill and collegiality as together we seek to better serve the Parliament and parliamentarians.

Finally, I must acknowledge and thank the Parliamentary Librarian, Dr Dianne Heriot, for her leadership of DPS for the first half of 2015–16. Dianne was a critical stabilising influence after a difficult period for the department and oversaw a substantial body of governance reform work during her time as Acting Secretary. I look forward to working with Dianne, the other members of the DPS Executive team and the nearly 900 strong staff of DPS as we develop an organisation that delivers innovative, unified and client focussed services.

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