

Additional Estimates Opening Statement – 14 February 2022

Protests and Security Arrangements

- 1) I would like to briefly address the significant protest activity that has occurred since the last Estimates hearing in October 2021.
- 2) I will commence by thanking the Department's parliamentary security staff and the Australian Federal Police, including ACT Policing, for their coordinated and diligent work to facilitate peaceful assembly whilst keeping this building secure.
- 3) One of the virtues of western democracies, is that our citizens can exercise their right to communicate their opinions and ideas through peaceful assembly
- 4) This includes gatherings within the Parliamentary Precincts. The Authorised Assembly Area, known as the AAA, is a designated space where large groups can meet safely and collectively articulate their concerns.
- 5) Groups are permitted to use this space following consideration for the protection of public safety and fair and equal access.
- 6) We were all however, shocked by the lawless acts which led to significant acts of vandalism and graffiti to our building and most recently, fire damage to Old Parliament House.
- 7) As a direct result, it has been necessary to maintain the security of the precincts by implementing tighter security controls including changed traffic arrangements.

- 8) I appreciate the inconvenience this causes to the operation of the Parliament and ^{those} others who work in APH and thank all building occupants for your patience.

Jenkins Review

- 9) At the previous Estimates hearing I reported that the Department has been proactive in assisting Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Kate Jenkins with her independent review of parliamentary workplaces.
- 10) Since the report was received by the Executive Government on 30 November 2021, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet has rightfully been leading the work to respond to the report's recommendations and findings.
- 11) Last week saw Presiding Officers deliver the statement of acknowledgement on behalf of the parliamentary cross-party leadership taskforce.
- 12) DPS has engaged with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet by attending working groups along with the other parliamentary departments, and the Department of Finance to action recommendations regarding Access and Inclusion and also Workplace Health and Safety.
- 13) DPS has also undertaken preliminary work to identify options to implement the proposed Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service, noting the reliance on completion of a feasibility study and guidance from the Leadership Taskforce.
- 14) Work implementing the recommendations of the Foster Review continues with the involvement of relevant committees.

Wi-Fi Update

- 15) In late 2021, the Department commenced the rollout of the Wi-Fi Upgrade Project to resolve persistent issues with the general standard of Wi-Fi connectivity
- 16) The project will replace 654 Wireless Access Points that have reached end-of-life and will improve coverage while increasing data throughput.
- 17) Upgrades have been completed in the public areas of the building.
- 18) Incremental improvements to Wi-Fi have been realised since December 2021, and the project is currently scheduled for completion by May 2022.

Auxiliary Power Upgrade

- 19) I am also pleased to report that the systems testing for the Auxiliary Power Upgrade Project was successfully completed over two consecutive weekends in January, finalising the installation of the new auxiliary power infrastructure.
- 20) Senators may recall the project replaced and upgraded the original independent back-up power system from 1988. The project is an important business continuity measure to provide an additional layer of redundancy if the grid backup power sources are unavailable.
- 21) Testing involved a controlled shut-down of the main power supply and restoration of the building's essential services.
- 22) The successful testing process was one of the last remaining deliverables for the project and I would like to thank all involved who supported this project reaching this important milestone.

Cyber Security

- 23) At the last Estimates hearing, I advised that the Department was in the process of implementing Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting, and Conformance, also known as DMARC, on our parliamentary email system.
- 24) You may recall DMARC is a part of the Australian Cyber Security Centre's Strategy to Mitigate Cyber Security Incidents and aims to protect the aph.gov.au domain from being used for email spoofing, phishing attacks, and cybercrimes by blocking emails generated by third-party distribution services.
- 25) I am pleased to report, since its implementation on 6 December 2021, DPS has observed an 82% reduction in email traffic attempting to impersonate the aph.gov.au domain.
- 26) Through standard reporting, DPS identified that DMARC blocked 31,255 emails (down from 181,000) in one week alone between 7 December and 14 December.
- 27) The subset of impersonation emails classified as "threats" have since reduced from over 240 per day, to less than 40 per day.
- 28) I'd like to thank all parliamentarians and staff for adapting to this essential change.
- 29) This does highlight, however, the ongoing need to guard against cyber intrusions to protect the essential work of all parliamentarians. This is a race that will never end and ongoing
- 30) enhancements of cybersecurity arrangements remains a high priority.