

**RESPONSE OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS TO THE REPORT
OF THE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATIONS**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PRINTING
STANDARDS FOR DOCUMENTS
PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT**

June 2018

Inquiry into the printing standards for documents presented to Parliament

Response of the Presiding Officers to the report of the Joint Committee on Publications

On 5 December 2017, the Joint Committee on Publications tabled the report of its Inquiry into the printing standards for documents presented to Parliament.¹

The committee examined the current printing standards for documents presented to Parliament and its report set out a revised set of standards that provide greater flexibility while ensuring the ongoing integrity of parliamentary records and access to them. The committee also examined the following related issues: the distribution, accessibility and transparency of documents presented to Parliament; the electronic delivery of documents to the Parliament; and the administration of the Parliamentary Paper Series. The committee made five recommendations in relation to these matters.

The Presiding Officers are pleased to respond to Recommendations 2 to 5 which concern the responsibilities of the Parliament. Recommendation 1 is directed at the Digital Transformation Agency and so requires a response from Government, and we note that Recommendation 4 is directed at both the Parliament and the Government.

Recommendation 2

That the Department of Parliamentary Services works with the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate to develop a dedicated web interface with appropriate functionality for locating and accessing tabled documents and in particular the Parliamentary Papers Series.

Agreed. The Presiding Officers support this recommendation and agree with the committee's conclusion that an improved web interface for accessing tabled documents, including the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS), is highly desirable.

The Departments of the Senate, House of Representatives and Parliamentary Services have advised that a project to receive and publish tabled documents online has been approved and prioritised under the Department of Parliamentary Services' ICT Capital Works Plan. The project will take a holistic approach to modernising the way the Parliament receives, stores and publishes tabled documents, including delivering an intuitive dedicated web interface for accessing these documents online. The PPS is an important subset of tabled documents and will be made available as a distinct collection from the new web interface. (See also the comments below in relation to recommendation 4.)

¹ 5/12/2018, J.77; VP 2017/89.

Recommendation 3

That the Department of Parliamentary Services ensure that all Members and Senators are provided with the facility to print and collate documents to the minimum standard, including printing in colour where it enhances the reader's understanding.

Agreed. The Presiding Officers support this recommendation. The Department of Parliamentary Services has advised that work has commenced on identifying a suitable approach to introduce printing facilities that will meet the requirements of the minimum standard for all Members and Senators.

Recommendation 4

That the parliamentary departments and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet develop a system for the embargoed delivery of digital documents to Parliament; and that once in place, the system be accompanied by a requirement for government departments to deliver digital documents prior to tabling.

Agreed. The Presiding Officers support this recommendation and note the important role the Parliament must play in utilising digital technology to streamline the process for the presentation of documents to Parliament, and which in turn supports the Parliament in its accountability role.

In its report, the committee noted that a project to develop a system for the embargoed delivery of digital documents to the Parliament was in its early stages and we agree with the committee's view that this project should be given priority. This is the project described above in relation to Recommendation 2. We are advised by the relevant parliamentary departments that the project is progressing, in consultation with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and we will monitor the progress of this important project. No doubt Senators and Members, and many others who require access to the work of the Parliament, will appreciate the benefits of having documents instantly available in portable, accessible digital formats.

Recommendation 5

That the Senate and House of Representatives pass the following resolution:

That unless otherwise ordered, and provided that they conform to the printing standards, the following documents shall be made Parliamentary Papers upon their presentation to the Senate/House of Representatives:

- *substantive reports of parliamentary committees;*
- *annual reports of Commonwealth entities;*
- *a report of a royal commission;*
- *a report of the Productivity Commission;*
- *a report of the Auditor-General;*
- *a report of the Australian Human Rights Commission;*
- *a report of the Australian Law Reform Commission;*
- *a report of the Australian Electoral Commission on the redistribution of electoral division boundaries;*

- *Australian Government white papers;*
- *a report in a series that has previously been included in the Parliamentary Papers Series on the recommendation of a Publications Committee; and*
- *budget papers and ministerial statements presented following the presentation of the appropriation bills.*

Agreed. The Presiding Officers support this recommendation and note that resolutions in these terms were agreed to by the Senate on 8 February 2018 and the House of Representatives on 28 March 2018.²

² 8/2/2018, J.2648; VP 2018/1484.