



PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library

1 August 2011

Ms Christine McDonald
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Finance and Public Administration

Dear Ms McDonald

The Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library (the Committee) wishes to make the following submission into the inquiry into the performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS).

The Parliamentary Library provides vital services to support the work of Senators and Members. Client satisfaction with the library's services has increased from 85% in 2003 to 89% in 2007 and 93% in 2009.

Each year the Committee considers and makes a recommendation to the Presiding Officers on the resource agreement between with Parliamentary Librarian and the Secretary of DPS. This year the Committee advised that it was concerned about the resources available to the library, in particular, the adequacy of the resources to provide research services that meet the needs of Parliament, skills for delivery of online services and digitisation of collection material, in particular radio and television programs. The committee has expressed concerns about resources for a number of years.

The Library has, before and since the creation of DPS, experienced over a decade of efficiency dividend reductions and has achieved significantly improved productivity from its resources. A consequence of the efficiency dividend has been a reduction in the ability to purchase information resources for use by Senators and Members. Achieving further efficiencies to fund the pay increases necessary to attract and retain skilled staff and meet efficiency dividend reductions without significant cuts in services is a very difficult task. The pressure of increasing costs and the efficiency dividend will lead to a further reduction in the number of staff delivering research services, simply because of the predominance of salaries in the Research Branch budget (99%).

The committee considers that adequate funding for library services is essential for a well functioning parliament.

Yours sincerely

Dick Adams
Joint Chair