



DPS ref: 12/29

Senator Louise Pratt  
Committee Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Pratt

**Re: Inquiry into the provision of amenity within the Parliamentary Triangle**

Thank you for the invitation to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into the provision of amenity within the Parliamentary Triangle. I look forward to discussing these important matters with the Committee at the public hearing today.

I thought it would be useful to provide some background about the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) to assist the Committee's work. DPS is the principal support agency for the operations of Parliament House and the lead agency for visitor and tourism related services. Our mission is to "support the work of Parliament, maintain Parliament House as a symbol of Australian democracy, and make the building, and the important activity that takes place within it, accessible and engaging". We do so by providing essential services to support the work of the Parliament, and ensure that the building, and the important activity that takes place within it, are accessible and engaging for all. This means providing amenities for up to 5000 building occupants on sitting days as well as over 850,000 visitors each year. Visitors to Parliament House include tourists, international delegations, government officials and function attendees.

For most building occupants—senators, members and their staff, staff working in ministers' offices, staff of the parliamentary departments and their contractors—leaving Parliament House to access amenities on a regular basis is not practical, particularly during sitting weeks. As such, DPS and its predecessor agencies have supported the provision of a range of amenities on site. DPS manages contracts for the provision of catering services for visitors and building occupants, agreements for a range of retail services (including banking, a Post Office, travel agent, hairdresser and florist), and an agreement for a childcare centre. Staff of DPS also provide medical health services and gymnasium for building occupants.

The Committee's inquiry is timely. DPS is developing a strategic plan for improved food and retail services at Parliament House with a focus on improved service delivery and on realising commercial opportunities to deliver value for money. The strategy will ensure that services are aligned with the needs of building occupants and visitors, whilst making better use of commercial space. DPS is concurrently reviewing the visitor and tourism related experience to increase the number of people visiting Parliament House and enhancing their experience. We aim to deliver a wider range of tourist programs centred on the authentic parliamentary experience, more professional exhibitions and partnerships with other national institutions. Parliament House has the potential to be a hub for retail and other services within the wider employment precinct of the Parliamentary Triangle, as part of enhanced services for visitors.

As most visitors and building occupants use private vehicles to travel to Parliament House, parking is also an important issue for DPS. Visitors to the Parliamentary Triangle and Parliament House use the public car parking provided at Parliament House as well as other car parking in the vicinity to visit multiple cultural institutions that lie within easy walking distance.

Overall, there are around 1,900 car parking spaces at Parliament House. The majority are allocated to pass-holders, who have access to free parking. DPS maintains the infrastructure for all car parks on the parliamentary precincts, including lighting, fire protection, security gates and signage. As is the case in the other national institutions in the Parliamentary Triangle, visitor access is impacted by car parks being used by workers. Three-hour limits apply in the public car park at Parliament House to ensure that parking is available to visitors and is not used by building occupants or commuters displaced from elsewhere in the Parliamentary Triangle or broader environs.

DPS notes the Australian Government's intention to introduce paid parking on national land in Parkes, Barton, Russell and Acton from 1 July 2014. Any decision to introduce paid parking on the parliamentary precincts would be a matter for the Presiding Officers. An important consideration would be that paid parking should not mean visitors could not afford to visit Parliament House. In relation to the introduction of paid parking for staff, DPS would have regard to the arrangements of other public sector agencies in the Parliamentary Triangle. There are several options to explore, noting that other agencies have adopted various models for addressing restricted demand, ranging from first-come-first-served to ballot-type arrangements. Others are introducing fee-for-service arrangements.

Enhanced public transport services within the Parliamentary Triangle—such as that currently offered by the Canberra Centenary free loop bus—would provide an opportunity for Parliament House to operate as a retail hub for workers in the Parliamentary Triangle as part of work to enhance retail services and the visitor experience at Parliament House.

I look forward to discussing these important matters with the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Carol Mills  
Secretary

11.6.13