

# **JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATIONS**

## **Inquiry into the development of a digital repository and electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series**

### **SUBMISSION**

**SUBMISSION NUMBER:** 3

**SUBMITTER:** University of New South Wales Library



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Howard Amos  
Deputy University  
Librarian

Ms Sue Blunden  
Secretary  
Joint Committee on Publications  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA

Dear Ms Blunden

**Submission to the Joint Committee on Publications  
Electronic Distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series  
University Library, University of NSW  
May 2010**

**Introduction**

The Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS) is a vital resource for researchers at Australian universities. The papers that form this series touch on virtually every field of research. They are also essential resources for the study of public policy and administration, law and political science in Australia.

The availability of freely available online versions facilitates effective and efficient research. The ability to access a comprehensive repository of parliamentary papers that incorporates advanced search functionality is increasingly an expectation of the Australian research community and the libraries that support them.

**Online availability of documents tabled in parliament**

Online availability of research material is the preferred mode of delivery for the majority of researchers. Academic libraries have witnessed a dramatic shift from the use of print based resources to online equivalents, allowing 24/7 online access.

The current arrangement for the publication of parliamentary papers requires agencies or departments to host parliamentary papers they produce on their organisation's website. While this goes some way to meeting the needs of researchers, there are problems with this model that could be addressed by making the series available via a central online repository.

Having papers from the series on a distributed network of websites makes it difficult to implement a simple yet powerful search interface. The *publications.gov.au* website provides only basic keyword search functionality. It is not possible to browse the series by subject, year, or the agency that created them for example. As the site also serves as the search interface for other types of content, it is often difficult to identify parliamentary papers within search results. The *Tabled Papers Register* index provided by the Department of the Parliamentary Library, provides extensive metadata and an advanced search interface that could be expanded to link to the full text of papers.

Another issue is the lack of compliance by a small number of organisations who do not provide online access to documents that have been designated parliamentary papers. This is problematic for researchers who expect to be able to access the entire series online.

A related issue for academic libraries is the need to continue collecting the print series to ensure library users have access to the entire series. This requires the allocation of resources to accession, catalogue and house the series. A comprehensive online repository, with guaranteed ongoing access, would allow academic libraries, who are not also legal deposit libraries, to cease receiving the print.

### **Short and long-term access to documents included in the PPS**

While many libraries still require print copies of the series (particularly those with legal deposit obligations), a digital preservation strategy based on providing access via a central repository would address the need for both short and long term access to the PPS. This would overcome the difficulties researchers can face when parliamentary papers hosted on agency and departmental websites are removed or relocated.

### **Options for a digital repository and electronic distribution & administration of an electronic PPS**

While there are many factors regarding the options for a digital repository and the administration of an electronic PPS that fall outside the scope of UNSW Library's knowledge, we do note the excellent work that the Department of the Parliamentary Library has completed in making the *Tabled Papers Register* available to the Australian public. This could be extended to allow agencies and departments to submit online versions of parliamentary papers to create a centralised service.

A central repository would also provide the Australian Government Management Office with a mechanism to more effectively ensure compliance by agencies and departments in posting online versions of documents forming part of the PPS.

Yours sincerely



Howard Amos  
Acting University Librarian  
University Library  
University of NSW