

# **JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATIONS**

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

### **SUBMISSION**

**SUBMISSION NUMBER:** 12

**SUBMITTER:** NSW Parliamentary Library

## NSW PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY'S SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATIONS

## RE: ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PAPER SERIES

Sue Blunden  
Senate Tabling Office,  
Department of the Senate,  
Canberra 2600



Dear Ms Blunden,

Thank you for the invitation to respond to the development of an electronic Parliamentary Paper Series (PPS).

The aspects of the Terms of Reference the NSW Parliamentary Library would like to address are as follows:

*a) The online availability of documents tabled in Parliament*

In relation to availability, the main concern of the New South Wales Parliamentary Library is for the timely delivery of tabled papers. The key question for us is the lag between the time they are tabled in the Commonwealth Parliament and their availability online.

Further to this, to facilitate accessibility and the currency of information, ideally there would be an alert service which notifies users when new documents that have been uploaded on to the site. As a regular user of Commonwealth parliamentary papers for whom accessibility and timeliness are crucial, the New South Parliamentary Library would value something like an RSS feed to facilitate notification. At present, we access the alert system provided by the UK House of Commons, a feature of which is that it permits users to customise their alerts to cater for their specific needs. The House of Commons alert system can be accessed at the following address:

<https://service.govdelivery.com/service/user.html?code=UKPARLIAMENT>

Another issue of concern to the New South Wales Parliamentary Library refers to the metadata standards used to describe the content. Of concern is the need to establish uniformity when creating and populating fields, and the necessity of making search options, particularly advanced search options, transparent to users. In other words, if classification hierarchies are used to describe the documents, will the components of the hierarchies be browsable and/or intuitive to users?

A further issue in this context is ensuring that all documents are available in full text.

*b) The short and long-term access to documents including the PPS*

A major concern for this Library is to ensure the integrity and comprehensiveness of our digital collection in areas of core interest. Commonwealth parliamentary papers are an essential component of our collection and, as such, we would wish to ensure the stability of any online collection and the continuity of access to relevant documents in perpetuity. Historically, we have acted as custodians of the series in its hard copy form. While that precise arrangement would not apply to the proposed online series, we would still wish to express our commitment to the maintenance of a complete repository of parliamentary material, to be accessed by such organisations as ourselves but also by the community at large. Access to information, current and historical, is the key to the healthy operation of representative democracy.

*c) Technological barriers and, d) Options for a digital repository and electronic distribution*

Two issues are raised in this context:

Firstly, in what electronic format will the papers be available. Will it be pdf or html? Will there be simple options for printing? Different formats come with their own limitations/constraints, for example, compatibility between different versions of software.

Secondly, if the recipient organisation chooses to download a document, would access be via website or another form of electronic delivery, such as FTP? Depending on the method of delivery, issues related to firewalls or limitations on file size may need to be considered.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission for this project.

Deborah Brown,

Manager, Reference & Information Services, NSW Parliamentary Library

Gareth Griffith,

Head of Research, NSW Parliamentary Library

Linda Brooker,

Government Publications Officer, NSW Parliamentary Library