

Methods of distributing hard copies of parliamentary papers

3.1 Documents presented to Parliament are distributed through a variety of methods:

- Presented documents of a substantial nature, which are selected by either House to be part of the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS), are distributed free of charge to a distribution list of eligible recipients.
- All government documents, whether presented to Parliament or not, are required to be distributed through the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes (LDS), which are administered through the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO).
- Within Parliament House, copies of presented documents are distributed to the Parliamentary Library, press gallery and Table Offices of the Senate and House of Representatives, for the use of Senators, Members and staff.

3.2 The major issues relating to the distribution of hard copies of documents are:

- Copies of documents required for these distributions are not always provided by author agencies in a timely manner; and
- Duplication among these distribution methods.

The Parliamentary Papers Series

- 3.3 The distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series is described in Chapter One. A discussion of the eligible guidelines for free sets of the series is in Chapter Two.
- 3.4 Prior to 1 January 2006, 97 pamphlet copies and 37 collated blister packs were distributed to 73 recipients. This includes 20 copies each for the Senate and House of Representatives Table Offices.
- 3.5 As a result of the changes made by the Presiding Officers, 89 pamphlet copies will be distributed to 50 recipients.¹

Cessation of blister packs

- 3.6 In May 2005 the Presiding Officers decided to cease the provision of blister packs; the 2005 series being the last to be produced in this form. The recipients of blister packs would instead receive one pamphlet copy of each parliamentary paper.
- 3.7 Under the revised arrangements nineteen recipients, who had previously received both a blister pack and a pamphlet copy, will now only receive the pamphlet copy. A further fifteen recipients will receive a pamphlet copy instead of a blister pack. The arrangements for sixteen recipients, who had received one pamphlet copy, will continue.²
- 3.8 The Presiding Officers gave the following reasons for deciding to cease providing blister packs:
- The delay by agencies in supplying, and the time spent by chamber departments monitoring the receipt of, stock for the series.
 - Reducing the costs of storing, processing and distribution.

Supply of stock

- 3.9 Blister packs are despatched in bulk once the entire set of documents for a given year are assembled. The Department of the House of Representatives reports a delay of up to 30 months in the provision of blister packs, caused by some agencies not submitting their documents in a timely manner.³

1 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

2 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 3.

3 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 9.

- 3.10 The Commonwealth Department of Parliamentary Services submitted that there were problems with the distribution of the PPS, including long delays in the receipt of documents. As a result, they are forced to rely on the distribution of documents within Parliament House, which provides a more immediate service.⁴
- 3.11 The Committee considers the 30 month delay in completing a series unacceptable but does not accept that the issue of timely supply of documents for distribution will be addressed by the abolition of blister packs. These delays by agencies also affect the provision of pamphlet copies, and are not isolated to the Parliamentary Papers Series.
- 3.12 Organisations seeking to bind their pamphlet copies will still have to wait for the entire series to be compiled. The core issue is one of agency non-compliance and, if not addressed, delays in providing the PPS will always be experienced, regardless of format.
- 3.13 It should be noted that a great majority of agencies do provide adequate stock of their documents for distribution. However the coordinating agency, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, must play a role in encouraging all agencies to provide stock of documents for the Parliamentary Papers Series in a timely manner.

Monitoring compliance

- 3.14 The Australian Library and Information Association recommended an audit of agency performance for the supply of documents to Parliament. The Australian Government Information Management Office stated that they have been working with the Australian National Audit Office to ensure that agency requirements are being met.⁵
- 3.15 The Committee would welcome an investigation by the Audit Office into whether agencies are meeting their obligations to make government publications available and encourages the Audit Office to include such obligations in their regular audit programs.
- 3.16 In 1997 the Committee recommended that Ministers should ensure that agencies fulfil their obligation to provide sufficient copies of documents for the PPS. The Committee also recommended that defaulting agencies be

4 Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Submission 11*, p. 1.

5 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 5; Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 3.

reported to Parliament.⁶ To date no agency has been reported to Parliament as not complying with the requirements of the PPS.

- 3.17 Officers in both chamber departments spend considerable time actively monitoring agency compliance with the requirements of the PPS, including the supply of copies of the documents to Canprint. This has the effect of ensuring the completeness of the series, although after long delays.⁷ The Committee intends to continue working closely with the chamber departments in ensuring the timely completion of each year's series.

Recommendation 3

- 3.18 **The Committee recommends that the chamber departments:**

- **continue to monitor agency compliance with the requirements of the Parliamentary Papers Series; and**
- **report to the Committee, by 30 June the following year, any defaulting agencies.**

- 3.19 The relevant Minister also has a role in ensuring that agencies provide adequate stock of their documents. Upon receiving the report from the chamber departments on defaulting agencies by 30 June the following year, the Committee will report any defaulting agencies to Parliament. The Chair of the Committee will then ask the Presiding Officers to seek an explanation from the relevant Minister as to why their agency has not complied with the requirements of the PPS.

- 3.20 The Committee believes that the potential for an agency to be named in Parliament, and their non-compliance to be reported to their Minister by either the Speaker of the House of Representatives or the President of the Senate is a strong incentive for compliance.

Cost savings

- 3.21 The Department of the House of Representatives submitted that only "modest cost savings" will be achieved as a result of the changes.

6 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. iii.

7 Ms Rosa Ferranda, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 3; Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, pp. 13, 14.

Approximately \$30,000 per year, the cost of storing, processing and distributing the series, will be saved by ceasing the provision of blister packs.

- 3.22 The State Library of New South Wales asserted that a collated series ensures long term access to parliamentary papers by keeping all the copies for a particular year together.⁸ The Australian Library and Information Association submitted that the abolition of blister packs would place at risk the efficient collection of parliamentary papers.⁹
- 3.23 Recipient libraries indicated that they would be required to do a great deal of extra work to source, collate and check their own sets to ensure their completeness. This would result in an added administrative and financial burden to manage a large number of single items.¹⁰
- 3.24 The Committee has some sympathy with these libraries; however it reiterates the view, expressed in its 1986 report, that organisations have a responsibility to secure their own holdings.¹¹ Yearly lists of Parliamentary Papers, recently made available online by the Department of the House of Representatives, should assist libraries in managing their papers.¹²
- 3.25 Similarly, concerns that individual libraries would process the series differently, resulting in holdings that are not comparable with one another¹³ are not shared by the Committee. Libraries are currently not required to bind the blister packs they receive, although many do. It is possible, and likely, for a library to process their blister pack in a way that suits them, such as sorting them by subject area.
- 3.26 The Committee considers that the additional costs transferred to libraries in obtaining a collated set of parliamentary papers, when multiplied across numerous libraries, would be in excess of the savings realised by the chamber departments. On this basis, blister packs should continue to be available to be provided to eligible recipients.

8 State Library of New South Wales, *Submission 3*, p. 2.

9 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 5.

10 Department of Parliamentary Services (Victoria), *Submission 9*, p. 2; National Archives of Australia, *Submission 10*, p. 3; Parliamentary Library of Western Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 1.

11 Joint Committee on Publications, *Review of the Cost and Distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra, 1986, p. 31.

12 See <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/publ/PPS.htm>.

13 State Library of Victoria, *Submission 2*, p. 1; Department of Parliamentary Services (Victoria), *Submission 9*, p. 2.

Recommendation 4

- 3.27 **The Committee recommends that, due to the costs passed on to recipient libraries being in excess of the savings realised by the chamber departments, blister packs of parliamentary papers continue to be available to eligible recipients.**
- 3.28 The Committee accepts the limit of one set of the PPS per recipient imposed by the Presiding Officers. Accordingly, recipients should be surveyed to ascertain whether they wish to receive the series as loose pamphlet copies or as a blister pack.

Recommendation 5

- 3.29 **The Committee recommends that recipients of the Parliamentary Papers series be surveyed to ascertain whether they wish to receive the series as loose pamphlet copies or as a blister pack.**
- 3.30 Given the value placed on blister packs by recipient libraries, this may be an area where some cost recovery is possible. The issue of providing blister packs as a subscription service is discussed in Chapter 5.

Recommendation 6

3.31 The Committee recommends that the guidelines for the provision of the Parliamentary Papers Series be amended to read as follows:

- that libraries of States, State Parliaments, tertiary education institutions, Commonwealth Departments, the main national or parliamentary library of a country which has an exchange with the National Library of Australia, and appropriate addressees as determined by the Presiding Officers, be entitled to be supplied, on request, with either:
 - ⇒ one free copy of each Parliamentary Paper; or
 - ⇒ one free collated set of the Parliamentary Papers Series.
- that trade, business, employer, employee, professional, commercial and similar organisations including members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and newspapers, be not entitled to receive free distribution of the above;

that the Presiding Officers advise current recipients on the free distribution list when the revised distribution scheme becomes operative, and instigate checks, from time to time as they consider necessary, to ascertain whether recipients desire to continue to receive their entitlement.

Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes

3.32 The Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes (LDS) are administered by the Australian Government Information Management Office, a business group of the Department of Finance and Administration. It augments the Legal deposit requirements of section 201 of the *Copyright Act 1968* and state legislation.

3.33 One copy of each publication produced by government department and agencies are required to be provided to each of the 41 deposit libraries, including the National Library, state libraries and university libraries identified under the *Higher Education Funding Act 1988*.¹⁴

14 Australian Government Information Management Office, see <http://www.agimo.gov.au/information/publishing/deposit>.

- 3.34 All government documents are distributed through the LDS, including those not included in the PPS and documents not presented to Parliament. This gives the LDS a wider range of documents than the Parliamentary Papers Series.¹⁵
- 3.35 Like the PPS, the LDS is also adversely affected by agencies not providing adequate copies. The former distributor of the LDS has been unfairly criticised for being unable to supply documents.¹⁶ This criticism should be more appropriately directed at agencies who fail to supply documents for distribution under the schemes.
- 3.36 The LDS is a statutory requirement of agencies and ultimately Ministers are responsible for ensuring that their agency meet their obligations.¹⁷ The Committee does not think it appropriate that a private company, given the contract to distribute either the PPS or the LDS, should have responsibility to monitor and enforce agency compliance with these schemes.
- 3.37 In evidence to the Committee, the Australian Government Information Management Office admitted that it does not monitor the supply of documents to the LDS by author agencies. Instead, agencies are relied upon to be aware of their obligations.¹⁸
- 3.38 The Committee accepts that non-compliance with statutory obligations by agencies is not deliberate.¹⁹ Nevertheless, if a requirement is important enough to be included in legislation, some monitoring of the adherence to those requirements should be performed.

Recommendation 7

- 3.39 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office monitor agency compliance with the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and provide a report, detailing defaulting agencies, to Parliament by no later than 30 June the following year.**

15 Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 15.

16 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 2; State Library of New South Wales, *Submission 3*, p. 2.

17 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. iv.

18 Mr John Lalor, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 8.

19 Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 4.

Internal distribution within Parliament House

- 3.40 The distribution of documents within Parliament House from external departments and agencies is coordinated by the Tabling Officer of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Copies of reports from the Auditor-General and parliamentary committees are distributed by the relevant committee secretariat or through the Table Office of each chamber department.
- 3.41 Two-hundred and eighty one copies of documents are required, and must be properly boxed and labelled by the presenting agency before being presented to Parliament.
- 3.42 The distribution list is as follows:
- 75 copies for the House of Representatives Table Office.
 - 100 copies for the Senate Table Office.
 - 21 copies for the Parliamentary Library.
 - 5 copies for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Tabling Officer.
 - 80 copies for the press gallery. This is the only optional part of the distribution.²⁰
- 3.43 Consistent with Recommendation 2, the recipients of the internal Parliament House distribution should also be surveyed regarding their need for documents.

Recommendation 8

- 3.44 **The Committee recommends that the Tabling Officer of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet write to each recipient of the internal Parliament House document distribution to determine their stock requirements.**

²⁰ Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, see <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/guidelines/index.cfm>.

Parliamentary Library distribution

- 3.45 The Parliamentary Library receives 21 copies of all presented documents shortly after tabling. Nine copies are passed on to other Parliamentary Libraries throughout Australia and New Zealand, with the rest used by library researchers and information specialists.²¹

Duplication between schemes

- 3.46 The submission of the Department of the House of Representatives identified duplication between the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and the Parliamentary Papers Series, and also between the Parliamentary Papers Series and the Parliamentary Library's distribution.²²
- 3.47 Significant overlap does exist, with more than half of all recipients receiving a second copy of each document. The Commonwealth Department of Parliamentary Services indicated that work needed to be done to eliminate some duplication. The Clerk of the House of Representatives likewise expressed a desire to see a rationalised Parliamentary Papers Series, free of unnecessary duplication.²³
- 3.48 The elimination of this duplication would result in minor cost savings for agencies, which would not be required to produce as many copies of their documents. The Committee, however, acknowledges the difficulties in removing this duplication and that the costs of doing so may outweigh the potential savings for the administrators of each scheme.
- 3.49 The Committee believes that this issue needs to be addressed despite these obstacles.

21 Miss Roslynn Membrey, Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 20.

22 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, pp. 17-18.

23 Miss Roslynn Membrey, Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 18; Mr Ian Harris, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 15.

Recommendation 9

- 3.50 **The Committee recommends that, where possible, any duplication between the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and the Parliamentary Papers Series be eliminated.**

Enhanced Library Deposit and Free Issue Scheme

- 3.51 One possible solution to address this duplication, proposed by the Department of the House of Representatives in its submissions to the 1997 inquiry and to the current inquiry, is for an enhanced Library Deposit Scheme.²⁴
- 3.52 This proposal again warrants further investigation. In 1997, the Committee recommended that a working party be established to investigate this proposal. The Presiding Officers accepted this recommendation²⁵ but to date no working party has eventuated.
- 3.53 The Committee believes that the responsibility for investigating and implementing an enhanced LDS lies with the Australian Government Information Management Office, in conjunction with the chamber Departments.
- 3.54 The inaction regarding the Committee's 1997 recommendation should not be allowed to be repeated. Accordingly, the Committee asks that the investigation be completed within six months from the date of this report and a report presented to the Committee. Any changes to the LDS and PPS should then be implemented within a further six months.

24 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. 25; Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, pp. 7-9.

25 Presiding Officers response, *Senate Hansard* (10.11.98) pp. 32-3.

Recommendation 10

- 3.55 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office, together with the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate, investigate methods to reduce the duplication between the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and the Parliamentary Papers Series. A report of their findings is to be supplied to the Committee within six months of the tabling of this report, and any changes implemented within a further six months.**

Adherence to productions standards

- 3.56 The Committee has identified potential savings for the whole of Government in the costs of production of reports presented to Parliament.
- 3.57 Many reports presented to Parliament are printed in full colour, which is in excess of the requirements of Parliament and contrary to the guidelines set down by this Committee, which encourages restraint in the presentation quality of documents.²⁶
- 3.58 The purpose of reporting to Parliament is to provide information on the activities and performance of an agency. Colour within reports should be used only if necessary to make this information clearer, for example in graphs. In most cases, single colour text is adequate.
- 3.59 The Committee desires a return to the practice, in place until a few years ago, of agencies writing to this Committee to seek an exemption from the standards. Agencies have been encouraged to use their own judgement when applying the guidelines and have been asked to follow the principle of 'value for money' in the publications.

26 Joint Committee on Publications. *Printing standards for documents presented to Parliament*, see http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/publ/printing_standards.htm.

Recommendation 11

3.60 The Committee recommends that the printing standards for documents presented to Parliament be strictly adhered to.

The Committee will monitor compliance with this recommendation and will regularly report to the Parliament those agencies not adhering to the standards.