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Mr Jason Sherd  
The Secretary  
Joint Committee on Publications  
Parliament House  
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Dear Mr Sherd

**Submission to the Joint Committee on Publication — Inquiry into the distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series**

1 Thank you for your invitation to provide a submission to the Inquiry. I write on behalf of the Parliamentary Library within the Department of Parliamentary Services.

*Background*

2 The primary objective of the Parliamentary Library's collection is to support the provision of commissioned information and research services as well as self-help services to Members, Senators, parliamentary committees and parliamentary departments. The PPS is of vital importance as a source of information on the Australian Government and Parliament. Its usefulness is demonstrated by the frequent use made of it by staff and clients of the Library.

3 A secondary objective of the Library's collection is to provide a complete record of the publications of the Parliament. Thus the Library considers that it is its responsibility to collect and maintain a permanent and complete collection of the PPS, and holds the PPS from 1901 to the present.

*Cessation of blister packs*

4 The Library notes that under the changes approved by the Presiding Officers, blister packs will no longer be produced after 1 January 2006.

5 Because of problems with the distribution of the PPS (currently undertaken by CanPrint Communications) the Library experiences long delays in receiving the papers, receives them out of sequence, and does not receive some at all. As a rough estimate, around 10 papers in a year may be missing. There are problems in the distribution of the PPS by CanPrint Communications.

6 Fortunately, the Library is also on the distribution list for all papers tabled in Parliament, which it receives much more promptly via the Parliamentary Liaison Office (for government reports), the Senate Documents Store (for Senate committee reports), and directly from the House of Representatives committees (for HoR committee reports). As the tabled papers are essential working papers for the Library, it keeps very close track of them using the Daily Papers List

published on the Department of the HoR intranet, and ensures that it immediately obtains papers not received from the author agencies/committees.

7 The Library therefore feels confident that the cessation of the blister packs will not affect its ability to maintain a complete bound set of the PPS. It is the sources listed in (6), rather than CanPrint, that it relies upon to ensure that it holds the complete set of the PPS.

8 We are aware that the HoR Table Office compiles a running list of the PPS for its own internal use. This lists the PP numbers, the dates tabled and the titles of the papers. The Library requests that this list be made publicly available on the Parliament House website as it would assist it and other libraries collecting the PPS to identify numbered papers not received.

#### *Tightening of eligibility guidelines*

9 The Library has some concerns that the tightening of the eligibility guidelines may result in an increase in the number of inter-library loan requests it receives for copies of Parliamentary Papers from libraries no longer eligible to receive the PPS.

#### *Provision of the PPS in a digital format*

10 The Library would welcome the provision of the PPS in a digital format that would enable clients and staff to quickly access the series from their desktops 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

11 While most of the papers in the PPS are already produced in digital format, online access is often unreliable and time consuming to discover. The individual papers are scattered over many agency web pages, some of which are difficult to find, their Internet addresses (URLs) may change through re-organisation of websites, or they may be removed altogether.

12 Discovery of the URLs of government publications would be facilitated by government agencies including the URLs in the catalogue records which they contribute to Libraries Australia (the national bibliographic database), as well as in their print publications. The Parliamentary Library submits that government agencies should be encouraged to do this.

13 In the long term, the most cost-effective method of distributing the PPS would be via a digital archive. A co-ordinated strategy is needed for creating a permanent digital repository of the PPS, providing access to the series from a single website and using persistent identifiers (permanent naming of Internet resources). To maximise access to the series, searches by PPS number and other appropriate metadata, as well as the ability to search the full-text of the papers, would be highly desirable. Further consideration could be given to loading all PPS since 1901 as an additional service to the Australian community.

14 The Parliamentary Library would be pleased to be involved in any discussion or consultation on the creation of a permanent digital archive of the PPS.

15 Until such an archive is in place, it is essential that the hard copy PPS be continued.

Yours sincerely

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