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The Department of Health and Ageing Submission to the Inquiry into Printing Standards for Documents Presented to Parliament

In relation to the Joint Publications Committee's inquiry into the printing standards the Department of Health and Ageing's submission provides comments on the following issues:

1. the necessity of the use of colour and illustrations within documents;
2. the cost of producing documents and whether value for money is being obtained; and
3. the feasibility of sanctions against organisations that do not follow the printing standards.

Discussion

The Department produces and presents a number of different reports and documents to Parliament, including but not limited to the:

- Department of Health and Ageing Annual Report;
- Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS);
- Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements (PAES);
- Office of Gene Technology Regulatory Annual Report;
- Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs Annual Report; and
- Report on the Operation of the Aged Care Act.

1. The necessity of the use of colour and illustrations within documents

Committee comment:

"The Committee notes that the primary purpose of Parliamentary documents is to provide information on agency activities to allow Parliament to make a fully informed judgement on departmental performance. Black text is usually sufficient. The value added by the use of colour and illustration is in some cases questionable."

- 1.1. When producing the Department of Health and Ageing PBS and PAES, the Department adheres to all printing standards (ie black ink for text, tables and cover design).
- 1.2. However, when producing the 2005-06 Annual Report, the Department included carefully chosen full colour photographs which supported the surrounding discussion, to give the document a higher quality look and feel.
- 1.3. The Department supports the use of colour and coloured illustrations within annual reports that are used as resources by universities, government departments, non-government organisations, the medical profession and the general public.

The use of colour and illustrations in annual reports can make a document more aesthetically appealing, which encourages people to pick it up and read it.

Used subtly, colour and colour illustrations can also enhance and aid the understanding of a document. For example, colour can be used to help separate themes or sections in a large document, making it more manageable in terms of access and readability.

2. The cost of producing documents and whether value for money is being obtained

Committee comment:

"The Committee is seeking information on the costs of printing, especially in relation to colour printing. In early 2006, the Committee obtained indicative printing costs for documents printed in either 2 or 4 colours. This quote showed that the cost of a report printed in 4 colours was over 70% higher than if printed in 2 colours, which was contrary to anecdotal reports from agencies."

- 2.1. The Department believes it receives value for money in the printing costs for the annual report. We obtain this by following procurement guidelines and seeking a range of quotes for desktopping and printing services.
- 2.2. The Department has found that including black and white photographs only does not necessarily mean the cost of printing will be lower. For example, the Department's printing costs for its 2005-06 annual report totalled \$25,948 for 2,000 copies on glossy paper with full colour photographs. We have been advised by another department that its 2005-06 annual report cost \$29,500 to print 1,600 copies on matt paper with black and white photographs.
- 2.3. The following table also shows that the use of colour does not necessarily mean more expensive printing costs. As illustrated below, the Department paid only \$139.70 difference in printing costs between the Department's 2005-06 annual report, which included full colour photographs, and the 2004-05 annual report which featured black and white photographs.

2005-06 Department of Health and Ageing Annual Report	2004-05 Department of Health and Ageing Annual Report
386 pages	445 pages
Full colour cover	Full colour cover
Full colour inner back cover	Full colour inner back cover
Full colour chapter dividers	2 colour chapter dividers
4 black and white photographs	2 black and white photographs
19 full colour photographs	No colour photographs
Printing Cost: \$25,947.90	Printing Cost: \$25,808.20

- 2.4. In our experience, the cost differential between printing an annual report in 2 pantone colours (ie. black and one other colour) verses a 4 colour process would be less than a 70 per cent increase in price. Annual reports are usually printed on an 8 or 10 colour printing press due to the sheet size and quality. Therefore, there is very little difference if only 4 cylinders (2 colours double sided, 1 cylinder per colour and per side) or 8 cylinders (4 colour process double sided, 1 cylinder per colour per side) are used.

Committee comment:

"The Committee is also interested in gaining information on the environmental cost of documents. A proposed option to reduce the number of printed copies is to make documents available electronically."

- 2.5. The Department makes the annual report, PBS and PAES available in a range of electronic formats, including Hyper Text Markup Language which can be accessed by the visually impaired.
- 2.6. The Department does not support an electronic only version of these documents when not all stakeholders, ie the public, necessarily have access to a computer or high speed internet connection with the capacity to easily download chapters. Instead we would support the printing of sufficient hard copies to meet need (based on demand in previous years) and an electronic version.

3. The feasibility of sanctions against organisations that do not follow the printing standards

Committee comment:

"There are currently no sanctions for not adhering to printing standards. However, if a document does not meet the standards, the author agency must bear any costs of reprinting the document to ensure its inclusion in the Parliamentary Paper Series.

In May 2006, the Committee recommended in a report on the distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series that it monitor compliance with the standards and report those agencies not adhering to them. This recommendation was supported by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The options currently available to the Committee include:

- 1. Do nothing. Continue to place the onus on agencies to comply with the standards.*
- 2. Issue new printing standards placing further restrictions on the use of colour and illustrations. Agencies would then need to seek an exemption from the Committee to exceed the standards.*
- 3. Write to agencies whose documents do not comply with the printing standards, seeking an explanation for the non-compliance and details of the costs of publication.*
- 4. Name non-complying agencies in an appendix to the Committee's fortnightly report."*

3.1. The Department suggests that the Committee adopt Option 1. Enforcing sanctions such as making non compliant agencies reprint documents will be costly (and may be inconsistent with value for money requirements of procurement guidelines) and harmful to the environment. This would also cause delays in tabling information for Parliament's review.

3.2. The Department supports agencies working towards complying with the standards and making a conscious effort to get value for money, if using colour and colour illustrations.