

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee—Budget Estimates May 2007

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary Portfolio, Department of Parliamentary Services

Answers to Questions on Notice

Topic: Parliament House visitor number trends

Question P6

Senator MURRAY—Is there any sense that a reduced number of visitors may be a consequence of the increased security we have been obliged to put into the building? I gathered the implication from your remarks was that if you try and divide normal entrants—in other words, building occupants and normal visitors—from shall we call them tourist visitors, you might find that tourist visitor numbers have decreased, and that would affect the shop sales.

Ms Penfold—I think tourist numbers have definitely decreased, and they have been decreasing since probably about 1990. I could get the figures for the full 19 years.

Senator MURRAY—So it is not a security consequence?

Ms Penfold—I would not like to assert that either way. It is possible that there was some impact from the security changes. It is possible, for instance, that there was a temporary impact while we were doing such a lot of building work on the security changes. Whatever it was, I think it was part of a larger trend which I suspect reflects the fact that a lot of visitors, especially Australians, came here after the building was finished to have a look; and, once they had been here and had a look, they did not need to come back. Visitor numbers started back in the early days at about a million a year. In heading for 20 million visitors in 20 years, we are running out of a local customer base. But we will get those figures for you and see whether there are any better trends.

Answer

In 1989, Parliament House's first full year of operation, 1,479,572 people visited the building. During 2006, 889,427 people visited Parliament House. Parliament House has seen a steady decline in the visitor numbers over almost 20 years of operation. The table below sets out the annual visitor numbers from 1988 to 2006, and the chart shows the trend in visitor numbers. These figures do not appear to provide grounds for asserting either that security changes have, or that they have not, affected visitor numbers.

Note that "visitor" numbers cover everyone who enters Parliament House via the main front entrance. This includes some building occupants, and some visitors who come to Parliament House for official, work or social purposes rather than as tourists.

Visitor numbers—Parliament House 1988–2006

Year	Number of visitors
1988	1,213,024
1989	1,479,452
1990	1,251,860
1991	1,329,555
1992	1,340,129
1993	1,394,608
1994	1,337,449
1995	1,259,807
1996	1,229,679
1997	1,176,818
1998	1,161,323
1999	1,139,366
2000	1,069,853
2001	1,141,357
2002	1,121,586
2003	1,004,986
2004	912,546
2005	899,523
2006	889,427

