

Department/Agency: Department of the Senate

Topic: Cross-departmental cooperation

Senator: Senator **Ronaldson**

Question reference number: 7

Type of question: Written

Question

In reference to Proof Hansard, 15 October 2012, pp. 13-14, if cross-departmental cooperation can be attained with respect to ICT:

- a. Is the department consulting with other parliamentary departments to produce a whole-of-Parliament cooperative plan in other areas, such as infrastructure and facility upgrades, sharing of resources and databases, repairs, service provision to Members, Senators and their staff and joint cost reduction measures?**

Answer

The Senate department consults regularly with the other parliamentary departments in relation to infrastructure and facility upgrades, sharing of resources and databases (where appropriate), repairs, service provision to Members, Senators and their staff and joint cost reduction measures.

Regular consultation occurs with the Department of Parliamentary Services which has the primary responsibility for infrastructure and facilities, and planning thereof. In relation to support for the operations of the chambers and committees of both Houses, and the participation of members and senators in those proceedings, the chamber departments have worked cooperatively for many years developing and sharing support systems, and coordinating resource sharing in such areas as joint committee support, parliamentary education and inter-parliamentary relations, consistent with the constitutional independence of the Houses.

- b. Are there already some existing cross-departmental cooperative measures in place for the whole Parliament, other than ICT, that the department can outline?**

Answer

Yes, there is a range of existing cross departmental co-operative measures in place for the whole of Parliament (other than ICT), starting with formal and informal consultations and meetings of heads of the parliamentary departments on matters of cross-departmental interest.

The principal co-ordination committee is the Senior Management Co-ordination Group (SMCG), the membership of which includes the Usher of the Black Rod, the Serjeant-at-Arms, and senior representatives of the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Parliamentary Budget Office. SMCG's terms of reference relevant to this question include:

- co-ordinating, where appropriate, corporate and related matters of common concern to the parliamentary departments;

- developing, where appropriate, a common approach to corporate issues in each of the parliamentary departments;
- identifying, and seeking to reduce, where appropriate, duplication of corporate functions and responsibilities across the parliamentary departments; and
- overseeing co-ordination of common procurement activity.

Other cross-departmental co-operative measures in place for the whole of Parliament (other than for ICT) include:

- the Security Management Board which advises the Presiding Officers on security policy, and the management of security measures, for Parliament House;
- the Project Assessment Committee which reviews and prioritises project requests received by DPS on a whole-of-Parliament basis; and
- the Heritage Advisory Board which makes recommendations to the Presiding Officers on heritage policies and major heritage issues and provides advice and guidance to the Parliamentary departments (on behalf of the Presiding Officers) on heritage issues and policy.

There are also a range of lower-level project boards supervising parliamentary projects including (for example) the Table Office Production System (a joint project of both chamber departments to redevelop a shared Document Production System that assists directly with the Department's management of parliamentary business) and the Venue Management System which is a joint project to redevelop various legacy systems used by the chamber departments and DPS for booking rooms and school visits.

- c. Will the department consider further ways in which it can take cross-parliamentary department measures to improve infrastructure, facilities, services, etc for the whole Parliament? If so, can the department advise as to what measures it has taken to:**
- i. Make improvements for the whole Parliament in cooperation with other parliamentary departments? and/or**
 - ii. Set up processes through which the department can cooperate with other parliamentary departments to make improvements for the whole Parliament?**

Answer

Yes, the Senate Department will continue to consider further ways in which it can take cross-parliamentary departmental measures to improve infrastructure, facilities, services etc for the whole of Parliament. The changes to ICT for example, present a significant opportunity in this regard. In particular, the department has sought to establish service level agreements for key services with DPS to improve delivery and clarify expectations. While these requests have not been agreed in the past, the fact that service standards have been established on other cross parliamentary ventures indicates that this issue can be revisited.

It should also be noted that while co-operation and the avoidance of duplication is important, clear lines of responsibility are also required and there will always be some tasks that are best handled by DPS and others by the respective chamber departments.