



Report

Parliament House Visitor Study

2012



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Report Details

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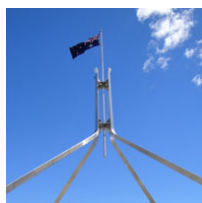
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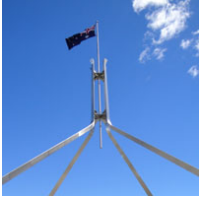
1. Executive Summary

The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) commissioned this study to support forward planning that will ensure that Visitor Services continues to meet the needs of visitors effectively.

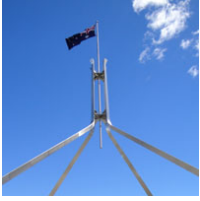
The study collected data from visitor surveys (n=201), a online teacher survey (n=55) and visitor observation/tracking.

Key findings

- A third (31%) of visitors were from overseas and are likely to have low levels of knowledge about Australian Parliament.
- Half (58%) the visitors had been to Parliament House before.
- The reasons for visiting fall into three main types which offer different kinds of visitor experience.
 - **The experience of being there** – the drawcards are the building itself, its iconic status, the architecture and art works.
 - **The wish to learn about a topic** – the drawcards are information about the political process; the experience of Question Time and seeing a specific display.
 - **The social experience of being with others** – the drawcards are spending time with family/friends; showing others around; going to the café.
- The most popular activities at Parliament House were visits to the two Chambers (Reps, 83% and Senate, 66%), clearly these spaces are at the heart of the meaning of the place. The shop is located close to the exit which makes it very easy for most (70%) visitors to enter and browse.
- The roof of Parliament House is a key feature and allows visitors to appreciate the pivotal location of the building in the surrounding landscape, so it has strong appeal to visitors and 43% visited it.
- A fifth (21%) said they had joined a Guided Tour. It is interesting to see that repeat visitors were just as likely as first time visitors to join a Guided Tour.



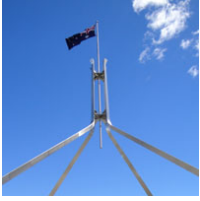
- Only one-third (30%) had visited the Viewing Room.
- 96% said they preferred to wander and discover for themselves, while 73% said they like to have tour guides show them around.
- 80% said that maps and floorplans are essential, only 56% received a floorplan during their visit.
- On the overall rating score, nearly half (38%) gave the highest score of 5, and 87% gave a combined 4+5 score. This compares very favourably with major Australian museums and galleries.
- The survey gauged visitor perceptions of important events at Parliament House. The findings indicate that many people arrive at Parliament House with little knowledge of specific events that have occurred here. Two key events were recalled most often: the 2008 Apology and State visits from President Obama and Queen Elizabeth.
- There was considerable interest in thematic tours/interpretive materials, such as: history, Indigenous, Artist, Migrant, Children's Trail.
- Detailed positive comments and suggested improvements are presented in Section 4 of the report.
- The tracking study notes that:
 - On entering the Foyer, many visitors were met by a Visitor Services host.
 - The Visitor Guide could be enhanced by including suggestions for a self-guided tour that covers the main highlights of the building.
 - Section 5 outlines some suggested improvements to the floorplan.
- The Teacher Survey included teachers of primary and high school classes from across Australia, with a preponderance from Victoria.
- Most teachers (95%) said they received accurate information and that the booking process met their requirements.
- There was considerable interest in pre-visit resources, especially printed resources that include visual elements and activities, and DVDs.



- Most teachers visited Parliament House in order to give students the living experience of how the Australian Parliament works and to link the visit with specific curriculum studies.
- At Parliament House, most participants (85%) participated in the parliamentary role-play and most (79%) attended the hospitality area.
- It is encouraging to see that 70% of the sample said the visit met all their expectations and that 32% of teachers reported pleasant surprises.
- The Australian War Memorial was the most widely visited (94%) attraction, followed by Questacon (83%) and the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House (81%).
- Detailed positive comments and suggested improvements are presented in Section 6 of the report.

This Study presents the following implications for consideration.

- To cater for the range of visiting styles, Parliament House should review the interpretive materials it offers for self-directed 'wanderers'. Guided tours should be reviewed to ensure they meet the needs of different types of visitors.
- New interpretive materials should align with the emotions of pride and gratitude as well as an appreciation for beauty and the strengths of Australian society.
- It is likely that The Apology could bear the weight of a strong interpretive presentation at Parliament House. A reproduction of the calligraphy could be a meaningful addition to the shop.
- DPS should ensure that floorplans and self-guide brochures are on visible display in the foyer to facilitate self-service.
- A signage review should examine the visibility and prominence of directional signage inside and outside the building.
- DPS should consider locating Visitor Services staff outside the security entrance so that the first point of contact for visitors has the specific role to greet and assist them.



- DPS should consider developing interpretive material on a range of themes. Each guide should cover core material along with an additional focus on thematic material.



2. Background to this study

The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) is committed to ensuring that:

(a) Visitor Services at Parliament House are dynamic in meeting the needs, expectations and evolving profile of visitors and stakeholders now and into the future; and

(b) resources allocated to the Visitor Services are used effectively to offer a range of services.

DPS commissioned this visitor study to provide up-to-date and relevant information about the visitor experience and to note changes since the 2011 visitor study.

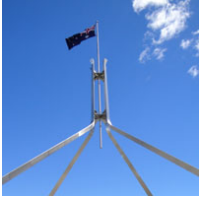
Research Method

We carried out three strands of data collection.

1. Onsite interviews with a sample of 201 visitors. On a base of 200, reported findings are accurate to within approximately +/-6%.
2. Site visit including observation and 'mystery shopping'. We carried out two days of observation that involved participation in five tours, tracking five visitor groups and observation at three points: Forecourt, Foyer and First Floor.
3. Online survey of school visitors. The sample size was 54.

Questionnaires were developed in association with DPS and copies are in the Appendix.

Interviewing was carried out by fully trained and experienced market research interviewers.

**About this report**

Interview dates: 20 Feb - 4 March, and covered both Sitting Days and Non Sitting Days.

Interviews: 201 Adults (16+ years)

Margin of error at 95% confidence level – $\pm 6.9\%$ on a base of 200; $\pm 13.9\%$ on a base of 50.

NOTE: Totals may occasionally sum to more than 100 percent due to rounding.



3. Discussion

3.1 Reasons to visit

The reasons for visiting fell into three main categories which relate to different kinds of visitor experience.

- **The experience of being there** – the drawcards are the building itself, its iconic status, the architecture and art works.
- **The wish to learn about a topic** – the drawcards are information about the political process; the experience of Question Time and seeing a specific display.
- **The social experience of being with others** – the drawcards are spending time with family/friends; showing others around; going to the café.

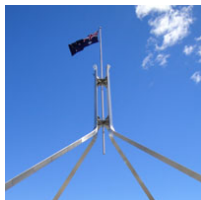
It is clear that the iconic status of Parliament House and its architecture were the dominant reasons for visiting. For most visitors the building fulfilled their high expectations.

When asked to nominate the most important things they experienced at Parliament House, many visitors referred to emotional qualities of pride and gratitude as well as admiration for beauty and quality of workmanship.

Implication

A review of Visitor Services should ensure that these different kinds of needs are supported by an appropriate array of services.

New interpretive materials should align with the emotions of pride and gratitude as well as an appreciation for beauty and the strengths of Australian society.



3.2 Guided tours and self-guided exploration

Nearly all visitors agreed that they were happy to wander and discover things for themselves at Parliament House and a similar proportion said they preferred to soak in the atmosphere.

Three-quarters said that maps and floorplans are essential for them, and a similar proportion said they liked to have guides to show them around.

Implication

To cater for the range of visiting styles, Parliament House should review the interpretive materials it offers for self-directed 'wanderers'. Guided tours should be reviewed to ensure they meet the needs of different types of visitors.

3.3 Important events

The survey gauged visitor perceptions of important events at Parliament House. The findings indicate that many people arrive at Parliament House with little knowledge of specific events that have occurred here. They expect that their visit will inform them about important events.

Key events were recalled most often: the 2008 Apology, ceremonial hosting of heads of State, President Obama and Queen Elizabeth, along with recent dramatic political events.

Those who remember key events expect that these events will be acknowledged in some way during their visit. For example, the prominent painting of Queen Elizabeth in the Wattle Dress is a reminder of her constitutional and ceremonial role. Similarly, The Apology is acknowledged by a small display that includes a fine calligraphy of the speech. In observation, we noted that this display was overlooked by most visitors.



Implication

It is likely that The Apology could bear the weight of a strong interpretive presentation at Parliament House.

A reproduction of the calligraphy could be a meaningful addition to the shop.

3.4 Wayfinding

Visitors reported that they did not find places such as access to the roof and the Magna Carta exhibition.

Three-quarters (80%) said that maps and floorplans were essential but only 56% received a floorplan during their visit.

Implication

DPS should ensure that floorplans and self-guide brochures are on visible display in the foyer to facilitate self-service.

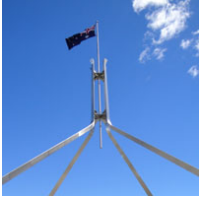
DPS should develop a range of interpretive guides that support self-directed exploration.

The body of this report suggests specific improvements to the current floorplan.

A signage review should examine the visibility and prominence of directional signage inside and outside the building.

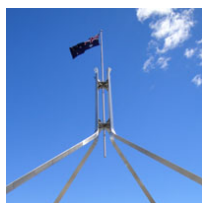
3.5 Thematic guides/tours

Visitors were receptive to a variety of thematic guides/tours. A general historical perspective had the widest appeal, along with an Indigenous perspective, an Artist's perspective, and a Children's Trail.



Implication

DPS should consider developing a range of self-guided tour brochures on a range of themes. Each guide should cover core material along with an additional focus on thematic material.



4. Visitor survey findings

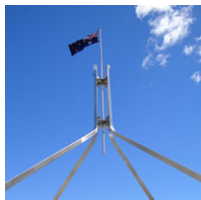
This section reports the findings from the exit survey and the online survey of general visitors.

1. Profile of visitors

The following table summarises the demographic profile of visitors.

Table 1. Demographic profile

	2012 (n=201)	2011 (n=200)
Residence		
Local	18%	12%
Australia	51%	61%
Overseas	31%	27%
Age		
Under 35	31%	35%
35-54	27%	38%
55+	40%	27%
Gender		
Female	50%	42%
Male	50%	59%
Occupation		
Skilled/Trade/Unskilled	11%	9%
Clerical/Admin/Sales	10%	12%
Professional	37%	45%
Looking for work	3%	1%
Home duties	2%	3%
Student	12%	16%
Retired	23%	15%
Education		
Primary/Secondary	21%	22%
TAFE/CIT	18%	16%
UNI - undergrad	39%	38%
UNI - postgrad	21%	25%



Comments

The profile of visitors was similar in 2012 and 2011. The differences are mostly within the usual sampling fluctuations. It is notable that the sample in 2012 was older and more likely to include retirees.

Residence

Most visitors (69%) were non-local Australians. It is likely that the proportion of overseas visitors is under-represented because only people with good English language skills participated in the survey.

Age

Visitors represented a spread of age groups. The proportion of older (55+ years) visitors is typical for major Australian museums and galleries.

Gender

The gender profile included an equal proportion of men and women.

Occupation

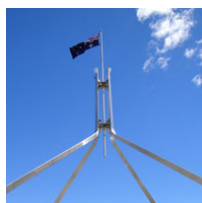
A broad range of occupational types were present, however there were few unemployed or engaged in home duties.

Education

The education profile is similar to visitor profiles for major Australian museums and galleries.

Comment

Overseas visitors comprise a high proportion of visitors. They will benefit from interpretive materials that include basic information with little assumed knowledge.



2. Character of a visit

This section describes key characteristics of a visit: repeat visits, length of visit, visit companions, reasons for visiting, things seen/ done.

2.1 Repeat visits

About half (58%) of visitors were making their first visit to Parliament House, while 42% were repeat visitors. The following differences were evident in key sub-groups.

- 78% of Canberra visitors were repeat visitors
- 48% of other Australian visitors were repeat visitors
- 11% of overseas visitors were repeat visitors

Most repeat visitors had visited Parliament House only a few times in the previous five years. Canberra residents were more likely to have visited 4+ times. In 2012, there were a higher proportion of Canberra visitors in the sample, and this is reflected in the higher proportion of more frequent visitors in 2012.

Table 2. Previous visits

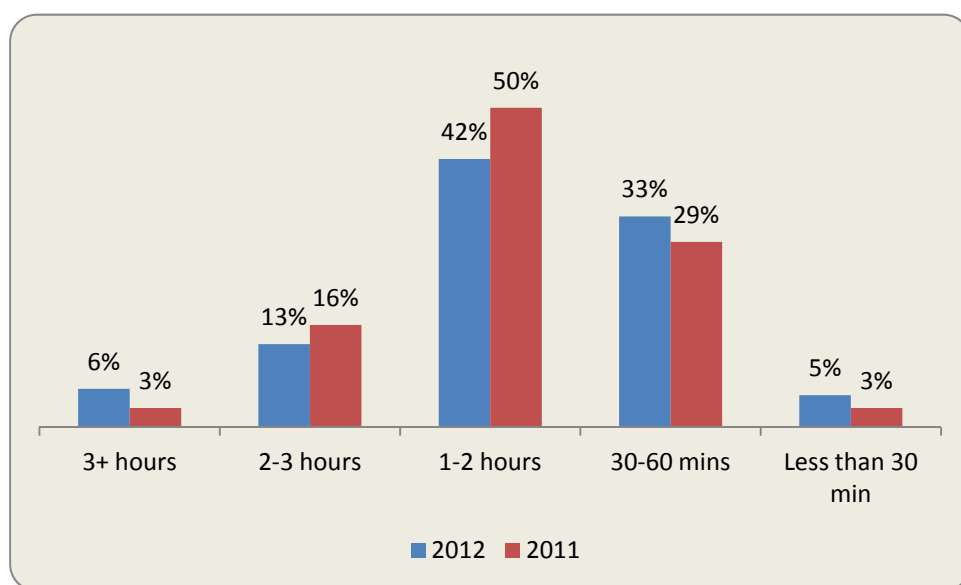
	2012 (84)	2011 (90)
Once	18%	36%
Twice	29%	23%
Three times	20%	18%
Four + times	33%	23%



2.2 Length of visit

Visitors were asked how long they stayed at Parliament House. The following graph summarises the data.

Fig 1. Length of visit



Base = 2012 (201), 2011 (200)

The length of visit was similar in 2012 and 2011.

Half (42%) the visitors stayed 1-2 hours, while 33% made shorter visits of 30-60 minutes and 13% stayed 2-3 hours.

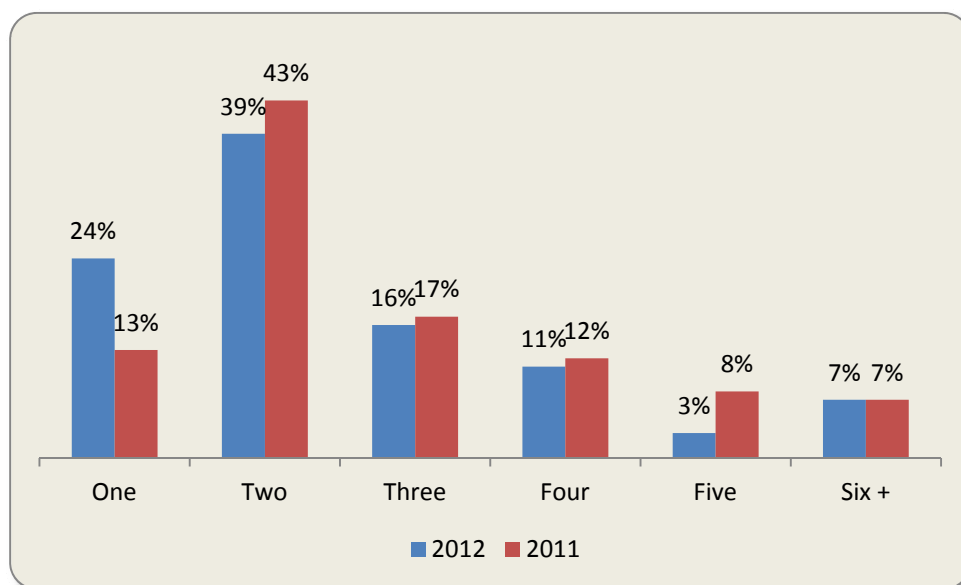
It was interesting to note that this pattern was the same for first time visitors and repeat visitors. The average length of visit was longer for non-local Australians, older people, people who visited on Sitting Days, and people who did not use a guide map.



2.3 Visit companions

The following graph shows the size of visiting groups.

Fig 2. Size of visiting group



Base = 2012 (201), 2011 (200)

The 2012 sample included a higher proportion of solo visitors (24%).

It is clear that the couple/pair was the most common visiting group, comprising 39% of visitors in our survey. Note that our survey did not include school groups, and it is likely that tour groups are under-represented in the sample.

One-tenth (11%) of visitors had children under 12 years with them.

Lone visitors were more likely to:

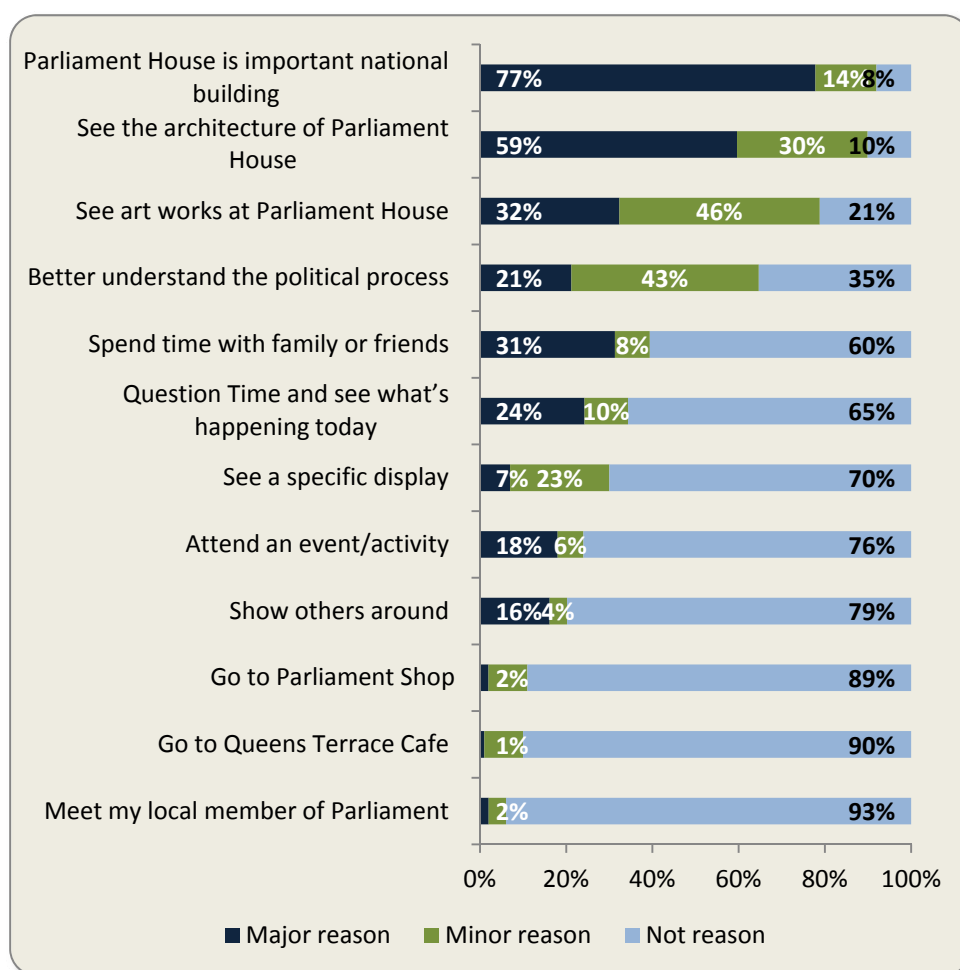
- Be repeat visitors
- Be under 35 years
- Visit when Parliament was sitting.



2.4 Reasons for visiting

Survey participants were asked whether 12 factors were contributing reasons for their visit. They were asked whether each one was a 'major' reason, a 'minor' reason or not a reason for their visit. The following graph summarises the findings.

Fig 3. Reasons for visiting Parliament House



Base = 2012 (201), 2011 (200)

The reasons for visiting fall into three main types which offer different kinds of visitor experience.



- **The experience of being there** – the drawcards are the building itself, its iconic status, the architecture and art works.
- **The wish to learn about a topic** – the drawcards are information about the political process; the experience of Question Time and seeing a specific display.
- **The social experience of being with others** – the drawcards are spending time with family/friends; showing others around; going to the café.

It is clear that the iconic status of Parliament House and its architecture were the dominant reasons for visiting.

These visitors were more likely to be making their first visit, more likely to come from overseas, more likely to use the map/brochure and more likely to come when Parliament was not sitting.

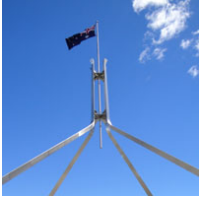
Those who came to see Question Time were more likely to be Australians (non-Canberra) making a repeat visit.

Those seeking to better understand the political process were more likely to be first time visitors from Australia (non-Canberra) and Overseas.

Those who wanted to spend time with family and friends, and those who were showing others around, were more likely to be repeat visitors from Canberra.

Apart from the broad desire to see the place as a whole, the following factors gave Parliament House niche appeal to smaller numbers of visitors.

- To meet my local member of Parliament
- To attend an event/activity
- To go to Queens Terrace Cafe
- To go to Parliament Shop
- To watch Question Time and see what's happening today
- To see a specific display



The pattern of responses was similar in 2011.

Comment

Visitors seek three kinds of experience at Parliament House:

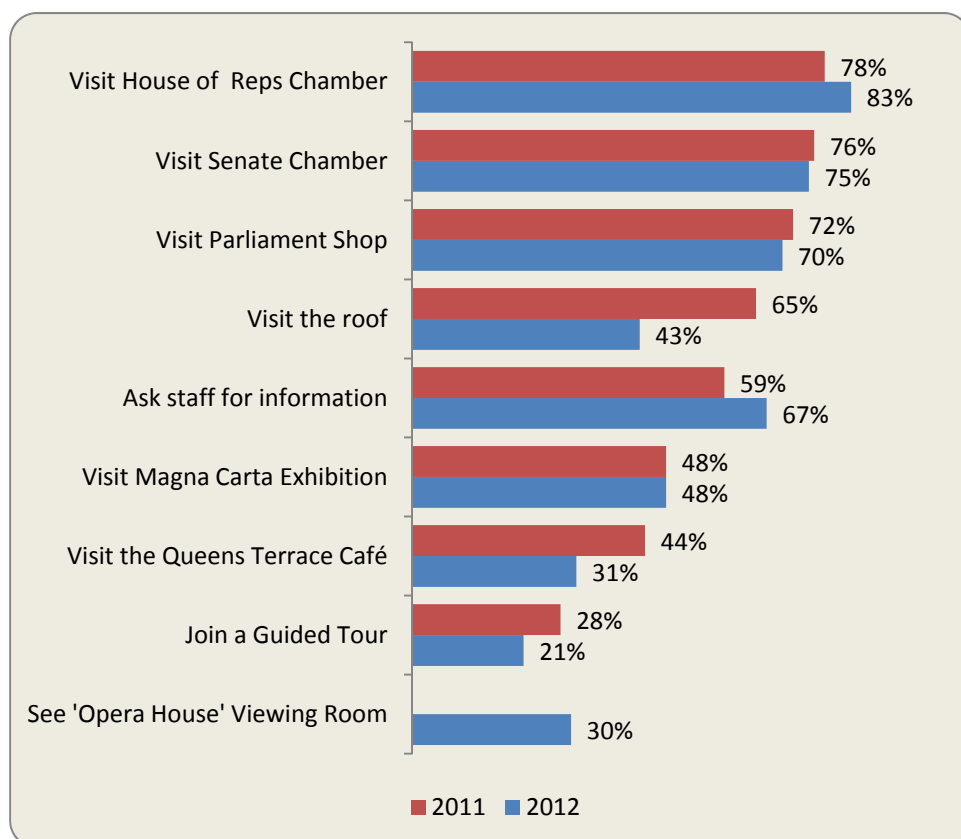
- The experience of being there
- The wish to learn about a topic
- The social experience of being with others.

2.5 Things done at Parliament House

Visitors were asked whether or not they did nine things during their visit. The following graph shows the extent to which these things were done.



Fig 4. Things done at Parliament House

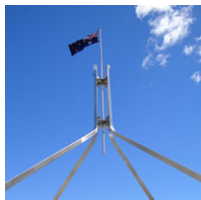


Base = 2012 (201), 2011 (200)

The overall pattern of activity was similar in 2011 and 2012, with the main difference that a smaller proportion of visitors visited the roof or the Café in 2012.

It is not surprising to see that the most popular (83/75%) activities were visits to the two Chambers, because these spaces are at the heart of the meaning of the place. The shop is located close to the exit which makes it very easy for most (70%) visitors to enter and browse.

The roof of Parliament House is a key feature and allows visitors to appreciate the pivotal location of the building in the surrounding landscape, so it appeals to visitors. Access is only by lift, and 43% of



visitors in the sample went to the roof in 2012, compared with 65% in 2011. This could be due to factors on the ground during the survey period, or be a quirk in the sample.

Two-thirds (67%) reported that they asked staff for information during their visit. In our observation, we noted that there were many conversations with security staff and staff at the upstairs cloak desk. We saw that 'meet and greet' staff at the front door welcomed a high proportion of visitors. Nevertheless it is likely that a notable proportion of interaction with staff happens with security personnel.

Nearly half (48%) said they visited the Magna Carta exhibition.

Nearly one-third (31%) said they had visited the Queens Terrace Café.

A fifth (21%) said they had joined a Guided Tour. It is interesting to see that repeat visitors were just as likely as first time visitors to join a Guided Tour. People who used a map/brochure were as likely as others to join a Guided Tour.

One-third (30%) had visited the Viewing Room.

Implications

In addition to Visitor Services staff, security personnel play an important role in ensuring that visitors' needs are met.

2.6 Use of map/guide book

Half (56%) visitors used the Parliament House map or brochure. This compares with 49% in 2011. A minority (7%) used a published guide. Four in ten (42%) visitors used no interpretive guides or maps. The use of maps/brochures was slightly higher for first time visitors, but still 40% of them did not use a map/brochure.



In observation, we noted that there were more 'meet and greet' guides in the main hall than in 2011 and they were active in engaging with visitors. We observed many visitors who entered the Hall took time to pause to take their bearings. They often took photos and explored the area before going up one of the staircases.

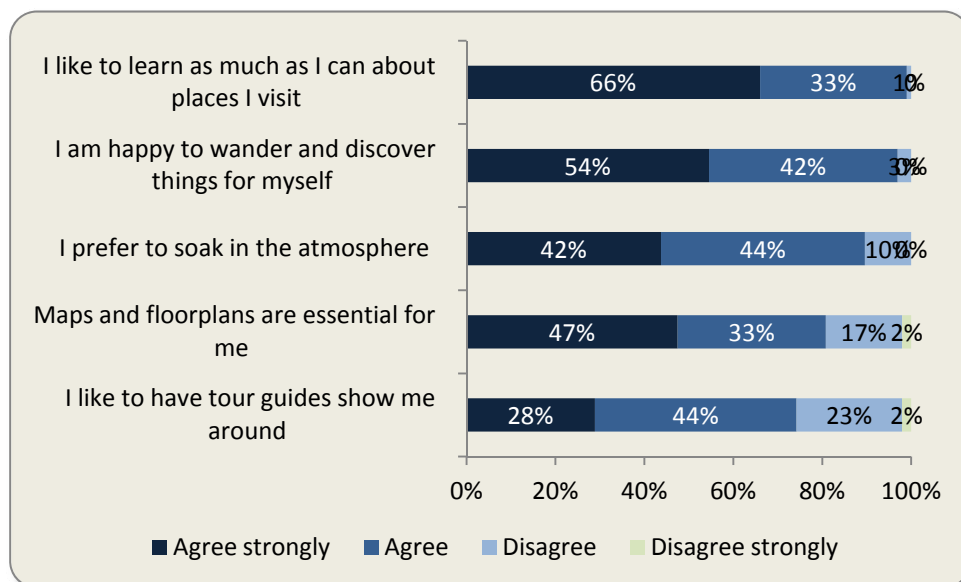
Implication

The addition of more 'meet and greet' staff may have boosted the proportion of visitors who have a Visitor Guide with floorplan.

2.7 Preferred visiting style

Visitors were asked to show their agreement with five statements about preferred ways to visit Parliament House. The statements were not mutually exclusive and visitors could agree with several statements. The following graph shows the responses.

Fig 5. Preferred visiting style



Base = 2012 (201), 2011 (200)



Most people (99% agreed + agreed strongly) said that they liked to learn as much as they can about the places they visit. This should not be taken literally, but as a strong indication that visits to places like Parliament House are seen as learning experiences.

There was similarly high agreement with the idea of wandering and discovering, with 96% who agreed (agreed + agreed strongly).

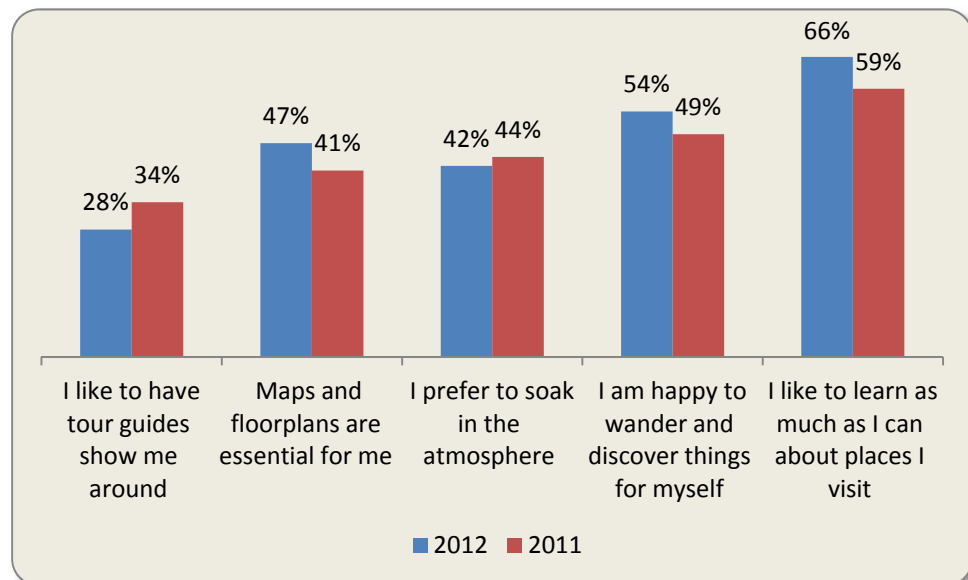
A strong majority (86% agreed + agreed strongly) said they preferred to soak in the atmosphere.

Three-quarters (80% agreed + agreed strongly) said that maps and floorplans are essential for them. This was stronger for first time visitors and those who used a map/brochure.

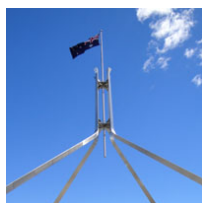
Finally, three-quarters (72% agreed + agreed strongly) said that they liked to have guides to show them around.

These results are similar to 2011. The following graph shows the 'Agree Strongly' data for 2011 and 2012.

Fig 6. 'Agree Strongly' for preferred style of visiting



Base = 2012 (201), 2011 (200)



2.8 Travel

The survey asked participants about transport and car parking. As the following table shows, most people travelled by car, though less than in 2011.

Table 3. Transport

	2012 (201)	2011 (200)
Car	72%	92%
Walk/Cycle	12%	0%
Bus	11%	4%
Other	4%	4%

Most (79%) of those who came by car parked at Parliament House, while 18% parked in nearby streets and 3% parked elsewhere.

The following table shows that visitors in 2012 found parking easier than visitors in 2011.

Table 4. Ease of parking

	2012 (201)	2011 (200)
Very easy	71%	41%
Quite easy	14%	32%
Quite difficult	10%	23%
Very difficult	6%	5%



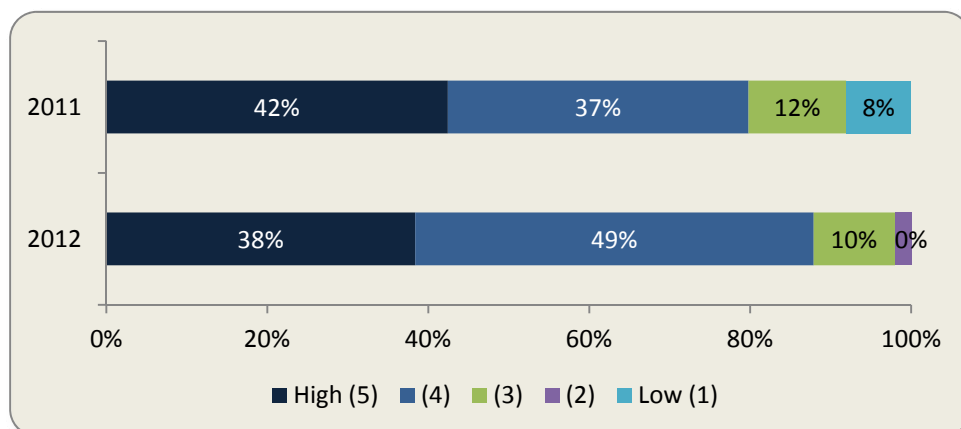
3. Perceptions of the visiting experience

This section discusses rating of the visitor experience, perceived strengths and suggested improvements.

3.1 Rating

Visitors were asked to rate the exhibition on a scale of 1 to 5. The following graph shows the results for 2011 and 2012.

Fig 7. Overall visitor experience



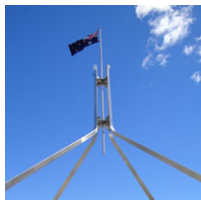
Base = 2012 (201), 2011 (200)

Rating of the overall visitor experience was very strong in both years. The overall positive rating (4+5) was 79% in 2011 and rose to 87% in 2012.

Rating benchmark

The rating can be compared with the following results from Australian museums and exhibitions.

- At the 2005 Museums Australia Conference, Lynda Kelly reported that visitor surveys in 10 regional museums in NSW included this question.



The average rating across all the museums was 87% for the 4 + 5 category.

- An iconic exhibition at a national institution in Canberra in 2001 recorded a rating of 96% for the 4 + 5 category. Other exhibitions at the same location have recorded ratings of 88% (2002), 94% (2005) and 96% (2001).
- Two special interest exhibitions at the National Museum in 2008 recorded ratings of 94% for the 4+5 category.
- A national institution in Canberra recorded an average rating of 98% for the 4 + 5 category across 12 months of visitor surveys.
- Museums in Queensland scored 83%, 90%, 96% and 97% for the 4 + 5 category in visitor surveys across a 12 month period in 2005-6.
- At one of Australia's State museums, the following scores were recorded for the 4 + 5 category.

Major exhibition with entry fee (2006)	87%
Major exhibition with entry fee (2005)	90%
Modest exhibition (2005)	90%
Family-oriented exhibition (2005)	83%
Overall visit(2005)	90%

Factors that influence exhibition ratings

In our experience, some factors that influence the ratings that audiences give exhibitions are:

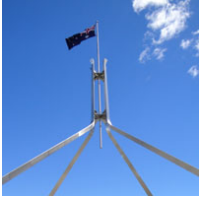
Free or paid entry. Free entry places tend to rate more favourably.

Purposeful or accidental visitors. Exhibitions that attract visitors who come intentionally are likely to score higher. Many accidental visitors (those who stumble across an exhibition) are simply not very interested in the subject, though a proportion will be pleasantly surprised.

Scale. Larger exhibitions/museums tend to rate more favourably than smaller places.

Significance. Unique/rare, valuable or significant items or subjects tend to rate more favourably.

Presentation. Well-designed exhibitions with professional interpretive devices tend to rate more favourably.



Environmental factors. Detrimental factors like crowding or noise can reduce ratings.

Audience demographic. Older people tend to rate things more favourably (perhaps they recall simpler times). Audiences with less experience of major museums tend to give higher ratings. Non-Canberra people often give higher ratings for exhibitions in Canberra than local residents.

Promotion. Exhibitions that are promoted to their 'natural audience' are rated more favourably than those that attract people who are not particularly engaged by the subject or presentation. Places that are over-promoted can disappoint audiences and get a lower rating than they might otherwise get.

Parliament House conforms to many of the factors that lean towards higher ratings: it has free entry; visitors make a deliberate decision to visit; large and important scale; well-presented; pleasant environment; and it is promoted to its natural audience. It is not surprising that it is rated so positively.

Comment

Ratings for Parliament House are in line with the best Australian cultural attractions.



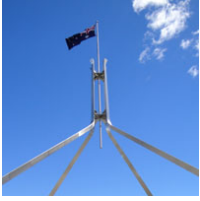
3.2 Best things about the visit

Visitors were asked to nominate the BEST THINGS about their visit, in their own words. Responses were grouped by topic and the following graph shows the main topics.

Fig 8. Best Things about the visit



Base = 201. Percentages add to more than 100, due to multiple responses.



It is rewarding to see that the main themes emerging here are central to the meaning of the place – the Chambers, the impressive building, the ease of access and the setting within the Canberra landscape.

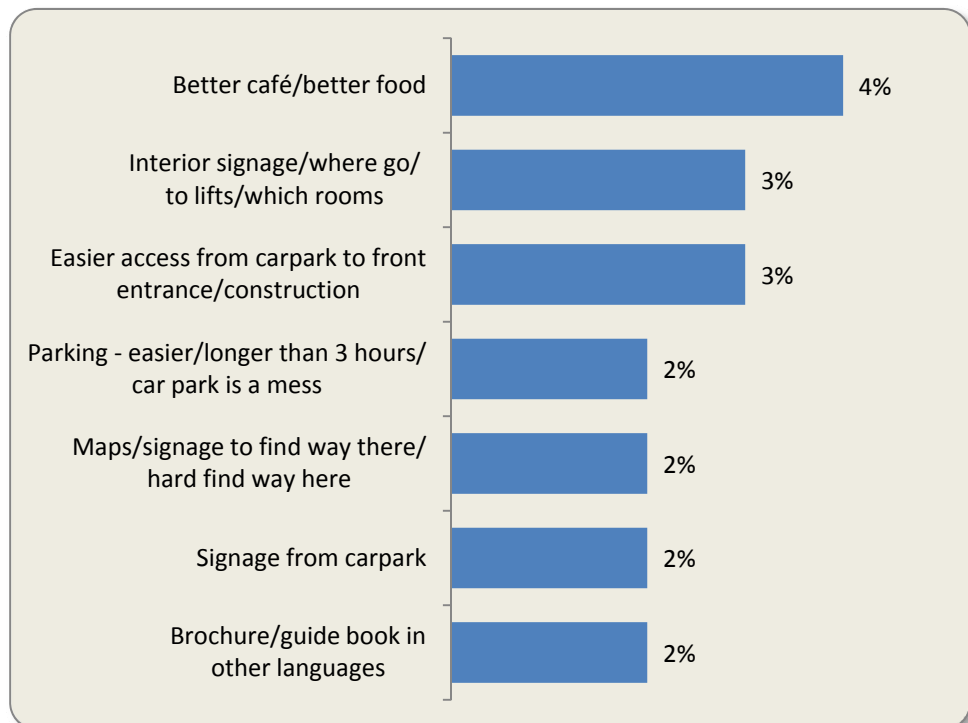
It is also rewarding to see that 11% mentioned the Guided Tour as one of the best things about their visit. Overall, 21% of people joined a Guided Tour and it is clear that the tour had a memorable impact for a high proportion of them.



3.3 Suggested improvements

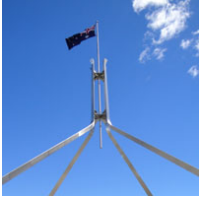
Visitors were asked to suggest IMPROVEMENTS that would make Parliament House better for visitors, in their own words. Most people (58%) had no suggestions to make. Responses were grouped by topic and the following graph shows the main topics. In addition, there were a considerable number of individual comments that could not be grouped.

Fig 9. Suggested Improvements



Base = 201.

Many of the comments related to issues with wayfinding and people suggested that internal and external wayfinding signs could be better.

**Comment**

It is important to recognise that suggestions are useful for identifying underlying problems. Visitors may suggest signage as a solution to a difficulties they had finding things or places. This is an indication that wayfinding is an issue that should be studied in more detail before applying appropriate remedies that may not necessarily involve signage.



4. Value and Importance

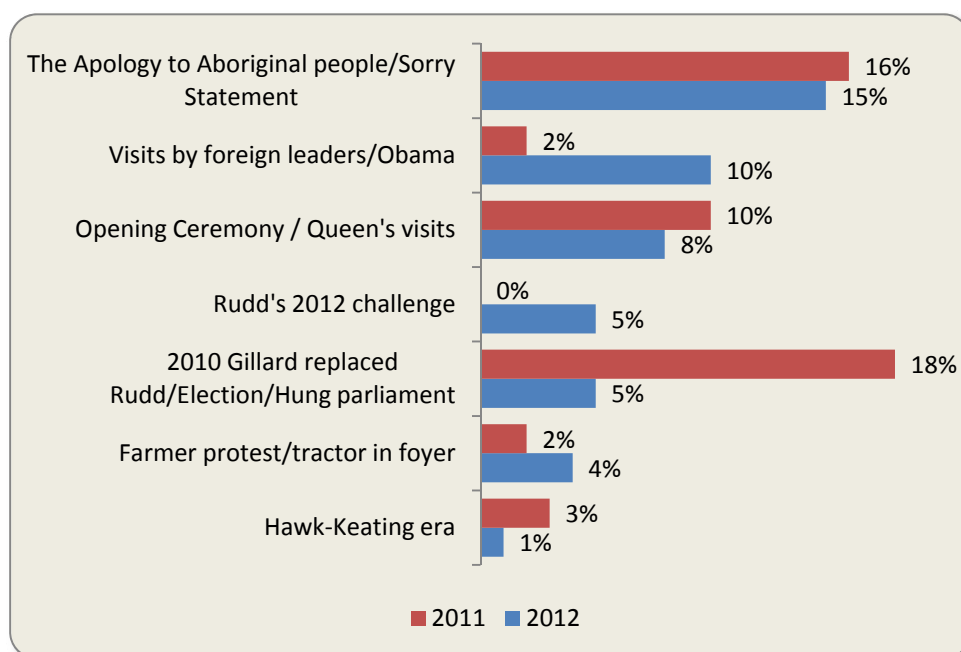
This section discusses visitor perceptions about important events at Parliament House, and their own experience during the visit.

4.1 Events since 1988

The survey asked people to nominate what events since 1988 at Parliament House stood out in their memory. These memories will give an indication of what visitors may expect to encounter at Parliament House.

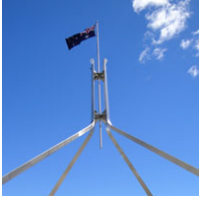
Responses were grouped into topics and summarised in the following graph.

Fig 10. Memorable events at Parliament House



Base = 2012 (201), 2011 (200)

About one-third (39%) said they could not think of any memorable events. This was higher for overseas visitors (61%); first time visitors (49%); and people under 35 years of age (56%). To some extent, this indicates levels of



awareness of Australian political events. It is not surprising that recent events dominated suggestions.

Among those events nominated, the dramatic 2010 political change when Julia Gillard replaced Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister and the following election that took so long for a government to be formed was the most widely recalled (18%) in 2011 but faded quickly to only 5% in 2012.

In contrast, the 2009 Apology continues to be strongly remembered and was the highest profile event in the current survey. Other ceremonial visits were also recalled: President Obama (10%) and Queen Elizabeth (8%).

Comment

It is clear that recent events were most widely recalled than distant ones. The political events of 2010 are fading into memory. In contrast, a powerful symbolic ceremony like The Apology is staying in the public memory.

Many people arrive at Parliament House with little knowledge of specific events that have occurred here. They expect that their visit will inform them about important events.

Those who remember key events expect that these events will be acknowledged in some way during their visit. For example, the prominent painting of Queen Elizabeth in the Wattle Dress is a reminder of her constitutional and ceremonial role. Similarly, The Apology is acknowledged by a small display that includes a fine calligraphy of the speech. In observation, we noted that this display was overlooked by most visitors.

It is likely that The Apology could bear the weight of a strong interpretive presentation at Parliament House.

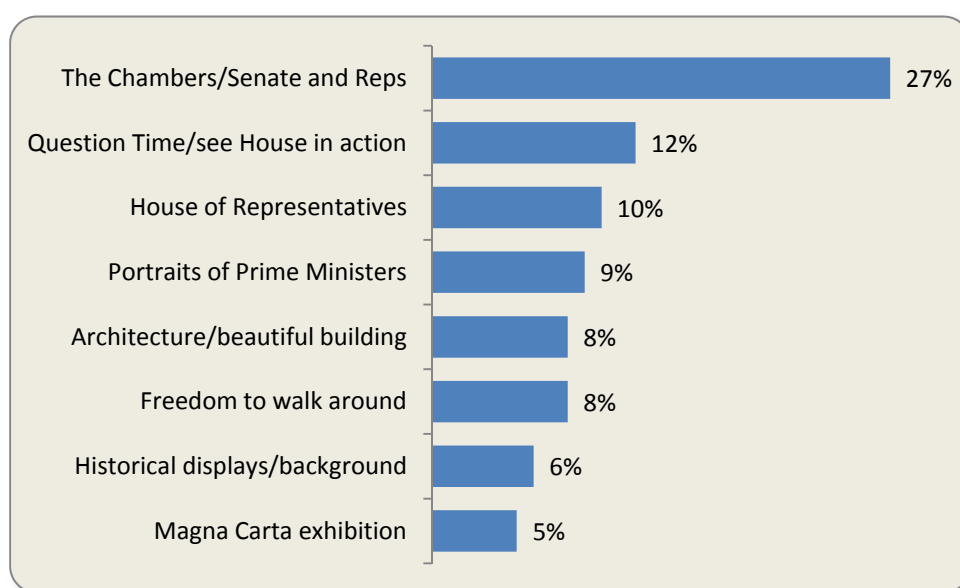


4.2 Important aspects of the personal visit

Visitors were asked to describe the things they had experienced in their visit that were most important to them personally.

Responses were grouped into topics and summarised in the following graph.

Fig 11. Important experiences in the visit

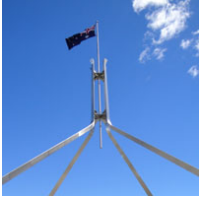


Base = 201

Many visitors commented on the core places in Parliament House, the two chambers (27%), or the House of Representatives (10%). The opportunity to see Question Time was also important (10%).

Visitors (8%) were impressed by the freedom to explore the public areas of the building in their own time as this allowed them to follow their interest and to absorb the experience.

The gallery spaces in the Members Hall with portraits of Prime Ministers were noted by 9% of visitors.



For others (6%), the most important aspect related to new understanding of the processes of the Australian government system, especially democracy.

The scale and architecture of the building and quality of fittings were the most important element for a proportion (8%) of visitors.

Comment

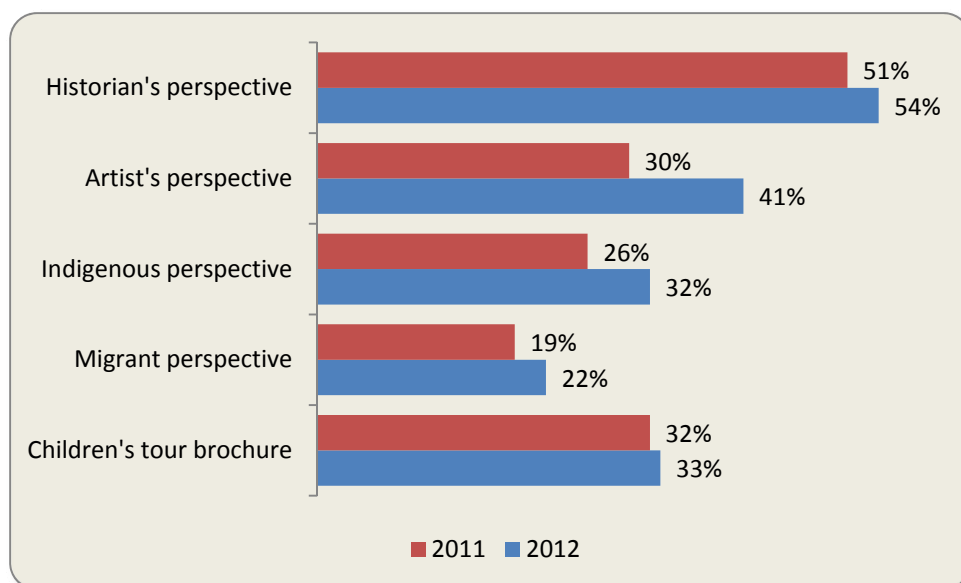
It is valuable to note that many of the comments related to emotions that were stirred by the visit. People experienced strong feelings of pride and gratitude as well as admiration for beauty and quality of workmanship. For many people, their visit to Parliament House evoked feelings that rose above partisan politics.



5. Interpretive Themes

The survey asked participants to rate their interest in five themes that could be used in self-guided brochures or guided tours. The following graph shows those who were very interested on a four-point scale.

Fig 12. Interest in Interpretive Themes (Very Interested)

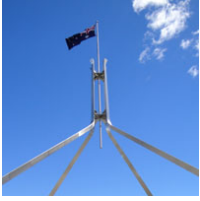


Base = 2011 (200). 2012 (201)

While interest levels varied between the suggestions, there was considerable interest in each of them. A broad historical perspective had the widest appeal (54%). Interest in an Artist's perspective or an Indigenous perspective was higher in 2012 than 2011.

Although only 11% of our sample were accompanied by children under 12 years, nevertheless one-third (33%) showed interest in having a children's brochure.

Interest in the different themes was fairly consistent across sub-groups with some exceptions.



- The Indigenous perspective was much more interesting to people under 35 years (78%) compared with people over 55 years (63%).
- A children's brochure was much more interesting to people who were more likely to have children with them, including weekend visitors (63%) and people over 35 years (61%).

Comments

The findings encourage the development of interpretive materials or tours that highlight different perspectives or aspects of Parliament House, while ensuring that core information is conveyed.

A children's tour brochure would be a very valuable addition to the resources available to visitors.



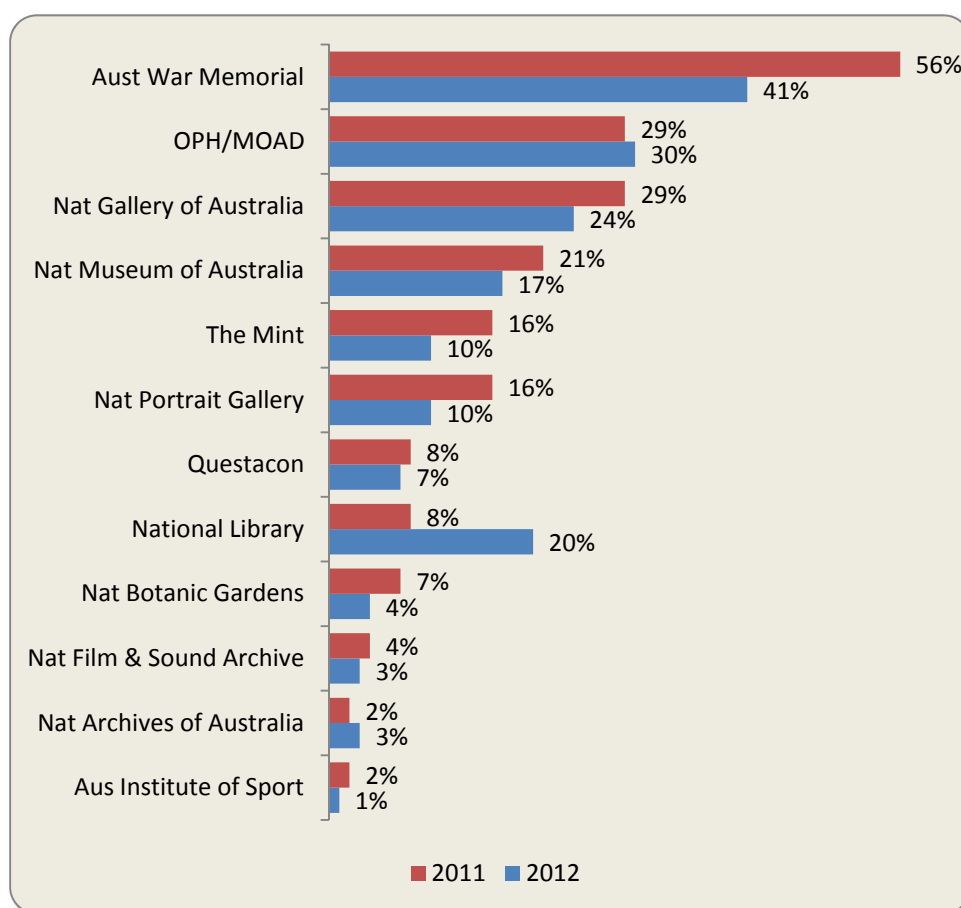
6. Other Canberra Attractions

The survey asked whether visitors planned to see other Canberra attractions on the day of their visit to Parliament House. Three-quarters (74%) planned to see another attraction on the same day.

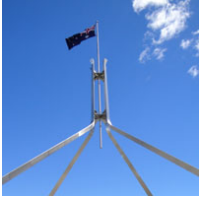
Most (56%) Canberra residents did not plan to visit other attractions.

The following graph shows where people went.

Fig 13. Other Attractions Visited



Base = 2011 (135). 2012 (148)

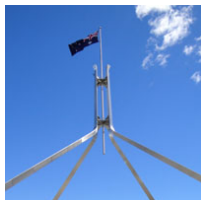


The findings confirm the strong appeal of the **Australian War Memorial** to Parliament House visitors (41 %).

The **National Gallery** (24 %) and **OPH/MOAD** (30 %) were well-frequented.

National Museum visitors (17 %) had a very different profile as they tended to be: First Time visitors (20 %); Overseas visitors (28 %); and those who came when Parliament was sitting (23 %) and at weekdays (18 %).

The main differences between 2011 and 2012 are that fewer people planned to visit the War Memorial, and more planned to visit the National Library, possibly to see the widely promoted *Handwritten* exhibition.



5. Site observations

This element of the research comprised two days of structured observations. We conducted participant observation of five guided tours, tracked five visitor groups, and observed visitor pathways and behaviour at key locations.

Observations and key findings are noted here.

Guided Tours

Visitors found the Guided Tour through conversations with staff and by discrete signage.

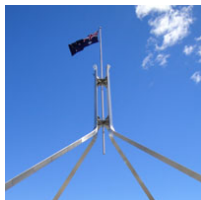
The Tours that we observed started on time and followed a set path that included the Chambers. Overall, the Guides were effective at establishing a connection with their visitors and fostered some exchange with individuals in the group or the group as a whole.

Guides appeared to have reasonable knowledge levels, though some errors were observed.

As well as taking people through key spaces in the building and giving interpretive information about locations, historical events and the working of Parliament, Guides pointed at other areas of the House that visitors might like to return to or explore independently.

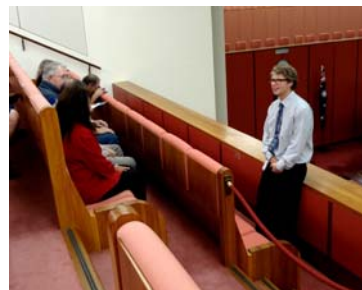
The guides we observed had their own individual style of presentation and this seemed to work well.





Some guides appeared to be less experienced or less relaxed in the role than others.

The better guides seemed to place less emphasis on running through facts and details. Instead, they brought an easy humour to the stories and information they presented.



Comment

There is scope for more experienced guides to mentor newer guides and help them improve their skills.

The content of the standard tour should be reviewed each year and re-calibrated to include salient events and activities.

Visitor Behaviour

We tracked the following visitor groups.

1. Young couple (30ish), toddler, and adult friend.
2. Couple, 50-60 years
3. Group of six adults with two young children (Asian)
4. Family with three pre-teen children
5. Couple, 50-60 years

In addition, we observed visitor behaviour in three locations:

- On entering the Foyer
- The Members Hall



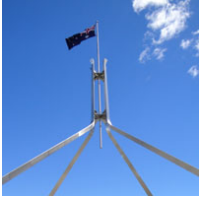
Following the typical path of a visiting group, we observed some common behaviours.

Foyer

- In the Foyer, we observed that most visitors were met by a staff member.



- Most visitors to orient and explore the space of the Foyer. After the formality of security screening, entry into the Foyer appeared to have a strong sense of arrival for many visitors.
- At busy times, staff at the Visitor Services desk were very pressed and could not give extended time to visitor queries.
- Some visitor groups spent considerable time in the Foyer, looking around, talking with each other and taking numerous photos/ videos of their group members with the Stairs or Foyer as background. This was a clear manifestation of a sense of arrival and pleasure in 'being there', simply experiencing the place, and recording the fact with photos.



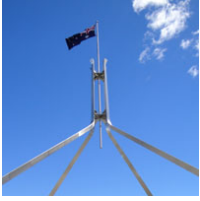
Comment

Prominent self-service racks for brochures and maps would relieve pressure on staff. Several venues (National Portrait Gallery, Old Parliament House and National Library come to mind) have a brochure rack along the face of the service desk. This allows those who simply want to pick up a map or brochure to do so, without cutting off the chance for contact with service staff. The visible brochures would help to signal that this is a service point for visitors.

At Parliament House, it would be helpful to provide similar racks at the Visitor Service desk, the Security Desk and perhaps also outside the Shop.

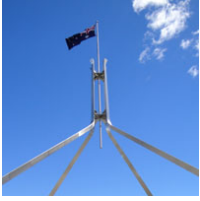
First Floor

- Visitors circulated around the First Floor in a relaxed manner, moving largely by line of sight from one point of interest to another. Visitors showed an easy curiosity by looking into doorways, looking at displays and artworks, and reading information labels. Those visitors with maps could be seen consulting them.



- It was clear that visitors enjoyed the freedom to wander and explore. Many visitors did not have a floorplan or brochure and they followed visual cues in the environment or asked staff (often Security staff). The displays in the free standing semi-enclosed display cases (e.g. The Apology) were overlooked by a high proportion of visitors.
- Once again, photography was an important way visitors engaged with the spaces and art works.





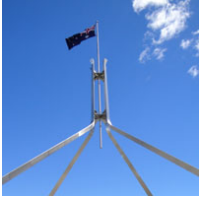
- The lounge areas were well-used and their location adjacent to toilets was convenient.



- Most visitors were observed to make a loop path around the First Floor, so that they went up one staircase in the Foyer and came down the opposite one. However, some visitors were observed to make a circuit of the Members Hall and then return to the foyer the way they had come.

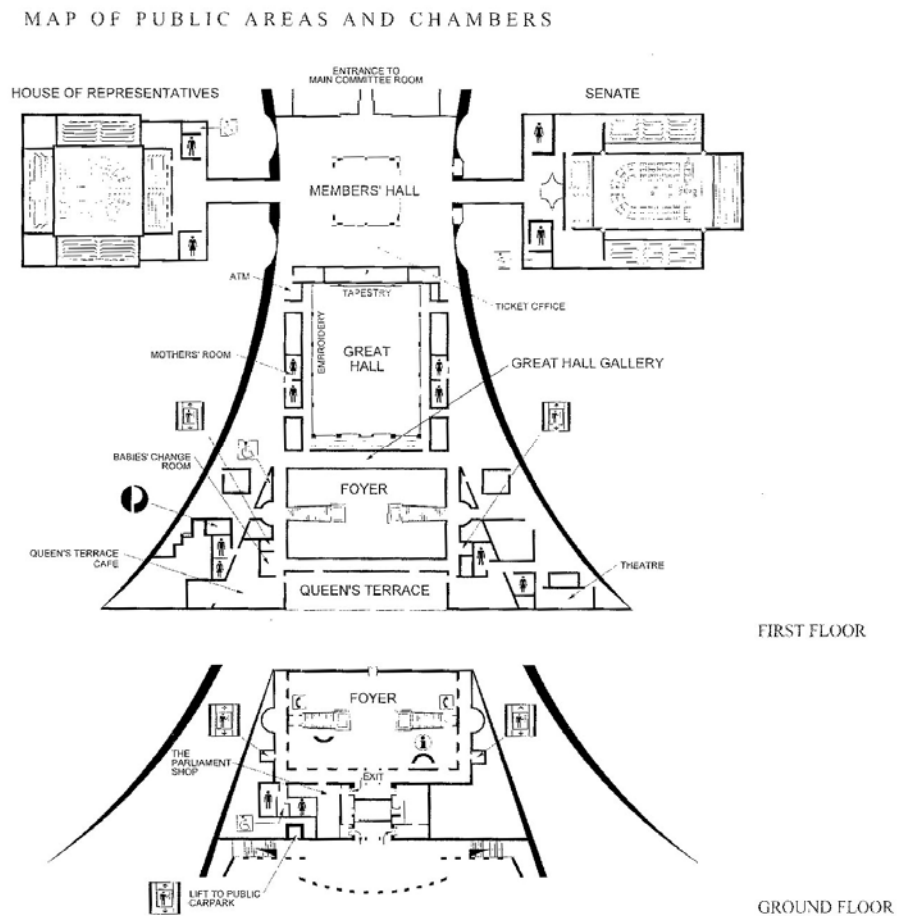
Comment

The open spaces on the First Floor and freedom to explore were attractive features of the visitor experience.

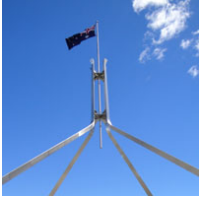


Floorplan and Brochure

Visitor Services offers a full-colour Visitor Guide which includes a simple schematic map shown here.



- The map provides a simple schematic that locates key features and services. Some people had difficulty orienting the map to their location.
- We have identified some small shortcomings of the map.

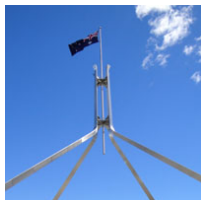


- It does not identify the lift that goes to the roof.
- The First Floor services desk is not shown.
- The lift icons are not immediately clear.
- The standard knife and fork icon could be used to help identify the café.

The full-colour Visitor Guide provides information about the House and the working of Parliament. As such, it functions as an introduction to the building and a souvenir of the visit. However, it does not help visitors to structure a path through the building.

Comment

The Visitor Guide could be enhanced by including suggestions for a self-guided tour that covers the main highlights of the building.



6. Teacher survey findings

Overview

The survey included teachers of primary and high school classes from across Australia, with a preponderance from NSW.

Most teachers (97%) said they received accurate information and that the booking process met their requirements.

There was considerable interest in pre-visit resources, especially printed resources that include visual elements and activities, and DVDs.

Most teachers visited Parliament House in order to give students the living experience of how the Australian Parliament works and to link the visit with specific curriculum studies.

At Parliament House, most participants (79%) participated in the parliamentary role-play and two-thirds (64/67%) attended the hospitality area and looked at art works.

It is encouraging to see that 85% of the sample said the visit met all their expectations and that 30% of teachers reported pleasant surprises.

The Australian War Memorial was the most widely visited (87%) attraction, followed by the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House (75%) and Questacon (69%).

Detailed positive comments and suggested improvements are presented in this section of the report.

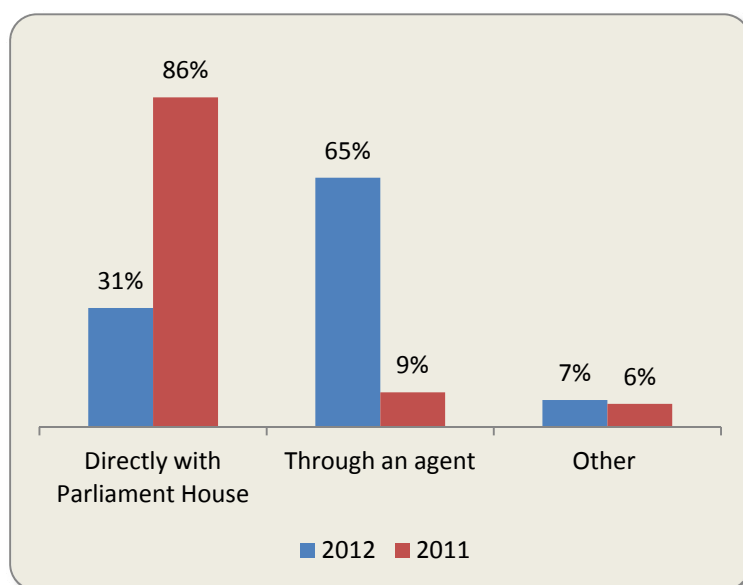


Survey Findings

There were 59 teachers who responded to the survey. All except one had visited in 2010.

The following graph shows that in 2012 most schools in the survey booked through agents, whereas in 2011 most had booked directly with Parliament House.

Fig 14. Bookings

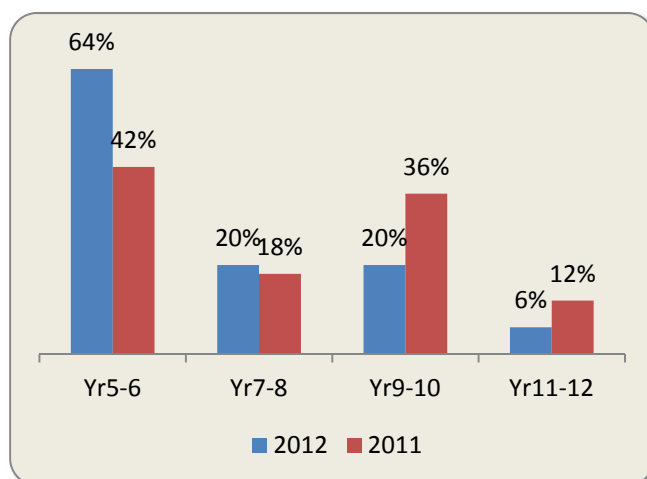


Base: 2011 (35), 2012 (59)

Participants represented both Primary and High Schools as shown in the following graph.

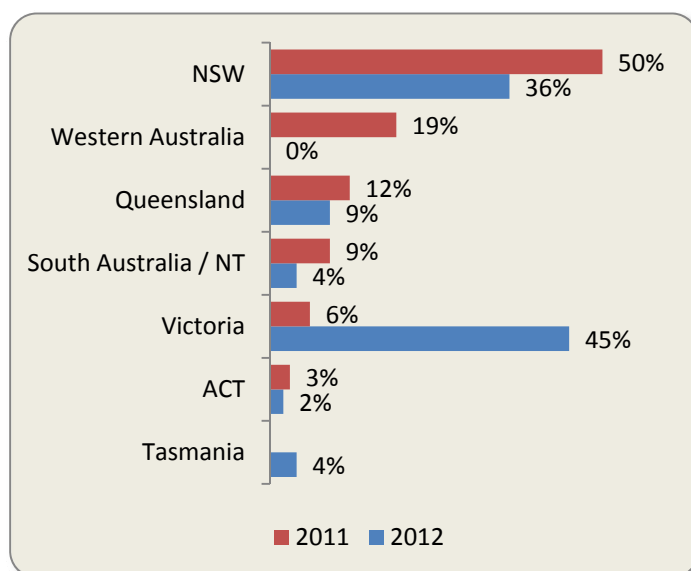


Fig 15. Year level



Base=2011 (33). 2012 (55). Note percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple response.

Teachers in the sample came from most states. In 2011 most teachers in the sample came from NSW, but in 2012 most came from Victoria. This year on year variability is not unexpected for small sample sizes.



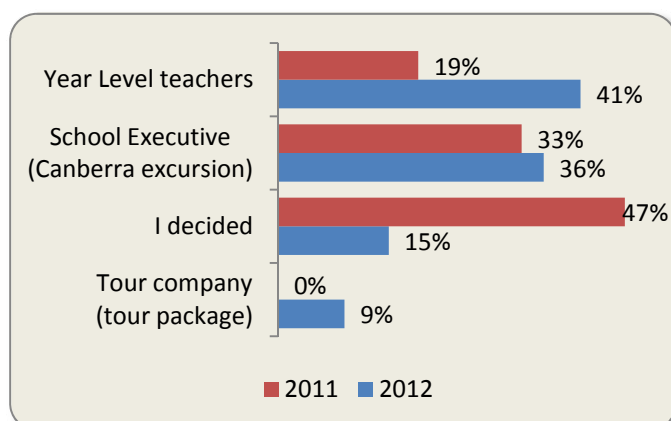
Base=2011 (33). 2012 (55).



6.1 Decision

Half (47%) the survey participants said that they made the decision to visit Parliament House, while others said the decision was made by the school executive or year level teachers.

Fig 16. Who decided to visit Parliament House

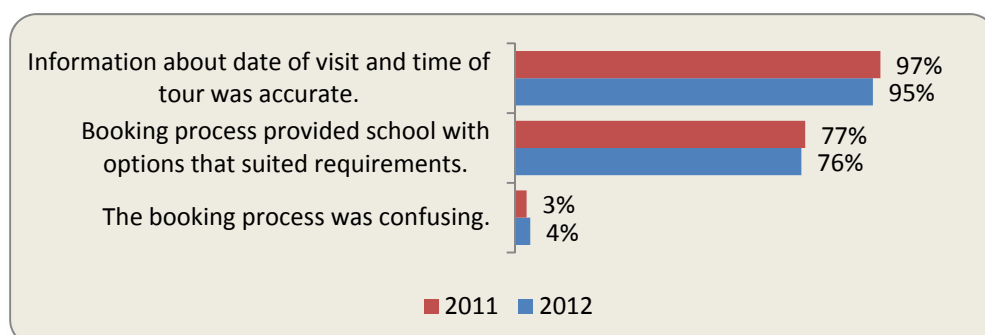


Base=2011 (35). 2012 (59).

6.2 Booking Process

The following chart shows that nearly all (95%) teachers said they received accurate information; and most (76%) said they were offered suitable options. Only 4% found the process confusing.

Fig 17. Booking Process



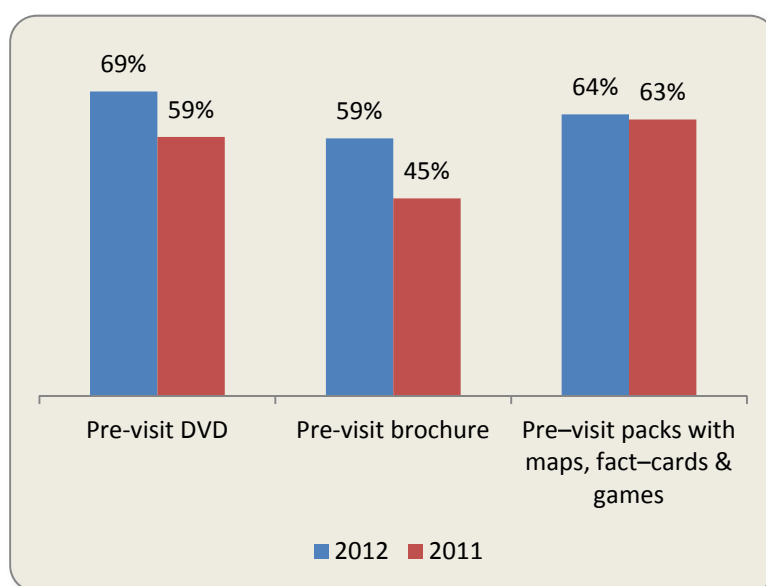
Base: 2011 (35), 2012 (59)



6.3 Interest in pre-visit resources

Participants were asked to show their interest in a range of pre-visit resource materials.

Fig 18. Interest in pre-visit resources



Base: 2011 (35), 2012 (53)

Interest in all types of materials was quite strong.

Participants offered the following comments.

Handout of current list of MPs and particular ministerial positions held.

Detailed handout (at appropriate year level - for us yr 9) of process for passing a bill through parliament."

PEO and APH websites gave us an enormous amount of information as well as up to date details of when the houses are sitting.

We are familiar with the excursion so "pre" visit materials would just be icing on the cake.



Participants were evenly split with respect to the way they preferred to access pre-visit resources, as shown in the following table.

Table 5. Preferred access to resources

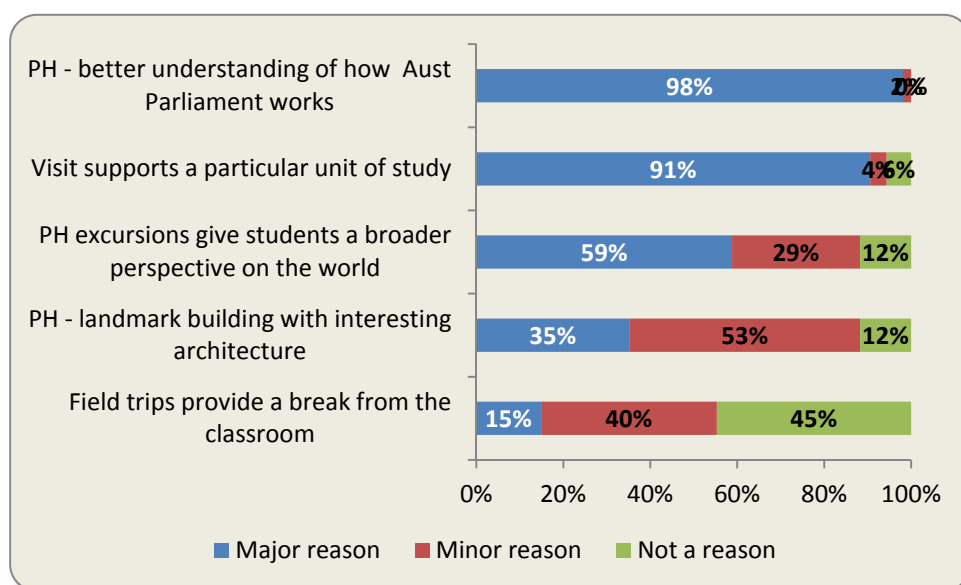
	2012	2011
Download	50%	55%
Sent by email	48%	48%
Sent by mail	40%	42%

Base = 2011 (35); 2012 (50); multiple response

6.4 Reason to visit Parliament House

Teachers were asked to say whether five factors were reasons for their visit. The following chart shows the results.

Fig 19. Reasons to visit Parliament House



Base= 2011 (30/33); 2012 (47/53)

It is clear that teachers value the opportunity to give students the living experience of how the Australian Parliament works and they linked the visit with specific curriculum studies.

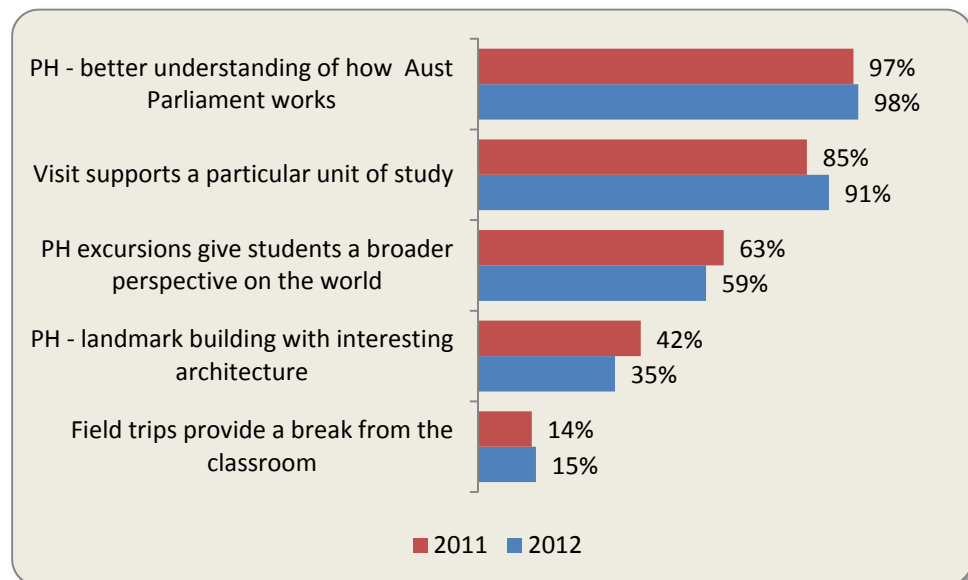


They were also motivated by more general aims relating to broadening perspectives and the experience of a landmark building.

While field trips were recognised to provide a break from the classroom, this was not the primary reason for many visits to Parliament House.

The following graph shows the data for “Major reason” for 2011 and 2012, and shows that the reasons were consistent across the two years.

Fig 20. Major reason to visit



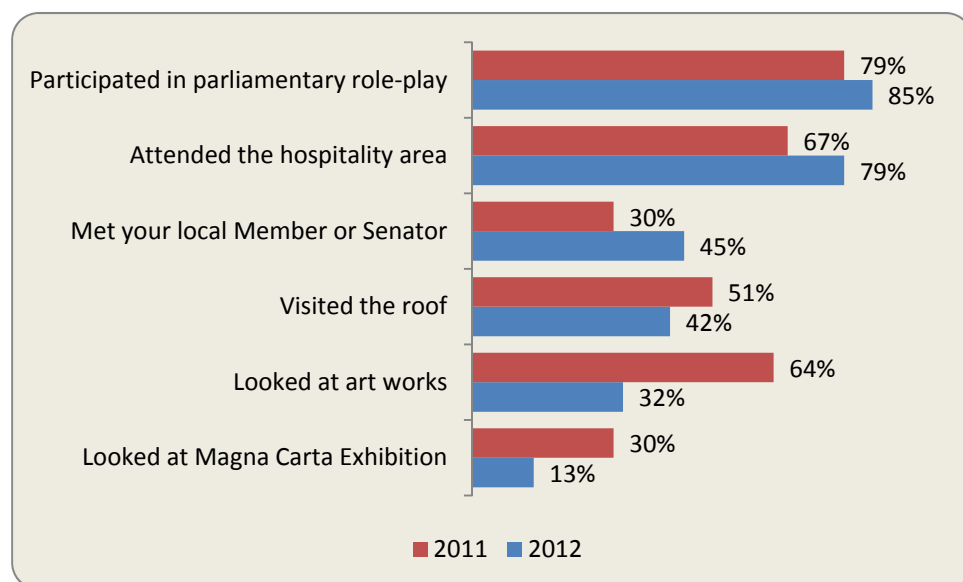
Base= 2011 (30/33); 2012 (47/53)

6.5 Activities

Teachers were asked to indicate which activities they had undertaken at Parliament House. The follow chart shows the results.



Fig 21. Activities undertaken



Base= 2011 (33); 2012 (53)

Most participants (85%) participated in the parliamentary role-play and (79%) attended the hospitality area.

About half (45%) met their local Member or Senator, and 42% visited the roof.

Only a third (32%) said they looked at art works and 13% visited the Magna Carta exhibition.

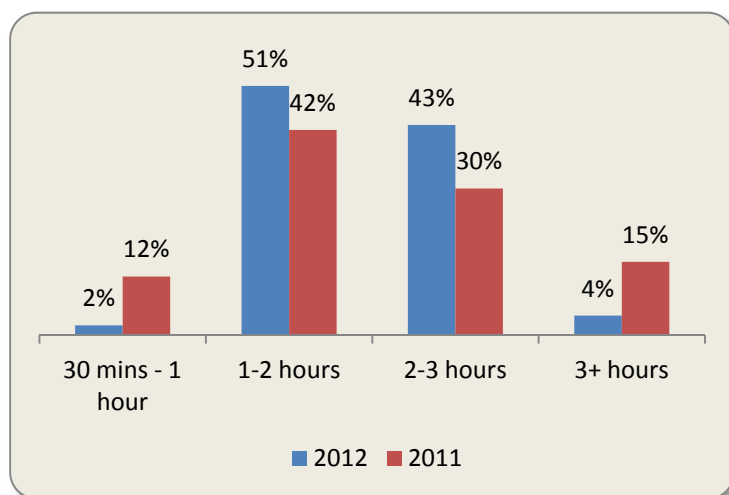
The lower emphasis on art works and Magna Carta between 2011 and 2012 could be because the 2012 sample included a much higher proportion of younger students (Yr 5/6).



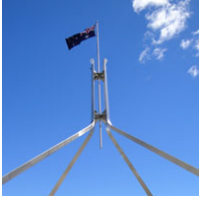
6.6 Time spent at Parliament House

Most teachers in the sample said they spent 1-2 hours at Parliament House (51%), while 43% spent 2-3 hours.

Fig 22. Time spent



Base= 2011 (33); 2012 (53)



6.7 Expectations

Teachers were asked to describe their expectations of the visit. A number of teachers said they had no expectations, and some expressed expectations that were very general or very modest.

It was our first visit so we were unsure of what to expect but were very happy with the outcome.

Have visited before so aware of what to expect.

Most teachers had very specific expectations as shown in the following examples.

To watch the Parliament process working through direct interface with Question Time and role plays. To give the students a sense of the importance of the processes involved in Democracy and how their understanding of the concept will assist them when they reach voting age.

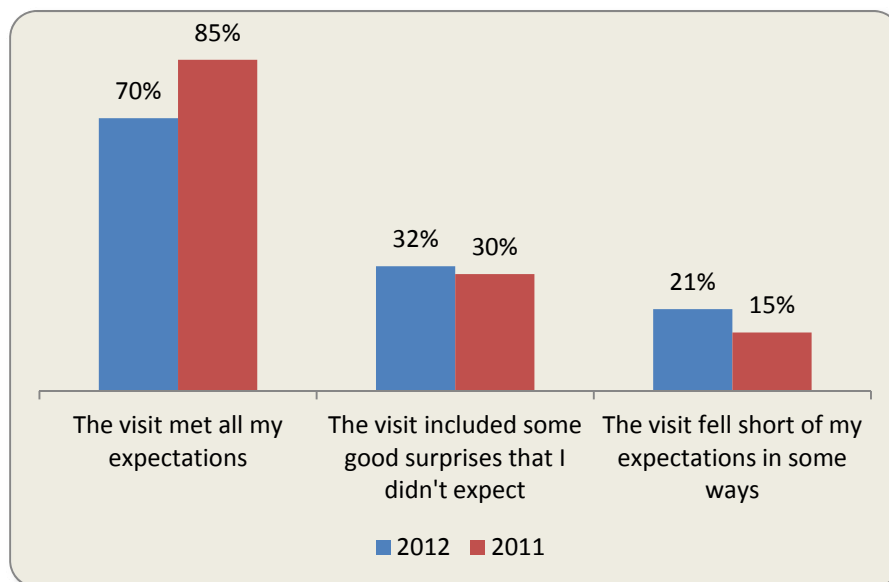
That the students will learn that they have a voice in a democracy and that their voice is counted.

For students to develop an appreciation of what Parliament House is like and what happens there.

The following chart shows how well the visit met teachers' expectations.



Fig 23. How well the visit met expectations



Base= 2011 (33); 2012 (53). Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple response.

Compared with 2012, more teachers (21%) said that the visit fell short of their expectations in some ways. However, the majority said all their expectations were met or there were some pleasant surprises.

Teachers noted the following 'good surprises'.

Surprise was it was the morning of the day Bob Carr was being sworn in and it was very busy with politicians everywhere! The kids loved it....it was like they were seeing movie stars!

The role-play was a surprising feature that really allowed students that do not always participate in discussion to interact and be a part of the lesson. The students have discussed since the trip that Parliament House was one of the favourite places visited while in Canberra. The leadership ballot on the day that we visited heightened the students' knowledge and excitement about the trip.

Portrait gallery and history behind them. The whole atmosphere of a Parliament House!!!! Art work, beautiful grass, water feature, etc.



It was caucus vote week in Canberra, the week we attended, so we were able to be right in the thick of the atmosphere, especially at Question Time where students witness all the ministers including PM! What a great opportunity to 'live' the history.

Joe Hockey's private secretary very kindly took us to the Liberal Party Function room where we met with our Mr Hockey, our local member who answered questions we had prepared. We were not expecting to be welcomed into the inner sanctum of the Liberal Party and saw many familiar faces. Even more exciting was during Question Time the Prime Minister waved at us, which sent the students into gasps and squeals of delight!!! Although we were in Canberra for 3 days it was the single most reported event of the trip! Priceless!!!!

They noted the following shortcomings.

Even though we got to visit both the House of Representatives and the Senate and see them in action, there were very few politicians in session and so it was a little disappointing for the students. It would have also been nice to have a greater tour of the building and look at some of the paintings of past Prime Ministers on display.

I thought the guide although knowledgeable and professional did not effectively engage or relate to the group and it almost felt like they (ordinary well behaved students) were beneath her and annoyed her. I felt she could have adapted her presentation to the year group and encouraged more questions.

We only saw 1/2 dozen people in parliament. Would have liked to be in there for question time. Due to our timing our local member was not available due to question time.

We were left in the hospitality area unsure of whether we were going to have a parliamentarian speak to us - no one showed up. It would have been good for a parliamentarian to speak to our group - it wouldn't have mattered if they weren't from our local area.

The tour guide who took us was abrasive, demeaned the students.

Repeating the same information by the three different guides was exceptionally irritating for highly intelligent year 10 students.

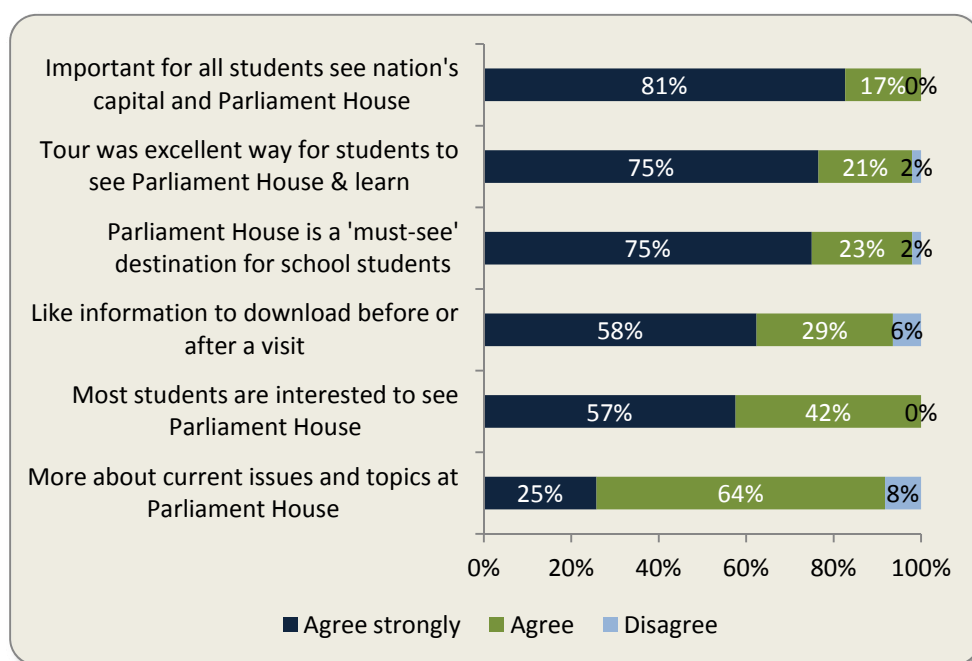


The role play was great, but when we did the tour, the guide repeated everything that the role play guide said, so it felt like a waste of time except that we got to actually be inside the house of reps and the senate. I felt like there was poor communication between the role play section and the guided tour section as it was too much of a double up.

6.8 Views and preferences

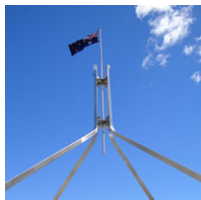
Teachers were asked to indicate their agreement with six statements. No one 'disagreed strongly' with any of the statements and the following chart shows the results.

Fig 24. Agreement with views and preferences



Base= 2011 (33); 2012 (53).

There was near-universal agreement with the quality of the tour; the importance of the national capital and Parliament House and the appeal of



Parliament House as a destination. Two teachers made critical comments about the tour:

We didn't really have a tour. We got ushered in and out of certain rooms and areas.

The tour we had the students did not learn a lot about Parliament House, due to tour guide.

Teachers agreed that most students were interested to see Parliament House.

A majority (58%) showed strong interest (agreed strongly) in accessing education resources online.

One-quarter (25%) showed strong interest (agreed strongly) in seeing more about current issues and topics during their visit. One teacher noted:

Current issues and topics are on the APH site. We looked before we came.

6.9 Best things about the visit

Teachers were asked to note the best things about their visit to Parliament House. The following themes recurred in the verbatim comments.

Seeing the Chambers/seeing Parliament in action

Definitely the access to Question Time in the House of Reps.

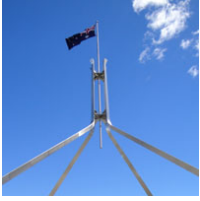
Viewing the House and Senate.

Seeing /hearing Question time.

Watching Question time and viewing a division.

A wave from the Prime Minister.

Being able to sit in the House of Reps and visiting the roof to see the amazing view of Canberra.



Question Time - to see parliament in action was an amazing experiences for the students and they talked about this regularly.

The role plays

The role play was truly excellent! And the speakers did very well to explain a usually difficult and boring topic to our eager learners. Keep up the great work!

Role play in the Education Centre.

The role play made learning concrete and much easier to understand as the students participated actively. All the students enjoyed it and benefitted so much from the experience.

Role play is excellent.

I believe the role play is an integral part of our visit and is a major support to the learning back in the classroom.

The PEO role play was helpful and the students were involved.

Meeting local Member/seeing politicians

Meeting a Senator and seeing the excitement of the students when they spotted a parliamentarian...it was like they had seen a rock star!

Meeting Tony Abbott and our local member of parliament - Richard Marles!

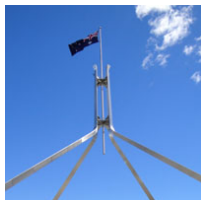
Meeting Joe Hockey - local member, who spoke to students and answered many questions.

Also the opportunity to meet the local member is a highlight for the children.

The guided tour

The content of the guided tour about the two houses of parliament was good.

Our guide was great, I think her name was Margosha.



The guides were patient and informative.

Several participants noted the excellence of the PEO and help from staff.

*Grade 6 students have a limited understanding of how parliament operates.
The sessions conducted were very appropriate for their level of understanding.*

6.10 Suggested improvements

Participants were asked to suggest improvements to the services provided for teachers and students. About half the participants suggested improvements which were quite diverse. The following topics were mentioned more than once.

Guides

Our students were divided in 2 groups. One group had a fabulous tour experience the other group really did not get the most of the opportunity, and this was directly attributable to the difference between the tour guides. One guide was friendly and engaging the other was rude and officious.

The tour guide who took our group through the houses of Parliament was very abrupt and abusive with the students. Her demeanour and apparent dislike of children did make our tour less than enjoyable and in fact was a major talking point for both staff and students following the tour - which detracted from the learning.

The tour of Parliament House was a little rushed. Our tour guide was quite grumpy and rude towards staff and students. I actually had an argument with the tour guide because she wouldn't let me take in a first aid bag with 3 Epi pens and medicines for children in my group that have severe anaphylaxis to foods. I insisted that I needed to take them into the House of Representatives rather than check them into the cloak room. After much persistence she finally allowed it, however I had to carry them without the bag, which was most inconvenient. I understand about the appropriate security measure that need



to be enforced, but serious medical issues like these ones need to be addressed and allowed under special circumstances.

Coordinate the guides so that they don't repeat the same things to groups, or ask if they have already heard information before.

The role play tour and the tour of the different houses should talk to each other and what they spoke to the students about. There was too much double up which became boring for the students as they already knew about it from the first part of the tour.

Our guide talked VERY fast and the kids were a bit confused - maybe some training in "kid-speak" for guides would be helpful.

Have good, dynamic presenters who can get students interested. The tours are a bit dry for students. They lose interest.

Learning resources

Curriculum material around Leadership, Civics & Citizenship.

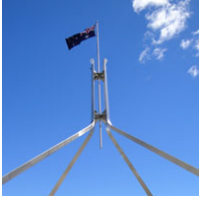
You may have, but I didn't have, a simple brochure outlining key features e.g. the tapestry in the Great Hall; info about the construction. Students and teachers alike may have different preferred learning styles e.g. some retain a lot of what is said, others retain more if they read. (Gardner's Multiple Intelligences).

Some pre-visit brochures and excursion booklets (may be completed during or after the visit) that the students can answer would be most beneficial.

To be provided with pre-visit materials & post visit materials.

Organisational matters

There always seems to be initial confusion at the front desk when we arrive. Our students (90 of them) always spend the first 10 minutes sitting on the floor at the entrance while guides are found. I always book well in advance, so this can't be a factor.



Would you be able to make the information about what they have to eat and drink available for excursion planning?

Someone to actually meet you in hospitality and tell you what is going on. We just sat there for 1/2 an hour and did nothing. Member's Chief of Staff popped in for 10 minutes and said hello.

Refreshments

Hospitality Room needs an upgrade of food!

The hospitality food was not that healthy.

In the hospitality area the students were given a fruit strip and water for morning tea. I realise you are trying to cater for all dietary needs but it was not much to eat and because we did not know what quantity was going to be available for them to eat and had not fed them since breakfast....by the conclusion of the visit they were very, very hungry!

The food offered in the hospitality area was nice but very low in filling up kids. We had not had morning tea beforehand and by the end of our visit they were mighty hungry. The point is we had no idea it was going to be such a light snack or we would have fed them as well before coming. This knowledge would be good for other groups to know.

We missed having the afternoon tea and the students really needed refreshments and a break.

Other comments

A short discussion of the events of the previous few days would bring us up to date with anything we may have missed in transit or while visiting other Canberra attractions.

I think if a member of parliament arranges to meet they should endeavour to do so. We have been many times and enjoy hospitality but our local member never shows!

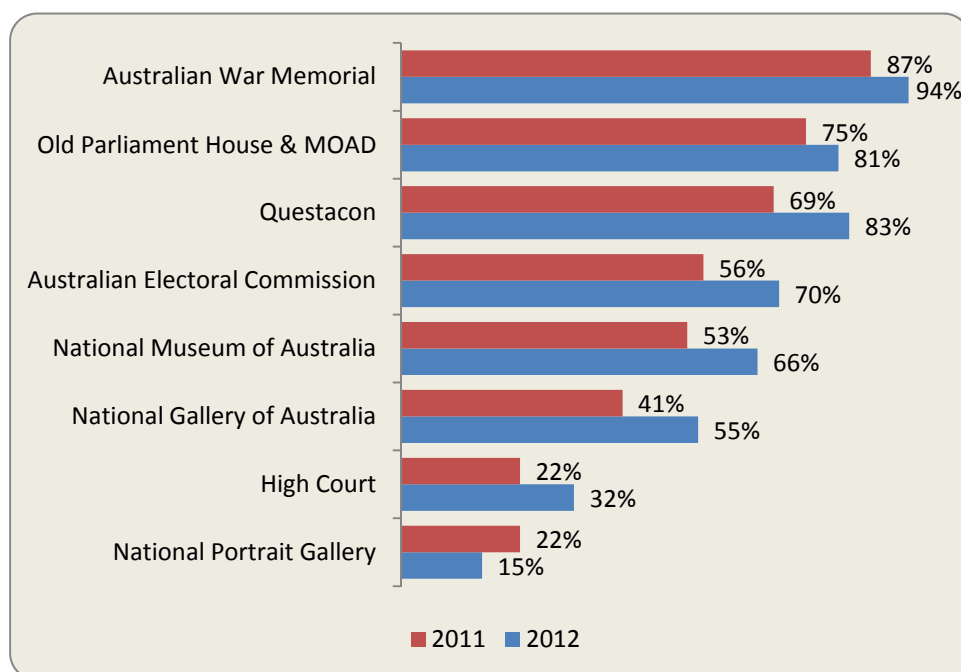


It would be good to meet our member even when parliament isn't sitting. Perhaps a short DVD of member introducing themselves to students and talking about what they do - 24 hours in the life of your member.

6.11 Visits to other attractions

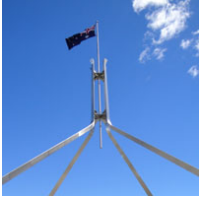
Participants were asked whether or not they had visited a range of other cultural institutions in Canberra. All participants had visited other venues. Visitation is shown in the following graph.

Fig 25. Visits to Cultural Attractions



Base= 2011 (32); 2012 (53)

The pattern of visitation was similar in 2011 and 2012, however all attractions except the Portrait Gallery were visited by a higher proportion of schools in 2012. This may be because the profile of schools in the 2012 survey included more Yr 5/6 classes.



Appendix

Questionnaires

