

Black Rod's Office

Output Group 5

Senators' services

Provision of office, chamber and committee room support; information technology and ceremonial services; and security advice for senators and Senate office-holders in Parliament House.

Provision of support services, in conjunction with the House of Representatives, to the Former Members' Association.

Administered items

Payment of parliamentary salaries and allowances to senators and office-holders of the Senate.

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	<p>The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.</p> <p>Advice, documentation and publications are accurate and of a high standard.</p>	<p>The 2009 senators' survey indicated that senators were satisfied or highly satisfied with the provision of support services. Levels of satisfaction were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • office support 85% • mail freight delivery 94% • information technology support 85% • payment of salaries and allowances 88%. <p>High levels of satisfaction (98%) were also recorded for the work of the chamber support staff.</p> <p>Senators provided positive feedback on accommodation moves undertaken as a result of new senators commencing from 1 July 2008.</p> <p>Satisfaction with the quality of advice, documentation and publications provided by the office remained high.</p>
Timeliness	<p>All support services delivered in a timely manner.</p>	<p>The office successfully completed accommodation moves for 60 senators, including moves associated with the commencement of new senators from 1 July 2008.</p>
Quantity	<p>All support services and supplies delivered in accordance with entitlements on request.</p>	<p>All support services were delivered in accordance with relevant legislation.</p> <p>The number of accommodation moves was very high.</p>

Analysis

To provide effective senators' services and corporate and other services for the department, the Black Rod's Office is divided into five functional areas, as shown in Figure 20. The office is headed by the Usher of the Black Rod, who, along with the Deputy Usher of the Black Rod, performs duties in the Senate chamber.

The primary function of the office is to provide support services to the Senate chamber and committees, and to senators when they are using their Parliament House offices. The Senators' Services Section provides messengerial support to the chamber, assists the President and Clerk on ceremonial occasions, and delivers support services, including mail, committee room servicing, transport, printing, accommodation, assets management and desktop publishing services.

The Information Technology Section provides senators with information technology support services in their Parliament House offices and limited support services and equipment when they are away from Parliament House.

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The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Black Rod's Office for 2008–09 was 46, the same as for 2007–08.

The cost of providing support services to the Senate chamber, committees and senators in their Parliament House offices was \$3.1 million (\$3.2 million in 2007–08).

Figure 20 Elements and responsibilities of the Black Rod's Office

<p style="text-align: center;">Executive <i>Brien Hallett, Usher of the Black Rod</i> Procedural, ceremonial, security and administrative advice Membership of the Security Management Board Advice to the Presiding Officers' Information Technology Advisory Group and to the House and Broadcasting committees</p>			
Senators' Services Section	Information Technology Section	Human Resource Management Section	Financial Management Section
<i>Nick Tate, Deputy Usher of the Black Rod</i>	<i>Joe d'Angelo, Chief Information Technology Officer</i>	<i>Anthony Szell, Director Human Resource Management</i>	<i>Joe d'Angelo, Chief Finance Officer</i>
Accommodation Assets management, purchasing and disposals Chamber support Committee room support Desktop publishing Fire and emergency warden administration Mail and freight Office equipment (not including information technology) Printing and photocopying Protective security—advice, keys, access approvals, containers and security clearances Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on facilities, security, projects and maintenance matters Travel and fleet management Comcar shuttle	Information technology equipment, including personal computers Internet publishing Support for departmental information technology applications Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on information technology matters	Recruitment and staffing Pay and conditions Workforce planning Learning and development Occupational health and safety Rehabilitation coordination Industrial relations Performance management Corporate planning Records management Fortnightly internal staff newsletter— <i>Information Bulletin</i>	Budget management and advice Financial reporting and systems management Accounting policy development and advice Accounts processing, general ledger maintenance and advice Strategic procurement advice Support for management decision making

Ceremonial support services

The major ceremonial function in 2008–09 was the swearing in of the new Senate on 26 August 2008—14 senators took the oath or affirmation of allegiance for the first time, and the President and the Deputy President were elected.

The office also provided assistance to the Ceremonial and Hospitality Section of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in connection with the swearing in of the new Governor-General on 5 September 2008.

Senators' services

From 1 July 2008 until the end of the first sitting period in August, Senators' Services focused on moving 14 new senators into their Parliament House suites and completing the associated moves of ongoing senators.

The update of the *Senators' Handbook—A guide to services, entitlements and facilities for senators* was completed and available to senators from mid-July 2008.

The new online stationery shopping cart was implemented. It has proven to be very effective for both clients and administrators.

Office services

During 2008–09, the Black Rod's Office:

- completed 45 accommodation moves associated with the commencement of new senators on 1 July 2009
- completed a further 15 accommodation moves associated with ministry and shadow ministry changes and the retirement of a senator, and other minor moves
- completed 14 refurbishments of senators' offices and departmental areas
- managed the refurbishment of eight sets of senators' furniture (this program is ongoing, with the aim of completing the refurbishment of all senators' furniture over the next four years)
- provided support services for Senate estimates hearings in November 2008, February 2009 and May–June 2009
- installed multifunction devices for office-holders, excluding party leaders, in August 2008 (the installation of multifunction devices for party leaders is planned for the second quarter of 2009–10)
- replaced inefficient instant boiling water units in suites with fewer than six occupants with more appropriate equipment (this change is expected to realise energy savings of up to 92 per cent)
- managed the implementation of a new key system and the changeover of keys, in conjunction with the Department of Parliamentary Services
- assisted with the transition of asset data from an old database to an assets database integrated with the department's Financial Management Information System (the transition was completed in December 2008)
- negotiated and managed departmental aspects of projects administered by the Department of Parliamentary Services.

The Black Rod's Office continued to provide general office support, committee room support, equipment and furniture maintenance, classified waste removal and stationery supplies.

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Planning

The department continued to develop and implement new security management, business continuity and intellectual property plans. It also provided significant support to the development of whole-of-parliament strategic, security and continuity plans.

Printing and delivery services

During the year, the office continued to produce high-quality reprographic services to very tight deadlines, and to provide mail and freight services as required. The work of Senate committees and the department in general, and work contracted from the other parliamentary departments, generated a high level of activity. Turnaround times were met consistently, ensuring that printed information was available when required by senators and others, even at short notice, and that committee reports were available to meet the tight inquiry timeframes.

The office completed the replacement of four monochrome copiers which had reached the end of their economic life and were becoming unreliable. Due to the quick turnaround time required for the majority of work carried out by the printing subsection, the outdated copiers were replaced with four monochrome copiers capable of higher print speeds and extra finishing capabilities. The new copiers have proved to be a useful addition, allowing the printing subsection to complete its work more efficiently.

During 2008–09, the office completed 1,286 printing jobs. Of these, 370 were for committees, 684 were in direct support of Senate chamber activities and senators, and 20 were for other parliamentary departments. The total value of work produced was \$602,335, of which \$264,693 was allocated to committee work. This was an increase of \$120,343 on the previous year's total, reflecting the greater number of sitting days this financial year, as well as increased committee activity.

The office continued to provide a high standard of delivery services to senators and their staff and departmental staff. Scheduled delivery run times were met for all deliveries, including internal stationery deliveries. This included successfully assisting the Table Office to deliver the Budget and Portfolio Budget Statements papers on Budget night.

Construction has commenced on a new departmental delivery services mailroom, which should be completed by August 2009. The new accommodation will enable the mail and freight staff to co-locate and thereby provide a seamless, more efficient service.

Information technology services

The office continued work on the development of the Senate Centralised Information Database (SCID) to make the management of committee inquiries more efficient and effective. The first phase of the SCID application, accepting submissions online, was released to the Committee Office for use in 2008–09. With the exception of two committees, all new committee inquiries use the SCID system and offer the option for the public to provide submissions online.

A major replacement of the department's desktop computers was completed in 2008–09.

A new intranet design, mentioned in last year's annual report, was successfully implemented, improving access, usability and functionality. On the public website, a new 'video on demand' service was released, providing access to recordings of question time for the preceding two weeks. The section continued its efforts to maintain a high level of metadata and World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines compliance on the website.

Other high-priority activities for the section included:

- implementing and supporting a new project management framework for the department
- updating departmental information technology policies and procedures
- reviewing and testing security and disaster recovery plans for critical information technology systems
- assisting the Procedure Office to develop an online version of the successful public exhibition 'Peace, Order and Good Government'
- supporting Senate estimates hearings
- developing an integrated, secure, centralised scanning solution
- assisting departmental staff with the transition to Microsoft Office 2007
- streamlining the department's travel approval processes by introducing an online form featuring electronic approvals and acquittals
- implementing, in conjunction with office services, an online shopping cart for managing stationery.

The section continued to provide input to wider parliamentary projects and tenders managed by the Department of Parliamentary Services. The department continued to support the Australian Public Service Information and Communications Technology Apprenticeship Programme by hosting an apprentice.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

The implementation of new systems and processes, including the stationery shopping cart, the key management system and the assets database, has resulted in improved administration, accountability, asset management and reporting capability.

The Black Rod's Office continued to work with the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Department of the House of Representatives to implement new processes for project support. While the new processes require more time to be spent in consultation, this has improved the department's interaction with the other parliamentary departments.

The department was also part of a working group reviewing recommendations of the *Review by the Parliamentary Service Commissioner of Aspects of the Administration of the Parliament*. In particular, the working group examined opportunities for shared services arrangements for the delivery of corporate support activities. This group is due to report to the Presiding Officers (through the Clerks and the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services) in the second half of 2009. While services delivered directly to senators were out of scope of the working group's review, a parliament-wide approach to shared services may be appropriate in some limited circumstances.

Evaluation

The principal medium for evaluating the Black Rod's Office services is the biennial senators' survey. The survey, conducted in 2009, reported high levels of satisfaction. The office achieved a satisfaction rating of 94 per cent for its provision of support to senators, such as mail and freight, payment of parliamentary salary and allowances to senators and office holders, and accommodation.

Much of the office's work involves frequent direct contact with senators, their staff and other clients, presenting an ongoing opportunity to receive feedback on the office's services. This informal feedback continued to be very positive in 2008–09.

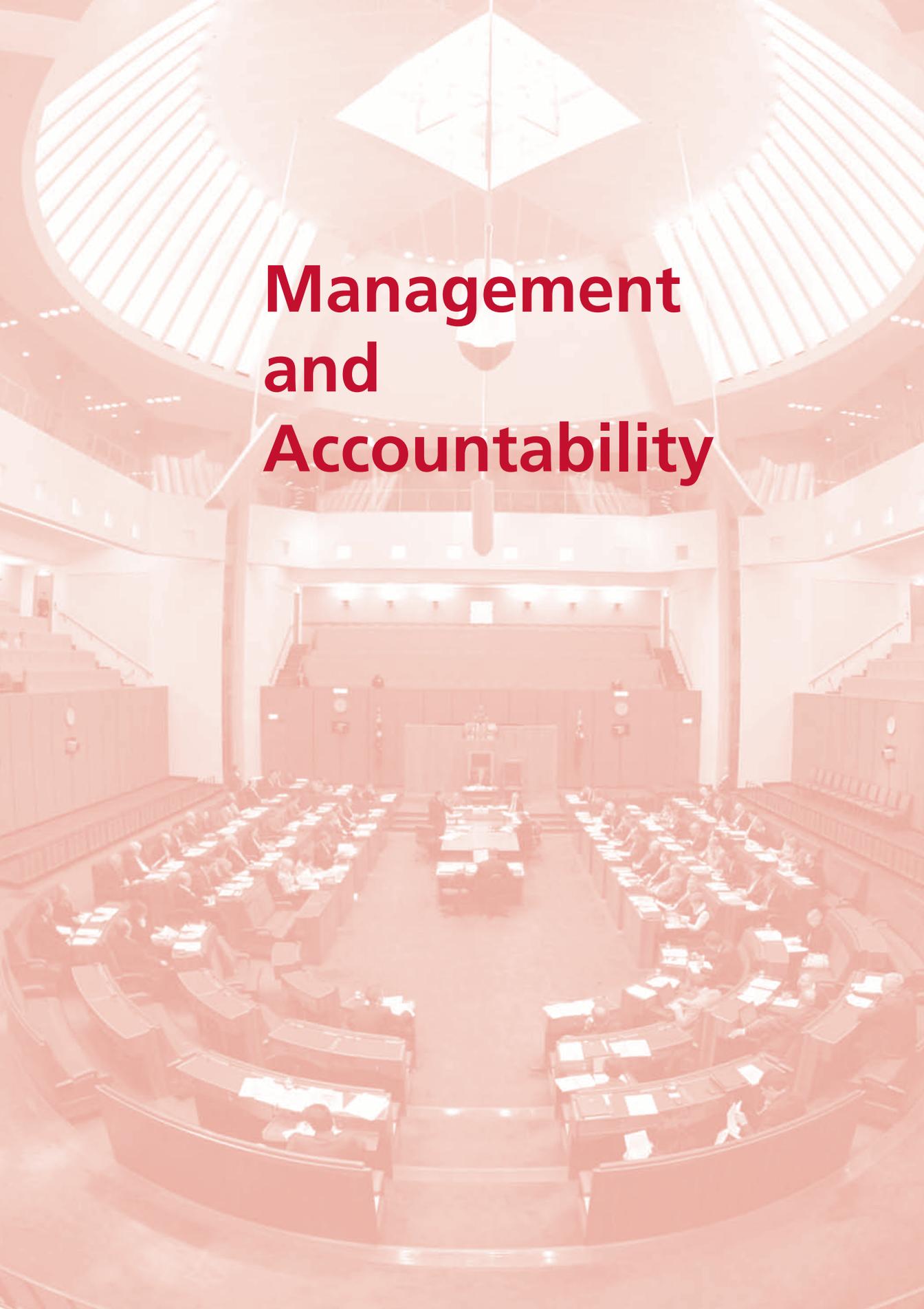
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Section heads met regularly with the Usher of the Black Rod to discuss operational matters relating to the whole office, and met regularly with their teams to discuss performance and work-related issues.

Performance outlook

In 2009-10, the Black Rod's Office will:

- replace executive chairs in senators' offices, and begin to roll out new office furniture to departmental staff and senators' staff
- roll out multifunction devices to party leaders
- move delivery services staff into the new mail room
- review the methodology and software tool used for the costing of printing and desktop publishing work
- upgrade the client management application to provide an improved user interface and improved reporting
- develop a proposal to improve current manual and information technology systems that individually manage committee room bookings; courtyard bookings; function requests; and film and photograph requests in conjunction with delegates from the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Department of the House of Representatives
- seek an improved storage solution for the department by reviewing both on-site and off-site arrangements in conjunction with the Department of Parliamentary Services sponsored accommodation review.



Management and Accountability