



M2004/114

19 October 2005

Jason Sherd
Secretary
Joint Committee on Publications
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Sherd

I refer to your letter to the Auditor-General dated 26 September 2005 inviting the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS). Mr McPhee has requested that I reply on his behalf.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Our submission addresses each of the four points in the terms of reference as set out below.

The potential impact of changes to the distribution of the PPS made by the Presiding Officers, namely the tightening of eligibility guidelines and the cessation of blister packs to commence on 1 January 2006.

The PPS is a key information resource for the ANAO and is widely used as research material in the preparation of our audits. If we were not included in the free entitlement schedule we would need to arrange an alternative means of accessing these documents.

The provision of the PPS in a digital format, either as an alternative or an adjunct to the hard copy series.

A digital format would enhance the service and allow wider access particularly for casual users. However, we would prefer any digital format to be an adjunct to the hard copy. Our reasons are as follows:

- connecting to the internet is not always practical or possible;
- many people find reading lengthy documents on-screen uncomfortable; and
- downloading and printing on a local area network is costly.

Many documents from the PPS are now made available on authors' websites while current, but older material is often removed and is therefore inaccessible electronically. Attempts to remedy this issue through gateway sites have, from our experience, not always been successful. In our view we would prefer any digital arrangement to be accessed through a central site where an electronic copy of current and older documents is maintained.

The feasibility of a subscription service

A subscription service would be feasible and our view on such a system would depend largely on the cost and the nature of the product. Again we would prefer both a central electronic arrangement as well as hard copy.

The possibility of partial or full cost recovery for the series.

Our comment on the previous point applies.

Should you require any clarification of matters discussed above, please contact the ANAO Information Services Office, Gary Pettigrove on 02 6203 7303 or email gary.pettigrove@anao.gov.au in the first instance.

Yours sincerely



John Hawley
Executive Director
Corporate Management Branch