



Department
of the Senate

ANNUAL REPORT 2003-04

© Commonwealth of Australia 2004

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Australian Government, available from the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Intellectual Property Branch, Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts, GPO Box 2154, Canberra ACT 2601, or posted at www.dcita.gov.au/cca.

ISBN 0 642 71458 4

ISSN 0812-1427

Web address of this report: www.aph.gov.au/senate/dept/annual04/index.htm

Produced by the Department of the Senate

Printed by the Department of the Senate

Coordinated and edited by WordsWorth Writing (02) 6232 7511

Designed by the Department of the Senate

Cover photograph courtesy of AUSPIC

Contact officer

For further information about the content of this report,
please contact the Annual Report Coordinator:

Usher of the Black Rod

Department of the Senate

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Telephone: (02) 6277 3398

Fax: (02) 6277 3199

Email: blackrod.sen@aph.gov.au

Website: www.aph.gov.au/senate

Output Group 5—Black Rod’s Office

Output 5.1

Provision of office support services and information technology support services for senators and Senate office-holders in their Parliament House offices.

Administered items

Support for the offices of the President of the Senate and the Deputy President of the Senate.

Provision of printing services to senators.

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

Output 5.2

Provision of security advice, systems and monitoring for the protection of Parliament House, parliamentarians, other occupants and visitors to the building.

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Output 5.1 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>Informal feedback relating to printing, desktop publishing, support to incoming senators, and chamber and committee room support was overwhelmingly positive.</p> <p>The introduction of additional services in the Printing and Desktop Publishing Subsection led to increased demand for and greater satisfaction with services.</p> <p>The quality of office services improved in the latter half of the year with the introduction of improved procedures in a number of areas.</p> <p>Improved supervision of mail and freight services resulted in consistently high levels of service, more effective training and greater staff stability and flexibility.</p> <p>Internal audit reports indicated that the protection of information held by the department and the implementation of the Presiding Officers’ Protocols for providing access to senators’ and members’ Parliament House suites were effective.</p> <p>Senators reported increasing problems with the OneOffice computer platform, especially in connecting to the parliamentary network using their laptops. Senate information technology staff took on a liaison role when the Department of Parliamentary Services help desk could not resolve the problems. Follow-up action was welcomed by senators.</p>
Output 5.1 Timeliness	<p>All support services delivered in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Printing production times were in accordance with the advertised guidelines for senators’ printing. Previously inconsistent turnaround times for desktop publishing improved to meet the same target.</p> <p>Mail runs were conducted in accordance with the advertised schedule and an internet-based system was introduced for more proactive tracking of senators’ freight.</p> <p>Declines were experienced in the timeliness of some externally provided services coordinated by the Office Services Subsection, and steps were taken at the end of the year to address the issue.</p> <p>Information technology staff visited each client who reported computer and network problems. Positive feedback was received about the timeliness of the responses.</p> <p>Tabled documents and other newly released information were published on the Senate website promptly and accurately.</p> <p>Prompt assistance and accurate advice were provided on recruitment and staffing matters.</p> <p>Salaries and allowances were delivered to senators and office-holders on time and with 99.9 per cent accuracy.</p>

Output Group 5—Black Rod’s Office

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Output 5.1	Quantity Documentation is sufficient for committee purposes and material available to the public is available promptly, electronically or in hard copy.	All support services and supplies were delivered in accordance with entitlements. All senators, except two, used the printing service in 2003–04. There was an increase in demand from senators of 145 per cent. In relation to printing entitlements under the Parliamentary Entitlements Regulations, negative feedback was received from a small number of senators on what they perceived to be a more rigorous interpretation of ‘for parliamentary purposes’ by the department than is reportedly applied by the Department of Finance and Administration to members of the House of Representatives.
Output 5.2	Quality Security advice and services are delivered in accordance with the policies and standards set by the President, the Security Management Board, the <i>Parliament House Security Policy Manual</i> and the <i>Parliamentary Security Staff Procedures Manual</i> .	The development of new security arrangements required an increased level of monitoring. High-profile visits by foreign heads of state in October 2003 tested security resources, but services were generally delivered in accordance with plans. The Presiding Officers received criticism from some senators and members and the Press Gallery relating to the access arrangements for guests and the media during the visits. There were two well-publicised security breaches during the reporting period, both occurring in the House of Representatives chamber. Following the second incident, involving a protester jumping from the public gallery to the chamber floor, the President agreed to security staff being located on the floor of the Senate chamber at certain times. Enhanced training of chamber security staff commenced.
Output 5.2	Quantity Security services are commensurate with the level of threat and are delivered within budget.	Security measures continued to be implemented in response to changes in the security environment, and were delivered within budget. Additional funding for major physical security infrastructure works at Parliament House was allocated in the 2004–05 Budget.

Analysis

To provide effective senators’ services, security services, and corporate and other services for the department, the Black Rod’s Office is divided into four functional areas as shown in Figure 26. 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 average staffing level for the Black Rod’s Office for the year was 71 staff years, down 38 from last year’s average of 109 as a result of the transfer of security staff to the then Joint House Department.

The cost of providing support services to the Senate chamber, committees and senators in their Parliament House suites was \$5.52 million. This was an increase from \$4.93 million in 2002–03. The cost of security increased from \$11.40 million to \$12.40 million. The latter increase was funded by a 2003–04 Budget measure.

Figure 26 **Elements and responsibilities of the Black Rod's Office**

Executive			
<i>Andrea Griffiths, 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			
Senators' Services Section	Information Technology Section	Human Resource Management Section	Financial Management Section
<i>Helen Donaldson, Deputy Usher of the Black Rod</i>	<i>Roxane Le Guen, Director</i>	<i>Denise Gordon, Director</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 Transport and fleet management	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 Training and development Occupational health and safety Rehabilitation management Industrial relations Corporate planning Records management Weekly information bulletin	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

Output 5.1 Senators' services

Through Output 5.1, the Black Rod's Office provides a range of support services to the Senate chamber, committees and senators in their Parliament House suites. The Senators' Services Section provides messengerial support to the chamber, assists the President and the Clerk on ceremonial occasions, and delivers a wide variety of support services, including mail, transport, printing, accommodation, assets management and desktop publishing.

The Information Technology Section provides information technology support services for senators and Senate office-holders in their Parliament House offices, and limited services and equipment when they are away from Parliament House.

Ceremonial support

Ceremonial support was provided during the swearing-in of the new Governor-General, His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retired), in the Senate chamber on 11 August 2003. The office also provided ceremonial support to two joint meetings of the Senate and House of Representatives, in the House of Representatives chamber, during the year. Joint meetings were addressed by the President of the United States of America, the Honourable George W Bush, on 23 October 2003, and by the President of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Hu Jintao, on 24 October 2003. The role of Senate staff at the joint meetings was examined and found satisfactory at the supplementary budget estimates hearings held by the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee in November 2003.

Office services

Efficient services were provided throughout 2003–04, and special projects were successfully undertaken as required, including the following.

- We completed eight accommodation moves (down from 26 in 2002–03), using existing resources supplemented as required by sessional employees, to the satisfaction of the people who were moved.
- We maintained senators' contact information according to high standards of accuracy and timeliness, ensuring that amendments to published lists and databases were loaded onto the Parliament House website within 24 hours of taking effect, to provide members of the public with access to the most accurate information.
- We maintained Senate information in the Government Online Directory to the same high standards.
- We completed several minor works projects, resulting in enhanced security—in a number of areas, including key control—or greater amenity for senators and staff.
- In response to a complaint, in May 2004 we installed a prototype of an improved telephone indicator light for senators' desks in the chamber; the prototype will need further development before a decision is made to replace all such lights.

The Presiding Officers' protocols for granting access to senators' and members' Parliament House suites, and revised arrangements for the permit system for access to Senate areas of Parliament House, created additional work for authorised staff in the Office Services Subsection—752 access permits were submitted for approval, 156 of them for senators' suites or groups of suites. An audit of the permit system's effectiveness, conducted at the request of the Security Management Board, found that the system had made office security more reliable, and suggested only minor adjustments to the procedures which underpin the protocols.

Important projects still in progress at the close of the reporting year included a four-month trial of an environmentally friendly, automated control system for office lighting, to improve energy efficiency in Parliament House, which commenced in June 2004 in three senators' suites. A substantial reconfiguration of furniture in the Procedure Office was in its final stages.

Plans were also finalised for the refurbishment of the Main Committee Room. This work will necessitate closing the room from July to early October 2004. As reported last year, the project to refurbish timber committee room chairs will resume during the room's closure.

The Office Services Subsection assisted in arranging some significant events in Parliament House during 2003–04, as detailed below. All were completed to the satisfaction of clients.

- We reconfigured the Senate chamber to accommodate the swearing-in of the new Governor-General in August 2003, and restored its usual layout within one hour in readiness for the day's sitting.
- During a series of Council of Australian Governments meetings held in Senate committee rooms in August 2003, we rearranged furniture and installed faxes and photocopiers, and reconfigured the rooms when the meetings had concluded. All rooms were ready for use by committees and senators at the start of the next business day.
- The budget lockup, held in the Main Committee Room and six Senate committee rooms in May 2004, required the reconfiguration of three Senate committee rooms, furniture and microphone removal, and changes to telephones and faxes. Such complex preparations usually mean that the rooms are otherwise unavailable for two days. In 2003–04, staff worked hard to ensure that as many rooms as possible were available to be used by committees and senators, for as long as possible, in the periods leading up to and immediately following budget night.

The restructure of the Office Services Subsection and the Chamber Support, Mail and Freight Unit operations was approved in May 2003. Its implementation in 2003–04 made possible improvements in a number of important processes, including the monitoring and maintenance of assets, the control of office keys, the electronic tracking and timely delivery of freight, and the minimisation of mail delivery errors. It also resulted in a more effective use of resources during non-sitting weeks. Many of these improvements also provided better health and safety conditions for staff, audit trails and enhanced security.

The restructure also contributed to more effective deployment of staff in these areas, including sessional staff. Support provided by sessional staff—in committee rooms, the mail room, freight and stores—was of a high standard. The level of flexibility achieved by using sessional staff considerably improved the subsection's ability to respond to changing priorities and unexpected staff absences.

In relation to the Senate chamber, staffing arrangements were stabilised, ongoing positions were filled and new staff were trained. More effective planning and training across the Office Services Subsection enabled chamber staff to draw on additional assistance to meet the demands of the final sitting weeks in June 2004.

In 2003–04, gift sales to senators and staff from the stationery store raised \$5,709, a small decrease from the total for 2002–03 (\$6,908), and improved cash-handling and reconciliation processes were implemented in the store.

Printing and desktop publishing

The combination of new equipment, additional functionality, an in-house desktop publisher and improved management in the Printing and Desktop Publishing Subsection resulted in a notable increase in senators' satisfaction with the levels of service they received in 2003–04, and higher productivity in the unit.

Conversely, comments made to the President, and discussed during the 2004–05 budget estimates process, described senators' dissatisfaction with one aspect of the administration of their printing entitlements under the Parliamentary Entitlements Regulations. Some senators were dissatisfied with what they perceived to be a more rigorous interpretation by the department of 'for parliamentary purposes' than is reportedly applied by the Department of Finance and Administration to members of the House of Representatives. As a result, senators suggested at the estimates committee hearing that the administration of senators' printing entitlements be transferred to the Department of Finance and Administration. The outcome of this suggestion will be reported in next year's annual report.

The demand for printing services increased significantly during the 2003–04 year compared to previous years. The unit completed 2,089 jobs for the year, 963 of these for senators and 459 for committees. In 2002–03, the subsection completed 393 jobs for senators and 370 for committees and 1,414 jobs overall. The difference represents an increase of 145 per cent in the volume of work completed for senators, a 24 per cent increase for committees and an increase of 48 per cent overall.

The main reason for the increase in senators' demand appears to be the availability of additional services, including full-colour newsletters, an in-house desktop publisher and upgraded printing equipment. This year, all senators, except two, used the printing services of the department. Work completed for senators comprised unlimited personalised stationery products (689 jobs) and other printed matter limited by the parliamentary entitlements legislation to 10 or 20 reams of paper per month (274 newsletters, postcards and other items). Committee work increased as a result of the increased workload of committees and the higher number of reports presented.

The Printing and Desktop Publishing Subsection completed work for other parliamentary departments by scheduling it between work performed for senators or committees wherever possible. Sixteen jobs were completed in 2003–04 for the Parliamentary Education Office, the Association of Former Members of Parliament of Australia, the Parliamentary Service Commissioner and the Department of Parliamentary Services. The new printing press completed a total of 7.0 million impressions in 2003–04. This compares very favourably with an impression rate of 3.8 million achieved on the old two-colour press in the previous year. During the reporting period, 13.4 million impressions were completed on the photocopiers and Itek printing presses. The total value of all work managed by the Printing and Desktop Publishing Subsection was \$2.1 million.

External contractors were engaged to handle overflow printing and desktop-publishing design work that arose, usually during sitting periods. They were also used to provide services outside the capability of Senate equipment. During the year, 582 jobs (approximately 27 per cent of the total output) were sent to contractors, to the value of \$570,763.

The printing of committee reports places significant pressure on staff and equipment but is the principal reason an in-house printing unit is maintained. Because of the pressure on committee timetables, the majority of committee reports are submitted for printing on the day they are due to be tabled. Such tight deadlines would be impossible to meet if the

printing were done externally and the department had to compete with other clients for priority. Moreover, few local printers have the required security arrangements in place to handle embargoed documents, and the time taken to deliver embargoed publications to Parliament House is also a significant factor.

Continued monitoring of the printing costing system improved the quality of our performance information and aided decisions about the best production methods for each job. This ensured that best value for money was obtained for the department. The costing method was updated in November 2003, and an audit of the system commenced in June 2004.

The accommodation issues raised in last year's report remained unresolved, initially because of the organisational upheaval experienced in the amalgamation of the joint parliamentary departments and, at the end of the year, because of the uncertainty created by the likely transfer of the administration of senators' printing to the Department of Finance and Administration.

Information technology

The major information technology project for the year was the rollout and implementation of the OneOffice platform for senators and their staff. The section worked closely with the Technical Services Group of the Department of Parliamentary Services to ensure a smooth transition to the new platform. The upgrade proceeded satisfactorily in Parliament House, but the network suffered two breakdowns in early 2004, which are still being investigated by the Department of Parliamentary Services.

During that period, Senate information technology staff liaised closely with the Table Office, the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and the Department of Parliamentary Services to ensure that essential services to the chamber continued to be available. The Procedure Office was most disadvantaged by not having a reliable backup system available at the time, and the Information Technology Section's staff found ways of assisting staff of that office to continue to work on-line. The situation has since been remedied. Senate information technology staff continue to work on ways of improving the backup systems for essential Senate chamber-related computer services.

Significant problems with OneOffice arose when senators attempted to connect to the parliamentary computer network from their electorate offices or from other locations. Slowness, unexplained 'freezing' and delays when using the mobile office component of the new platform have resulted in a majority of senators expressing frustration about that component. These problems are currently being addressed by the departments of Parliamentary Services and Finance and Administration, and the Senate Information Technology Section is continuing to liaise closely with senators and with staff of the Department of Parliamentary Services to ensure that they are resolved satisfactorily.

Since the beginning of 2004, a sustained effort has been made to raise staff awareness of document security, and training has been offered to assist in removing hidden text from Microsoft Office documents. The unit also continued to make staff members aware of the role they play in maintaining and improving computer system security.

The Web Publishing Unit developed new pages for and added new links to the Senate website. These included an interparliamentary relations page and a legislative instruments page, both with direct links from the Senate homepage.

The Parliamentary Web Server Replacement Project, discussed in last year's annual report, was brought to a close. The server was replaced successfully and new monitoring tools were

deployed in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the levels of interest shown in the various areas of the Senate website. Further steps will be taken in the year ahead to facilitate access to information held on the site by making the new search engine more user-friendly. Work continued on adding metadata to all pages on the Senate site to facilitate search and retrieval.

After careful consideration, the department decided, subject to review at a later stage, not to proceed with the development of an electronic records management system. The main reason was the recognition that, at this stage, a dual print and electronic system would be necessary to meet the needs of our clients. This would be both cumbersome and costly to manage. Delaying the move also provides greater opportunity for the department and others to explore the potential for a whole-of-parliament approach to electronic records and to 'content management' (the management of an organisation's databases, web pages and electronic files). The Australian Government Information Management Office has asked all departments to investigate and implement content management systems.

Senators' salary and allowances and support to the President and Deputy President

The department administers the special appropriations under the *Parliamentary Entitlements Act 1990*, and the *Remuneration and Allowances Act 1990*. During 2003–04, the department was responsible for:

- payment of senators' and Senate office-holders' salaries, electorate allowances and postage allowances, and delivery of their printing and related entitlements
- administration of funds in the departmental budget used to employ staff for the President and Deputy President.

During the year:

- one increase to all senators' pay and allowances was processed
- 203 salary variations were processed
- one senator commenced and was entered into the payroll system, and one senator resigned.

No complaints were received from senators about the accuracy or timeliness of services provided.

Output 5.2 Security

The Presiding Officers determine security arrangements and policies within the parliamentary precincts and Parliament House as a whole. To assist them in this role, the Presiding Officers established the Security Management Board in 2001–02. The Usher of the Black Rod is the department's representative on the board. Black Rod provides security advice to the President and is responsible for the maintenance of security in the Senate chamber and associated galleries and lobbies, roles which will continue despite the transfer of security funding to the Department of Parliamentary Services. (See the report on Outcome 1 for more information on the department's changing role in relation to security.)

Security Management Board

The Security Management Board is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services. Apart from the Usher of the Black Rod, the other members are the Serjeant-at-Arms, the Assistant Secretary, Security and Facilities (formerly known as the Security Controller) and the Assistant Secretary, Technical Services (both from the

Department of Parliamentary Services), and senior officers from the Department of Finance and Administration (representing the Special Minister of State, who has responsibility for the administration of the Executive Wing of Parliament House), the Protective Security Coordination Centre (part of the Attorney-General's Department) and the Australian Protective Service (part of the Australian Federal Police).

The Security Management Board met eight times during the year and provided advice to the Presiding Officers on policies, practices and procedures on matters relating to security at Parliament House. The board also developed security policies and procedures to improve parliamentary security. In July 2003 the board endorsed the *Parliament House Security Policy Manual*. At the end of the financial year, a review of the Parliament House pass system, the purpose of which is to facilitate entry to the car parks and private circulation areas of Parliament House for authorised people, was nearing completion.

Under the direction of the Security Management Board, day-to-day security is maintained for the internal areas of Parliament House by the Assistant Secretary, Security and Facilities, and for the external precincts by the Australian Protective Service.

Operational enhancements

Following the completion of a number of risk assessments for various aspects of security at Parliament House, the Security Management Board consolidated the results and is using the recommendations as the basis for a coordinated security plan. External security initiatives were given priority, and the Department of Parliamentary Services received \$11.7 million in additional funding for new security capital works in the 2004–05 Budget. These included:

- construction of a barrier around the internal perimeter of Parliament Drive to replace existing temporary traffic barriers
- provision of controlled vehicle access to the Senate, House of Representatives and Ministerial Wing entrances
- installation of extra window protection for windows in the Ministerial Wing
- construction of boom gates to control access to the Melbourne Avenue car park area.

In addition, new walk-through metal detector units and hand-held metal detector units were purchased during the year to improve screening procedures for people entering the building.

During the reporting period, our efforts continued to be focused on:

- enhancing protective security measures within the parliamentary precincts by strengthening physical barriers and access control arrangements
- maintaining operational capabilities commensurate with prevailing threat levels and risk management principles
- balancing the security needs of the Parliament with the requirement for public access.

Informal feedback indicated that the balance was appropriate, and that senators, members and staff were able to carry out their parliamentary duties in security and safety.

Efforts to raise the awareness of security issues among building occupants continued, particularly in relation to the handling of mail. Following an incident in the British House of Commons during which a powdered substance was thrown from the galleries onto the floor of the chamber, hitting the prime minister, a draft protocol for the management of 'white powder' security incidents in the Senate and House of Representatives chambers was endorsed by the Security Management Board for consideration by the Presiding Officers.

A sequential emergency evacuation exercise was conducted at Parliament House on 9 June 2004. Members of the Australian Capital Territory Fire Brigade and private firm Chubb Fire observed the exercise, and affirmed that the main objectives of the exercise had been met. *The Parliament House Emergency Procedures Manual* was updated by the Manager, Security Operations, in conjunction with the Parliament House Emergency Control Committee (comprising representatives from the chamber departments, the Ministerial Wing and Chubb Fire), and the revision will be provided to the Security Management Board for consideration. Further evacuation exercises are planned for August and October 2004 to keep building occupants familiar with emergency evacuation procedures.

During the reporting period:

- the visits by the presidents of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, on consecutive days in October 2003, resulted in a sustained period of high-intensity security planning and operational activity
- there were 12 organised protests held in the protest area during the year and several vigils by single persons or small groups; the level of protest activity was lower than in the previous year, when a higher level of activity was associated with Australia's decision to send troops to Iraq
- eight protesters were removed from the chamber galleries, counselled and escorted from Parliament House; one protester jumped onto the floor of the House of Representatives chamber, and was apprehended and subsequently convicted of various offences
- new security staff were recruited, and a cumulative total of 501 security staff members attended 22 security-related training and development courses, including training in the use of fire extinguishers, first aid, X-ray machines and security screening techniques, defensive tactics, and client relations
- 172 official visits were supported by the Parliamentary Security Group, 194 security incidents were recorded by the Australian Protective Service and 434 incidents were reported by Parliamentary Security Service officers. The range of topics reported on included significant events, persons of interest, unattended or suspect items, the serviceability and status of locks, alarms and security equipment, and workplace security issues.

Liaison with other law enforcement agencies

Good working relationships with other law enforcement and intelligence agencies continued throughout the year. On a number of occasions, uniformed members of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) provided support to the Australian Protective Service for crowd control purposes, or provided investigative assistance to parliamentary security staff. AFP and Australian Protective Service officers were prompt in responding to requests for attendance, and in familiarising themselves with relevant features of the building and the parliamentary precincts. The arrangement under which a senior AFP officer manages the Australian Protective Service officers stationed at Parliament House and liaises closely with Parliamentary Security Service officers continued to be successful, and resulted in improved communications, coordination of operations and monitoring of security costs.

Evaluation

The principal medium for evaluating Black Rod's Office services is the biennial survey of senators' satisfaction with the services provided by the department, due to be conducted next in early 2005. As reported previously, the survey conducted in 2003 revealed high levels of

satisfaction among senators with most services provided by the office, and steps were taken during 2003–04 to address areas of concern.

Senators responded favourably to improvements in printing and desktop publishing services and gave positive feedback on the improved quality of the work. The most negative feedback received related to problems with the freight carriers used by external contractors. In response, the department expressed concern to the external contractors, which are outside the department's control, and received commitments about improved performance in the future.

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

Section heads met weekly with the Usher of the Black Rod to discuss operational issues relating to the whole office, and met regularly with their teams to discuss performance and other work-related issues. The office contributed to productivity improvements, as detailed in the 'Management and accountability' section of this report.

The performance of individual staff members was evaluated through the performance communication scheme, in accordance with the certified agreement. All but one of the Black Rod's Office staff were assessed overall as 'effective or better'. Formal performance monitoring procedures were put in place to address this issue.

Significant changes in functions and services

The transfer of security staff from the two chamber departments to the then Joint House Department was completed in October 2003, and the transfer of the security function was finalised at the end of 2003.

In order to formalise oversight of security matters, on 16 June 2004 the Senate agreed to recommendations from the Appropriations and Staffing Committee to amend that committee's terms of reference to give it explicit capacity to continue its oversight of security funding and administration on behalf of the Senate. The committee also recommended an amendment to the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* to establish the Security Management Board and its membership on a statutory basis (see Outcome 1 for further details).

The department faced a significant challenge in formulating its response to the expected transfer of senators' printing to the Department of Finance and Administration. At the end of 2003–04, the transfer had not been implemented and therefore its impact on the workload of the Senate Printing and Desktop Publishing Subsection could not be assessed.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

This year's increase in demand for printing services was significant. Some increase is not unusual in the year leading up to an election; however, the availability of additional services due to the department's decision last year to employ an in-house desktop publisher and purchase more up-to-date technology met with an overwhelmingly favourable response from senators.

This office depends on the new joint department, the Department of Parliamentary Services, for a range of services, particularly in relation to building services, accommodation modifications and information technology. While appreciating that the changes taking effect in the new department are profound and must distract its staff to a certain extent, the Senate Department is looking forward to more timely services in 2004–05.

Performance outlook

In the year ahead, Output 5.1 will:

- upgrade the existing human resource management system
- conduct a tender process for the next survey of senators' satisfaction with departmental services
- coordinate the senators' survey
- organise ceremonies associated with the opening of the forty-first parliament
- provide support to those senators retiring on 30 June 2005 and to new senators whose terms of service will commence on 1 July 2005.

