

Part 1—Secretary's review

Part 1—Secretary's review

An effective parliament needs excellent support services and administration. For the Australian Parliament, these functions are provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services (**DPS**) and the two chamber departments (the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives).

The body of this report sets out in considerable detail what services DPS provided in the 2008-09 year, as well as the numerous projects initiated or completed during that year. We also detail the level of financial and other resources needed to deliver those programs.

DPS staff can be justifiably proud of our achievements, big and small, over the last year, and I believe that it is best to consider these achievements against the background of the “big picture” events that have been unfolding in and around the Parliament.

On the one hand, 2008-09 was a “normal” mid-term year, without significant electoral activity. On the other hand, 2008-09 was always going to be a busy year for DPS because of the work rate of a new Government intent on implementing a large number of pre-election policy commitments. Moreover, from about July/August 2008, the work of the Government and the Parliament became much more complicated because of the unfolding Global Financial Crisis (**GFC**). It is fair to say that the GFC has dominated much of the discussion and debate throughout the reporting year, and will have significant consequences for Australia, the Parliament and DPS for some years to come.

Some of the key DPS work groups supporting Parliament through this busy and turbulent period have included our Library (providing advice to Senators and Members about many emerging issues) and Content Management Branch (providing Hansard and broadcast records of proceedings).

So, how do we measure the performance of DPS during 2008-09? There are four ways in which we have done this.

Firstly, we use a large number of detailed performance indicators. The results are listed in the “Report on Performance” section of this report. Generally, the results are positive.

Secondly, we conduct a customer satisfaction survey once a Parliament (every three years). The most recent survey was completed in July 2009. Key respondents to this survey include Senators, Members and their staff, as well as staff of the chamber departments and our own staff. In total we had some 559 responses. At the time of writing, the results are still being fully analysed, but the overall outcomes are generally positive. I will provide more detail about this survey in the 2009-10 DPS Annual Report.

Thirdly, we have initiated a survey of our own staff. The survey was conducted by ORIMA Research in the autumn of 2009. ORIMA has conducted similar surveys of many other large and small organisations, including numerous agencies within the Australian Public Service (**APS**).

Some 554 staff responded to the survey, which is a 62% response rate. The results provide some important messages for everybody in DPS. When we measured job satisfaction and satisfaction with DPS, the results showed we were very similar to many mid-sized APS agencies. On a very positive note, our staff generally believe that their jobs allow them to use their skills, knowledge and abilities. However, the survey also makes it clear that we can do better in a number of areas, including communication (upwards, laterally and downwards), work-life balance, career progression and recognition. Tackling these issues will need to be an important part of how we do business from here on.

Fourthly, I identified five key priorities in the 2007-08 report, and it is pleasing to report good progress on all of these, as set out below.

» “Important projects” have included commissioning and completing the new child care facility (Capital Hill Early Childhood Centre), upgrading the Staff Dining Room, providing a new ParllInfo IT system, wireless connectivity for laptop computers in committee rooms, and a new, user-friendly intranet for DPS.

» Client focus has been the subject of one of our forward-looking task groups, which I will return to later. The DPS 2009 Customer

Satisfaction Survey was also completed.

» Climate change actions have included continuation of our existing energy and water conservation programs, as well as a large trial planting of couch grass on the sports field below the Senate entrance. Couch grass uses around half the water of the previous blend. However, at the time of writing, we are still assessing whether the winter colour of couch grass will be suitable for this building. The other major climate change task has been the completion of a major energy audit. As we progressively implement the recommendations of this audit, we will be able to further reduce the carbon footprint of Parliament House.

» Infrastructure maintenance and modernisation continued on many fronts, including new door-locks, replacement of x-ray machines, committee room microphones and vision mixers, as well as renewal of much irrigation pipe work.

» Service delivery has continued throughout the year, and has remained within budget. We have also initiated reviews of key service delivery areas such as internal security and facilities management. These reviews will assist us to live within available budgets for future years. I thank all involved staff for their cooperation.

What then for the future? I consider it essential that any organisation develops its own ideas about the future. For DPS, in late 2008 we established five task groups to think about the future of the Parliament and of DPS, under the overall banner of "Supporting the Future Parliament".

Each task group focused on a particular aspect of our operations, and developed ideas about how our business might change over the next 15 to 20 years. In particular, the task groups separately considered:

- » Customer service
- » Enhancing productivity
- » Environmental performance
- » Workforce development
- » Renewal and modernisation.

The reports from these task groups are now being analysed and should allow DPS to develop a new overall strategic plan, taking into consideration security considerations and a challenging budget outlook. While nothing is certain in life (or Parliament), especially about funding levels, I believe this new plan will assist all in DPS to understand where we need to go over the next 15 to 20 years.

In the shorter term our operational budget is under considerable pressure. The work rate of a new Government has greatly increased the level of parliamentary activity, including chamber business and committee business. There is a flow-on increase in DPS operating costs. However the available operating funds for DPS have changed very little for nine years; in terms of purchasing capacity our budget has declined significantly over this period. Without extra funds, we will therefore need to continue to operate with increasing frugality. This will require a strong focus from DPS officers at all levels to minimise our operating costs, including the direct and indirect costs of staff, as well as the services we purchase externally. Furthermore, while we will aim to provide good quality services in support of both Chambers and the committee system, it is inevitable that we will need to progressively adjust other services around Parliament House so as to remain within budget.

On a different note, with Parliament House valued at around \$2 billion, sustaining the building and its infrastructure is the other key DPS responsibility. Our capital funding for this is enabling a major renewal and improvement program for the Parliament over the next two years. Major projects will include: a new Hansard Production System; new Parliament House web site; digitisation of further Hansard and broadcast records; and modernisation and expansion of our closed circuit TV systems. We will also reactivate some of the water features around the building by collecting rainfall run-off from around the building.

Over the same two years, we will also be reviewing and improving our security systems.

Responding to the results of the recent customer satisfaction and staff satisfaction surveys is a further key priority for DPS. Results of both surveys suggest the need to improve communications, and this will be a high priority.

Before I conclude, I wish to thank the Speaker of the House, Mr Harry Jenkins MP, and the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon John Hogg, for their support over the year. I also thank the chamber departments for their cooperation.

My final thanks go to the staff of DPS for a job well done. We publicly recognise the contributions of our staff in two ways.

Firstly, we continue to recognise people who have made major contributions to Parliament, DPS and the broader community, through Australia Day Awards. In total, we recognised 11 staff in this way in early 2009. My thanks to all of these officers (see the case study on page 14). Secondly, in 2008-09, responding to a suggestion by a DPS staff member, we also instituted a system of Long Service Pins. It has been very gratifying to be able to recognise the contribution of over 300 DPS staff with 10 or more years service through the award of these pins.

I look forward to working with DPS staff to deliver services to the Parliament for the year 2009-10 and beyond.

Alan Thompson

Staff recognition – Australia Day Achievement Medallions

Renee Buckley is the Change Manager for DPS and has been instrumental in the department's restructure and Continuous Improvement Reviews (CIR). Her effort in coordinating and facilitating the various CIRs in the department has been exemplary.

Tony Dibley played the major role in co-ordinating and undertaking an unprecedented number of moves of Parliament House artwork in 2008. Much of the movement was related to the changes following the 2007 election, but there was also activity associated with events such as the 20th anniversary Open Day.

Trevor Fowler has enjoyed an uninterrupted and distinguished Hansard career spanning 30 years, during which he has provided non-partisan and impartial advice and service to both houses of Parliament and to parliamentary committees. His English language skills are of the highest order and he has trained, mentored and advised several generations of Hansard editors.

Colin Hudson has been instrumental in establishing and maintaining the strategy for the "Floating Painter". This role provides a flexible method of achieving an increased output for maintaining the building.

Clare Lonergan has made significant contributions to DPS in a number of areas. Clare is passionate about the environment and the environmental performance of Parliament House. She has been instrumental in many activities designed to ensure that DPS meets its objective of reducing Parliament House's impact upon the environment.

Martin Lumb is a member of the Politics and Public Administration (PPA) Section in the Parliamentary Library and has been the Editor of the Library's flagship publication, the *Parliamentary Handbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*, since 1985. Martin recently played a key role in completing the publication of his 9th Handbook, which is a remarkable achievement.

Riz Risteovski has worked in Parliament House since 1988 which has provided her with excellent corporate knowledge. Currently Riz manages the Recruitment Team and has shown superior leadership in improving recruitment processes for the department. Riz is receptive to change and has been an active member of the Strategy and Business Service Branch Continuous Improvement Review team.

Walter Manning has been the driving influence for DPS blood donations to the Australian Red Cross Blood Service. As a result of his encouragement, DPS is recognised as a significant contributor to the Red Cross Blood Service, often placing in the top 10 contributors in the Corporate Challenge for government department and agencies, both in total number of donations and by donations as a percentage of staff numbers.

ParlInfo Project Replacement Team consists of Rina Bretell, Rekha Vanamali and Shirley White. The Project team formed in 2007 and the new ParlInfo Search system was successfully integrated with various Parliament House information systems by the end of 2008. Collectively they did a remarkable job of sorting out user requirements—including moderating where users had completely different priorities. Overall they have displayed all the attributes that we value in DPS—commitment to achieve a quality service; ability to work well with stakeholders and clients; and the ability to plan and deliver innovative services.

