

Clerk of the House, Ian Harris.

WORLD EVENTS
CONTINUED TO HAVE
A DIRECT IMPACT ON
THE DEPARTMENT.

Overviews

Review by the Clerk

Our role

The Department of the House of Representatives advises the House and supports its representative and legislative roles. As a department, we assist the House, its committees, individual members and their offices, and foster the relations of the House and Parliament with the community and with other parliaments, here and overseas.

The political issues of the day drive much of the work of the parliamentary departments, and the forums we service are Australia's key political arenas. Our job is to support the House and all its members, regardless of their politics, with a highly professional, impartial and, where appropriate, confidential service. The volatility of politics means we are never certain about future demands on the department, and we must remain flexible and committed.

Unusual developments during the past year called for both flexibility and innovation. For example, the cloning and embryo legislation involved a series of rare 'free votes', and for the first time the House divided a bill, requiring procedural innovation and consideration of constitutional and processing issues. Some debates were almost unprecedentedly long: 38 hours on human cloning and embryo research, and some 71 hours on Iraq – a considerable proportion of the sitting time of the House. The routine legislative and representative work of the House had to be fitted in around such debates, and the department needed to be flexible in programming and in processing Chamber business. Changes to the sitting hours, which omitted meal breaks, also demanded that we be responsive and develop new staffing arrangements and procedures for quorums and divisions.

The year in review

World events continued to have a direct impact on the department, particularly in relation to security. Parliament House is a great national symbol, and we were challenged to provide a safe environment for those who work in the building or who visit it. The interdepartmental Security Management Board – established at the beginning of 2002–03 in response to the report of the Parliamentary Service Commissioner, Andrew Podger – guided a continuing security upgrade. The Podger review also recommended the centralisation, in the Joint House

WE DEvised A NEW
WAY TO MEASURE
SATISFACTION WITH
OUR SERVICES.

Department, of security services for the whole of Parliament House, where previously security had been a shared responsibility of the departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Presiding Officers agreed to the recommended new structure, which will operate under a purchaser-provider arrangement, and the first stage of the handover was completed on 1 July 2003. The Serjeant-at-Arms will continue to serve on the Security Management Board.

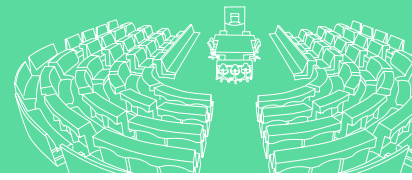
Andrew Podger presented his report on other aspects of the administration of parliamentary services in October 2002. The review recommended the amalgamation of the three parliamentary departments that serve both Houses, with the Chamber departments to remain independent. The review further recommended that, if the amalgamation could not be achieved, a shared services centre should be established to provide human resources and finance and office services. The Speaker and I supported the recommendations. I was pleased that the Podger review team agreed that the Department of the House of Representatives had the most efficient corporate services area and was very efficient in other areas too.

A new three-year corporate plan came into effect in July 2002 and the department is already a good way 'down the track' in implementing the plan's priorities for improvement. A working group, set up to review performance indicators across the department, reported in April 2003; the new indicators were in place at the beginning of the 2003-04 financial year.

During 2002-03, we introduced a new approach to measure satisfaction with our services, surveying a random sample of 30 members in June 2003. We will conduct this survey annually, with a different sample of members each time, to assess our work and look for ways to improve. Results from the first survey are described later in this report, but I am pleased to note here that 70 per cent of the members contacted participated and 16 made time for an interview. We asked 15 questions, and most members were highly satisfied or better with departmental services.

Improvements in our services to members included enhanced electronic delivery of material. For example, in May 2003 the department was able to reduce the number of hard-copy budget papers supplied to members by promoting and providing better access to electronic versions. Together with other parliamentary departments, we also began work on a parliamentarians' portal for easy access to commonly used information held on the internet and parliamentary intranets.

Compared with financial year 2001-02, in which a federal election was held, 2002-03 saw activity return to more normal levels as the House moved into the middle part of the election cycle. From an unusually low base in the previous year, the number of sittings of the House and meetings of the Main Committee rose by 43 per cent, with total sitting and



meeting time rising almost 50 per cent to 845 hours. The number of bills introduced declined slightly, to 203 from 214 last year, and the number of bills assented to increased to 160 from 143 last year. There continued to be dramatic fluctuations in the level of committee activity – the number of meetings supported by the department, having dropped nearly 60 per cent in 2001–02, rose by 85 per cent in 2002–03. The number of committee reports presented rose by only 3 per cent to 67 but will build up as inquiries move from evidence gathering to reporting stages. Appendices 1 to 4 detail the levels of activity of the House and its committees during the year.

The department continued to develop outreach programs. In one guest lecture program, which aims to broaden ties between the House of Representatives and tertiary institutions, the Speaker and I presented lectures about the role of the House to students at their places of study. Following successful lectures at selected universities last year, and with the strong support of the Speaker, we have invited all Australian tertiary institutions to participate in future.

We also made the department's centenary CD-ROM and documentary *A House for the Nation* more widely available through sales to members, institutions and the public, a touchscreen kiosk in Parliament House and a web version which will be available early in 2003–04. I was delighted when the CD-ROM was selected as a finalist in the 'best tertiary educational resource' category of the prestigious Australian Teachers of Media Awards for 2003.

In April 2003, I was honoured to be the first Australian elected as President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, an international organisation constituted as a consultative body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In the three-year term of my presidency, I will work to strengthen democratic practices in parliamentary institutions and foster the development of parliamentary staff around the world. The additional responsibilities will impose some burdens on the department, but will also help us foster international parliamentary capacity and provide development opportunities for departmental staff.

Attracting, developing and retaining a corps of committed, skilled and knowledgeable staff is one of the department's most important responsibilities. Our accreditation under the international 'Investors in People' standard was renewed after an independent audit in 2002, and we will continue to use this as a measure of our commitment to positive practices. I intend to supplement this approach by surveying the department's staff to determine what they see as important in the workplace.

AS PRESIDENT I WILL
WORK TO STRENGTHEN
DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES
IN PARLIAMENTARY
INSTITUTIONS AROUND
THE WORLD.

Our fourth regular leadership survey allowed staff to give anonymous feedback on the performance of their supervisors, the Senior Executive Service staff and me, in relation to 13 leadership skills and behaviours outlined in our Leadership Statement. The Australian Public Service Commission's publication *Building capability: A framework for managing learning and development in the APS* includes our highly structured leadership evaluation program as a case study under principle 7 – evaluation of learning and development.

The department formalised its work on knowledge management by appointing a steering committee to identify and coordinate knowledge management activities and initiatives. The steering committee will oversee a project to upgrade our records management, for which a specialist records manager is being recruited. One activity begun during the year was a program of briefings on Committee Office operations, to complement existing briefing programs on general parliamentary topics and procedural discussions.

An early retirement provision in our certified agreement, aimed at improving the mix of skills in the department, resulted in the departure of 16 staff members. While the initiative made a positive contribution to our future workforce needs, the loss of some 224 years of accumulated parliamentary experience in a small department highlights the importance of sharing and passing on corporate knowledge. We will continue to focus on workforce planning and knowledge management during the coming years.

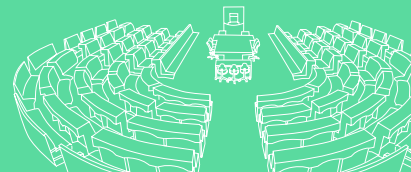
Our financial result, while showing a surplus because of a technical issue of bringing into the accounts the balances in two trust accounts, reflected an underlying loss. The underlying loss was caused by increased expenses for additional security at Parliament House in response to the changed security environment, and by pressure from other departmental services in a non-election year. The loss this year is balanced by a surplus made last financial year when there was reduced activity in an election year. Our budgetary position will be tight next financial year as legislative and committee activity reaches a peak at the end of the Fortieth Parliament.

Outlook

As we move into 2003–04 and the election-driven parliamentary cycle reaches its peak workload, the department aims to make significant progress towards the priorities listed in the 2002–05 corporate plan.

Security will remain a significant focus while the Security Management Board continues its program of progressive security upgrades. The transfer of security operations to the Joint House Department puts our department, with the Department of the Senate, in the role of contract manager for the service, as funding remains with the Chamber departments. Managing such a large contract will be a new challenge for us.

SECURITY
WILL REMAIN
A SIGNIFICANT
FOCUS.



The Podger review's recommendations on other aspects of the administration of the Parliament were agreed to by the House of Representatives on 14 August 2003 and the Senate on 18 August 2003. The Houses agreed to the abolition of the three joint service departments – the Department of the Parliamentary Library, the Joint House Department and the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff – with effect from 31 January 2004, and the creation of a new Department of Parliamentary Services with effect from 1 February 2004. I am delighted that the Houses have decided to fully implement the recommendations of the Podger review and will be working to ensure a smooth transition to the new administrative arrangements.

Some additional funding was provided in the 2003–04 Budget for improved security for the Budget year and the following three years, but this will be offset for the three out-years by a requirement over those years to find savings of \$18.8 million across the parliamentary departments. These must be achieved either by the implementation of the Podger recommendations or by other means, which will place considerable pressure on resources, including those needed for the work of committees. In 2001–02, the department supported four additional committees without receiving additional resources; we now support a fifth extra committee. Activity levels of all committees are likely to peak over the next year or so, resulting in significant pressure in this area.

A new certified agreement is due to be negotiated by the end of 2003. Despite pressure on our budget, the department will try to maintain the competitive pay and conditions, opportunities for staff development, positive working environment and sound management practices that make ours an attractive place to work. We will also look for ways to encourage our highly skilled and experienced staff to remain within the department.

Knowledge management issues, including the records management project, will be an important focus. We will also be looking at the results of the survey of members, to assess the priorities that the members place on various services and consider where improvements might be made.

The detailed performance sections of this report outline specific measures the department will take to maintain and improve performance in 2003–04. We expect the next year to be increasingly busy, with growing parliamentary and committee activity and the normal political uncertainties of parliamentary government. Funding increased activity, compulsory savings and the new certified agreement – from a budget with little remaining scope for productivity gains – will be a major challenge.

Ian Harris
Clerk of the House of Representatives



Trish Bicket sets up the Chamber Table for a sitting.



Clerk of the House, Ian Harris, donating laptop computers to Tony Graham, ACT Rural Fire Service, and Jim Lomas, NSW Rural Fire Service.



Speaker, Neil Andrew, unveils the House for the Nation touchscreen kiosk.



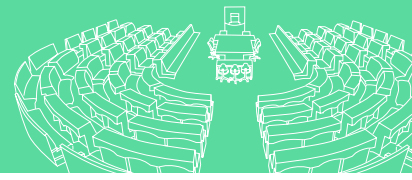
Clerk of the House, Ian Harris and Fortunio Rocca, gold and silversmith with the Mace made by Mr Rocca as a gift for the Tongan Legislative Assembly from the Australian Branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.



Keith Johnson retrieving House records from the document store.



John Murphy MP lodges a question on notice with James Rees.



Serjeant-at-Arms, David Elder, briefs Mr Kang Yong-shik, Secretary-General, and other officials of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.



Joanne Towner, Peter Mason and Richard Selth address an About the House Seminar in Hobart.



Senator Peter Cook (centre) with Quinton Clements and Margaret Swieringa at Casey Station, Australian Antarctic Territory, for the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories.



Briefing for members and staff by US Congressional Science Fellows chaired by Gary Naim MP, Chair of the Standing Committee on Science and Innovation.

Photos: AUSPIC and members of the department's staff.

SUPPORTING
THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES
AND THE
PARLIAMENT
BY PROVIDING
ADVICE AND
SERVICES OF THE
HIGHEST POSSIBLE
STANDARD

Departmental overview

Role and functions

The Department of the House of Representatives was established under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* and is one of five parliamentary departments supporting the Australian Parliament.

The other four parliamentary departments – the Department of the Senate, the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff, the Department of the Parliamentary Library and the Joint House Department – report separately to Parliament.

The department's purpose, as set out in its corporate plan, is to support the House of Representatives and the Parliament by providing advice and services of the highest possible standard.

In 2002–03 the department provided services to support the work of the House of Representatives and its committees and a number of joint committees. The department provided a range of services for members, principally in Parliament House. The department also was responsible for the Parliament's international and regional relations and for activities to promote the work of the House in the community.

The department worked in partnership with the Department of the Senate and other parliamentary departments, the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General and executive agencies to ensure that the outcomes of parliamentary proceedings were processed and recorded accurately and on time.

Organisational structure

In financial year 2002–03, the departmental structure comprised nine offices managed by the Senior Executive – that is, the Clerk of the House, the Deputy Clerk, two Clerks Assistant and the Serjeant-at-Arms (the two Clerks Assistant and the Serjeant-at-Arms are Senior Executive Service Band 1 staff).

In April 2003, management responsibility for the Security Controller's Office was transferred from the department (under the Serjeant-at-Arms) to the Joint House Department, prior to the formal transfer of security operations as a whole to the Joint House Department.

The organisational structure at 30 June 2003 is shown in Figure 1.

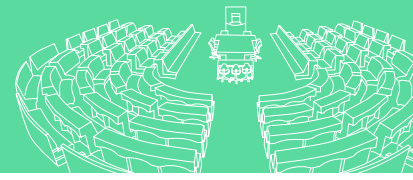
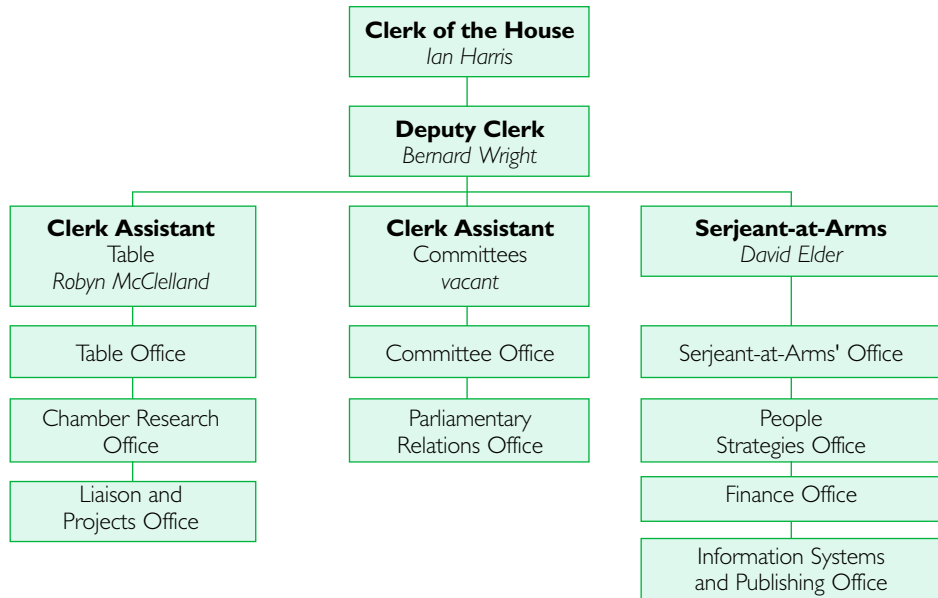


Figure 1 Organisational structure (30 June 2003)



Outcome and output structure

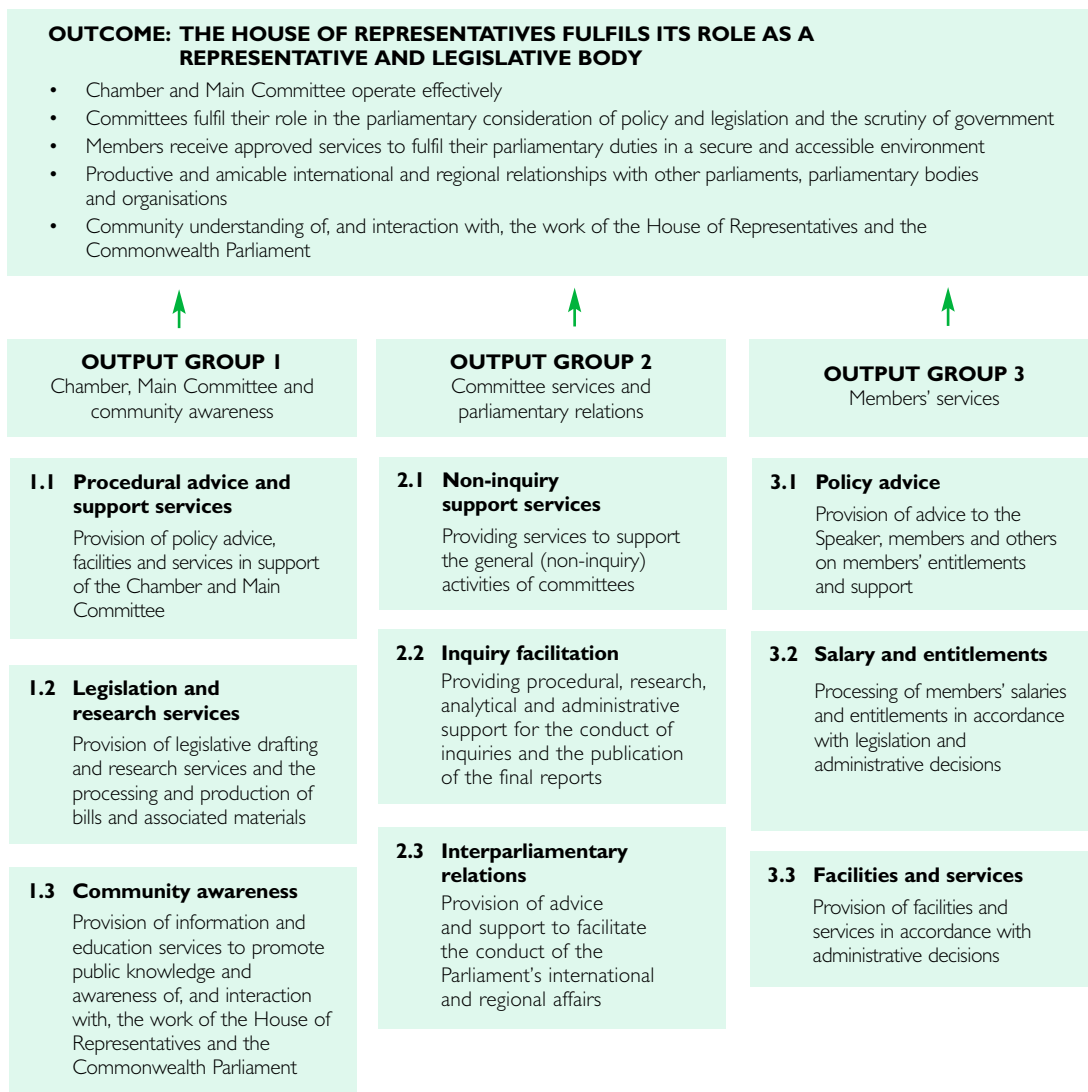
The department contributes to a single outcome:

The House of Representatives fulfils its role as a representative and legislative body.

The outcome and output structure and reporting framework for 2002–03 remained consistent with that described in the department's 2002–03 Portfolio Budget Statements. The department's outcome and output structure is shown in Figure 2 and the relationship between the output structure and the organisational structure is shown in Figure 3.

During 2002–03 a working group on performance information, chaired by the Serjeant-at-Arms, reviewed the outcome and output structure and the performance information in the Portfolio Budget Statements. As a result, the structures of the output groups were revised slightly to better reflect the department's activities and enable more precise reporting, and the ways in which performance would be measured against each indicator were identified. The department will report against the revised Portfolio Budget Statements at the end of 2003–04.

Figure 2 Outcome and outputs structure (30 June 2003)



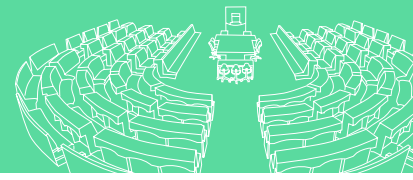


Figure 3 Relationship between output structure and organisational structure (30 June 2003)



Output 1

Chamber, Main Committee and community awareness

Manager
Clerk Assistant (Table)

Deputy Clerk
Staff from other outputs who provide assistance when the House sits

Table Office
Chamber support

Chamber Research Office
Parliamentary and procedural research
Provision of information and publications

Committees
Selection, Publications, Procedure, Members' Interests, Privileges, Broadcasting

Liaison and Projects Office
Promotion, information and publications
Liaison with Parliamentary Education Office

Serjeant-at-Arms' Office
Chamber and ceremonial duties
School visits
Citizenship Visits Program

Output 2

Committee services and parliamentary relations

Manager
Clerk Assistant (Committees)

Committee secretariats
Support for 22 committees

Liaison Committee for Chairs and Deputy Chairs

Parliamentary Relations Office
Includes support of membership of parliamentary associations

Output 3

Members' services

Manager
Serjeant-at-Arms

Speaker's staff
Serjeant-at-Arms' Office
Accommodation and support services
House Committee Security

People Strategies Office
Salaries and allowances

Information Systems and Publishing Office
Printing, publishing, Information technology equipment

Finance Office
Administrative support and services

Financial performance

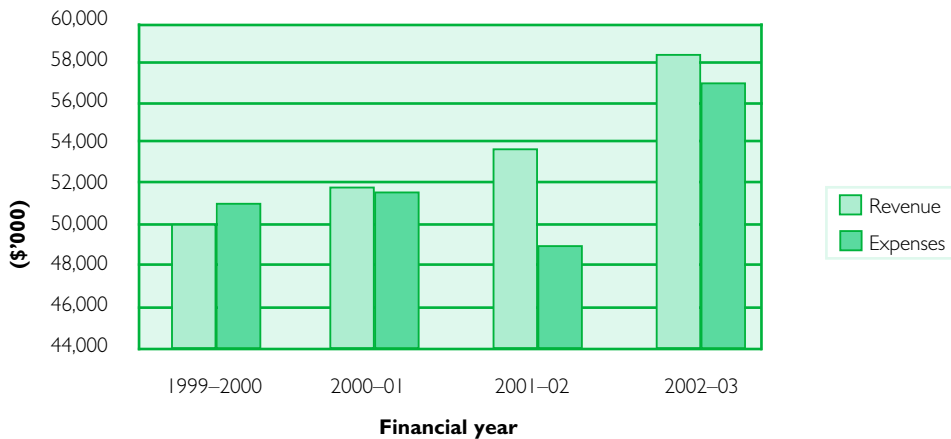
Overview

The 2002–03 Financial Statements show a surplus of \$1.17 million. However, the surplus was achieved as a result of a technical accounting issue of bringing into the accounts the balances in two trust funds that previously were regarded as separate from the department's account. Without this additional revenue, there would have been a loss. The underlying loss resulted from increased expenses associated with the introduction of additional security measures at Parliament House, in response to the changed security environment, and the additional demand for departmental services that is usual in a non-election year. We expect the surplus of \$4.5 million made in financial year 2001–02, when the federal election resulted in a reduced demand for our services, to offset the loss made in 2002–03. Although our budgetary position will be tight next financial year as legislative and committee activity reaches a peak at the end of the Fortieth Parliament, we expect to break even over the term of the Fortieth Parliament.

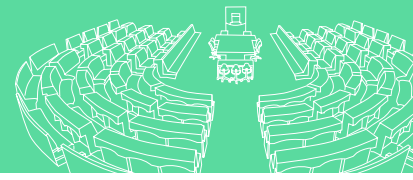
The capital use charge was abolished in 2002–03. This will result in a future reduction in revenue of approximately \$1.7 million.

Figure 4 provides comparative information on the department's financial performance for the period 1999–2000 to 2002–03. Table 1 provides a summary of the department's financial resources for 2002–03.

Figure 4 Financial performance 1999–2000 to 2002–03

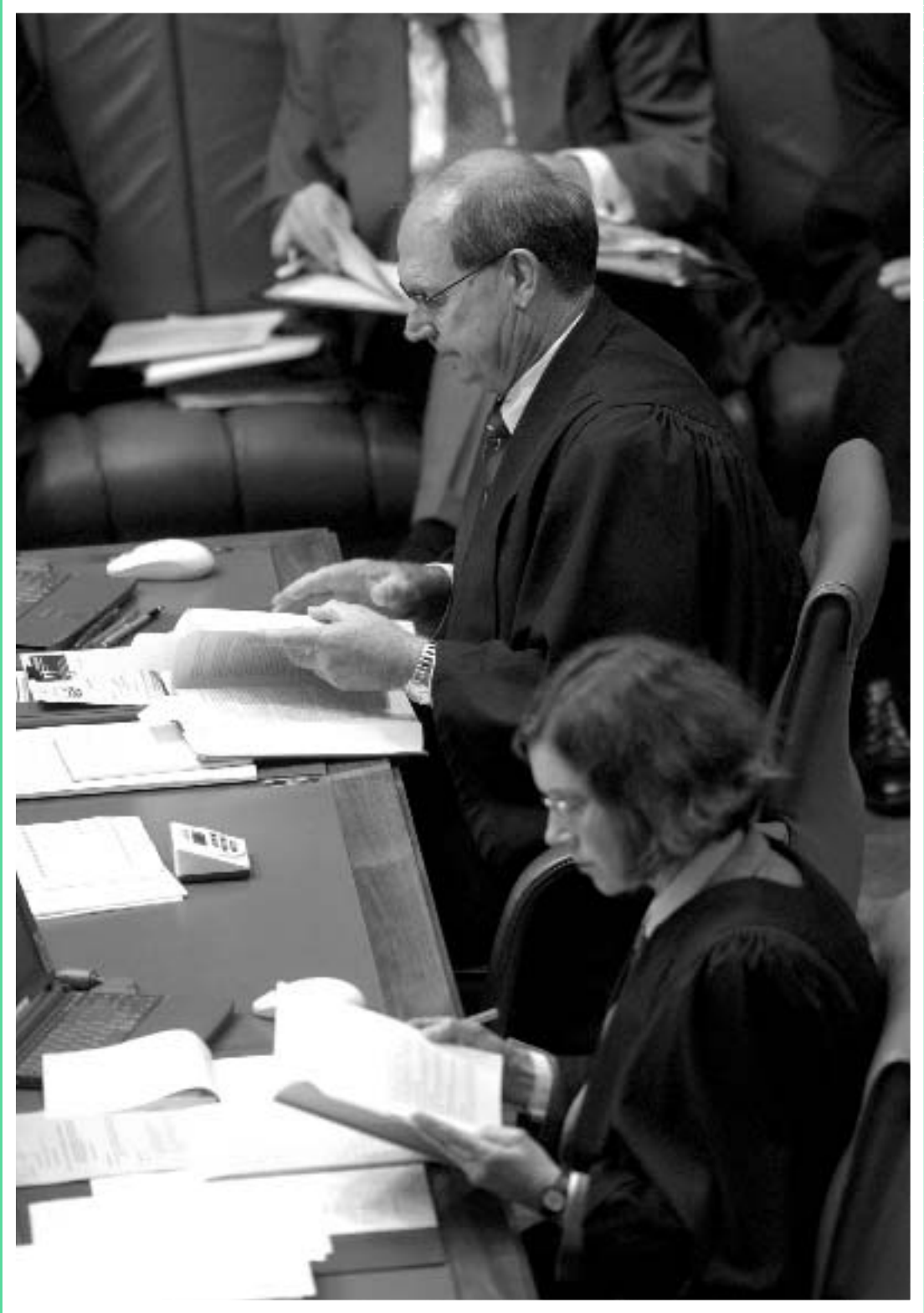


Oracle Financials, the department's new financial management information system, was implemented during the financial year. Ongoing enhancements will assist managers with their decision making.

**Table I Summary of resources for Outcome I**

	Budget 2002-03 \$'000	Actual 2002-03 \$'000	Variance \$'000
Total administered expenses	20,477	21,477	1,000
Price of departmental outputs			
Output groups			
1. Chamber, Main Committee and community awareness	5,246	3,563	(1,683)
2. Committee services and parliamentary relations	9,856	10,001	145
3. Members' services	13,770	16,697	2,927
Revenue from Government (Appropriations) for departmental Outputs	28,872	30,261	1,389
Revenue from other sources	555	414	(141)
Resources received free of charge	3,849	4,860	1,011 ^(a)
Total price of departmental outputs	33,276	35,535	2,259
TOTAL FOR OUTCOME^(a)	53,753	57,012	3,259
	Budget 2002-03	Actual 2002-03	
Staff years (number)	232	225	(7)

^(a) Actual resources received free of charge calculated differently in 2002-03.



Clerk of the House, Ian Harris, and Clerk Assistant (Table), Robyn McClelland, during a sitting of the House.