

PART B

Department Overview

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Department is one of the Parliamentary departments supporting the Australian 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.

The Department provides services to ensure:

- the Chamber and Main Committee operate effectively;
- Parliamentary Committees operate effectively;
- Members receive appropriate services to fulfil their Parliamentary duties in a secure and accessible environment;
- international and regional relationships with other Parliaments, parliamentary bodies and organisations are maintained; and
- the community understands, and interacts with, the work of the House of Representatives and the Commonwealth Parliament.

The Speaker, the Honourable Neil Andrew, MP, has accountability obligations to the Parliament for the Department. The Clerk of the House of Representatives, Ian Harris, is responsible for managing the Department.

The Department acts in partnership with the Department of the Senate, other parliamentary departments, the Office of the Governor-General and relevant government agencies to ensure the outcomes of parliamentary proceedings are processed and recorded accurately and on time.

Factors that may impact on Departmental performance

The pressures on the Department's budget are strongly influenced by the parliamentary cycle. As the forthcoming year is likely to see the peak of the parliamentary cycle, the demands on resources will be significant.

Following the events of 11 September 2001 and 12 October 2002, security at Parliament has been significantly upgraded to respond to an increased level of threat. While the Department indicated last year it would endeavour to meet the additional expenditure

for security from within its budget, the magnitude of the additional measures and the other pressures on the Department's budget have not made this possible. Additional funding of \$25.5m has been provided equally to the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives for enhanced security measures for the next four years. However, this has been substantially offset by savings of \$18.8m across the parliamentary departments to be achieved in 2004-05 to 2006-07 either by implementing the recommendations of the Review of Aspects of the Administration of the Parliament (the Podger Review) or by alternative means. Notionally, the amount of savings to be achieved by the Department is around \$1.2-\$1.3 million in each of the financial years 2004-2005 to 2006-2007. The amount of actual savings to be achieved by the Department will be determined by the Speaker, in consultation with the President of the Senate in relation to the other parliamentary departments. Given the scale of the savings relative to the Department's budget and other competing demands on the budget of the Department, there is little scope to achieve savings without a reduction in services to the Chamber, to committees and/or to Members.

Of particular note is the impact on resources of the work of parliamentary committees. As indicated last year, the Department has supported the work of four additional committees within existing resources. In addition, support is now being given to a House select committee within existing resources. This support will continue to place pressure on the Department's budget, particularly as committee activity is likely to peak in the forthcoming year.

The work of supporting the Chamber also should be very demanding. The enhanced use of information technology in the Chamber support area has enabled the Department to deliver more efficient and better services. Despite the demands of the peak of the parliamentary cycle, the Department will need to provide the resources to meet the needs of Members and the requirements of the House for support of the Chamber and the Main Committee.

The forthcoming year will also see a new certified agreement negotiated with staff. The Department's desire to continue to attract and retain high quality staff will mean that salary rates provided by the certified agreement will need to be competitive. The payment of competitive market rates will place pressure on the Department's budget, with little flexibility available to achieve the productivity gains to fund competitive pay increases.

DEPARTMENTAL OUTCOME

The Department has one outcome:

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

The outcome is supported by three output groups as discussed in Part C of this statement. A major review of the Department's output structure occurred in 2002-03.

The break-up of resources to outputs is shown in Chart 1. The contribution made by organisational units to the outcome and outputs is shown in Chart 2 on the following page.

Chart 1: Resource usage attributed to outputs

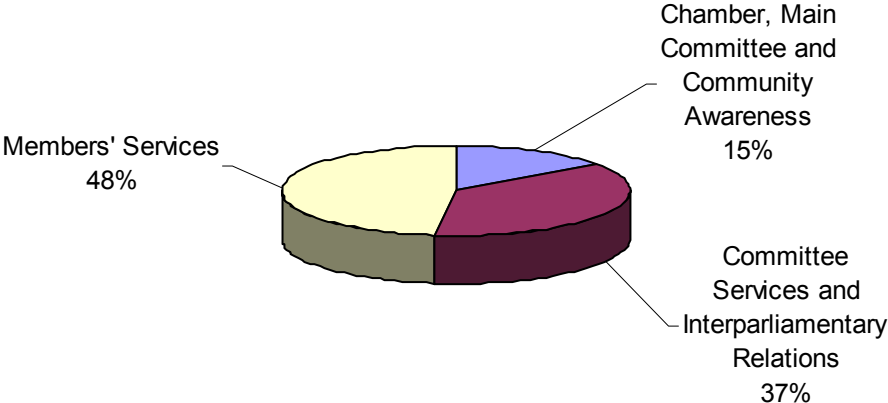


Chart 2: Organisational contribution to the outcome

Department of the House of Representatives
 Relationship between output structure and organisation structure

