

Output Group 3 – Members’ services

Members receive approved services to fulfil their parliamentary duties in a secure and accessible environment

Description

Output Group 3 provides advice, services and support for members. Its activities include the payment of salaries and allowances, the upkeep of accommodation and furniture at Parliament House, and the delivery of office and communication services such as maintaining information technology facilities and printing.

Services to members are provided by the Finance Office, the People Strategies Office, the Information Systems and Publishing Office, and the Serjeant-at-Arms’ Office.

The Presiding Officers accepted the recommendations of the Podger review relating to the security management function. This function is therefore now administered by the Joint House Department under the oversight of the Security Management Board through a purchaser–provider arrangement. The Serjeant-at-Arms represents the department on that board. Funding for this function remains with the Chamber departments.

The actual expenses for the provision of services by Output Group 3 were \$16.70 million, while the budget allocated was \$13.37 million. A summary of the financial resources for the output group is provided in Table 1.

Performance

This output group performed well throughout the year, with members giving positive feedback both formally and informally. Changing work practices and staffing arrangements enabled some savings to be made on service provision in some areas.

3.1 Policy advice

Provision of advice to the Speaker, members and others on members’ entitlements and support

All offices supporting the output provided advice on members’ entitlements to the Speaker, members and others.

3.2 Salary and entitlements

Processing of members' salaries and entitlements in accordance with legislation and administrative decisions

All performance targets were met during the year with all salary variations completed when required and within the 99 per cent accuracy target. The cost per transaction rose from \$4.76 to \$5.44.

One pay rise was processed during the year, increasing the members' rate of pay to \$98,800 per annum with effect from 1 July 2002. Officeholders' additional salaries were also adjusted in accordance with the formula outlined in the parent determination. Feedback received from members indicated that 68 per cent were extremely or highly satisfied and 32 per cent were satisfied with services in relation to their base salary, electorate allowance and deductions.

3.3 Facilities and services

Provision of facilities and services in accordance with administrative decisions

Information services

Four editions of the members' bulletin *House Update* were published during the year to help keep members and their staff informed about developments in the House. In addition, a seminar for new staff of members was held to familiarise them with the work of the House and the services available to assist them in their work. The annual series of briefings on procedural and other developments in relation to the House continued. Feedback indicated that members and their staff valued the regular updates they received from the department.

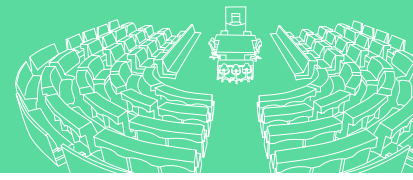
Accommodation services

Twelve members were relocated during the reporting period. The relocation requests were responded to in a timely manner and to the satisfaction of the members.

During the reporting period we received 602 requests for the supply or movement of furniture. Of those requests, 99.88 per cent were processed within the agreed target time. Our agreed target was to satisfy priority 1 tasks within three hours, priority 2 tasks within 12 hours, priority 3 tasks within 24 hours and priority 4 tasks within two to five days.

Maintenance, access and transport services

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office coordinated the responses to requests for both emergency and routine maintenance works. During the reporting period the office processed 367 emergency requests, attending to 99.75 per cent within five minutes of receipt. The office passed to the Joint House Department 334 routine maintenance requests for repairs or alterations to suites or



common areas. These requests often resulted from our procedure of checking all suites at the end of each sitting period.

During the reporting period the office received and dealt with 203 requests for telephone support. Of those, 37 related to faults and were reported within five minutes of receipt to telephone support officers, who actioned them all within the agreed 45 minutes.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office processed 764 individual applications for access to suites. The office processed a further 97 multiple requests (requests for access to all members' suites).

The Hyatt Catering Service made 223 requests for access to Parliament House facilities, such as the Great Hall, the Mural Hall and the private dining rooms. The office returned 93 of these with requests for further information. The office considered every request within one working day of its receipt, and granted all but one.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office coordinated transport services for members, including the members' shuttle service available during sitting weeks. Our agreed target was to conduct the transport service without error; we achieved a 99.85 per cent success rate for the year, out of approximately 4,500 bookings.

Information technology services

The Information Systems and Publishing Office completed a rollout of new laptop computers for members during the year. The new laptop is a lighter and smaller model, more suited for use in the Chamber and while travelling, and was well received by members. After having the hard drives erased, the department donated 14 of the superseded laptops to the Rural Fire Services of the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales to assist them in their duties.

A new computer operating system (Windows XP) was tested and will be rolled out to members early in the new financial year. The system has already been implemented for departmental users. It offers several advantages in improved productivity, being more stable, easier to use and better performing than the obsolete platform. A particular advantage for remote and mobile users is that it will provide more consistent access to services and information.

Following their successful implementation in committee offices, trialling of new multifunction devices for members' suites took place during the year. These devices replaced photocopiers that had come to the end of their working lives, and will provide increased functionality.

Departmental staff participated in an interparliamentary working group planning the implementation of a new parliamentarians' intranet.

Messenger services

The agreed target for messenger services was to provide the services within the periods specified in the service charter. No complaints were received and the service charter approach adopted by the messengerial attendants continued to be very successful.

The messenger services continued to be staffed by a small core group of full-time ongoing staff supplemented by part-time or sessional staff as the need arose. There were fewer full-time staff in 2002–03, and the strategy resulted in considerable salary savings compared with salary costs in 2001–02.

Printing services

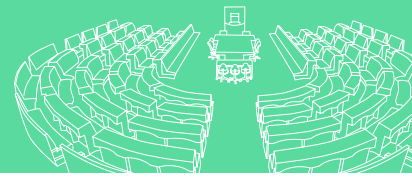
The department's in-house printing centre continued to print those documents that were needed within short time frames for the efficient running of the House. The overall print room output was in the order of 14.76 million impressions. While this is an increase on the total reached in the previous reporting period, which included an election break, it is just over half the number of impressions made in the corresponding period in the last parliamentary cycle. The decrease in impressions was due to a change in work practices, primarily in the Table and Committee Offices, whereby more information was provided in electronic format or by print-on-demand. The increase in the number of documents provided electronically was facilitated by the installation of multifunction devices in work areas. These enabled work groups to turn their hard copy into portable document format (PDF) documents that they could send electronically or publish on the intranet or website.

During 2002–03, 6.57 million impressions were printed for members as part of their in-house printing allowances. This represents an increase of 20 per cent on the total reached in 2001–02, an election year. The average turnaround time for this work was fewer than seven working days, representing a 30 per cent improvement in service provision. The improvements were due to changes made to work practices during the year and the training of printing staff in the use of Digipath, software used in the pre-press stage of printing. Members indicated that they were satisfied with the in-house printing service, 70 per cent being either highly or extremely satisfied and another 25 per cent being satisfied.

Internet services

An upgrade in the members' homepage generator software resulted in members' homepages being updated in a more timely manner. Improvements were also made to the electronic processing of our *List of Members*, making it available in PDF format on our website rather than in hard copy.

During the year, a new web server was built and implemented by the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff, resulting in improvements in the security and performance of our internet site.



Security services

Security continued to be an important focus for all parliamentary departments, following the terrorist incidents in the United States on 11 September 2001 and in Bali on 12 October 2002. A heightened level of threat existed during the reporting period. Enhanced security measures were progressively introduced to ensure that security at Parliament House was adequate to meet the heightened threat level whilst maintaining the accessibility expected of the nation's parliament building.

The success of the new security arrangements was partly demonstrated by the absence of unwelcome incidents during the year. The adequacy of security measures was also tested internally, through a program of random checks on staff members' performance against the agreed security procedures and protocols. Of the members surveyed, 50 per cent were either extremely or highly satisfied, and 45 per cent were satisfied, with their experience of the security service.

In addition, in May 2003 a national counter-terrorist exercise was conducted, with a major aspect taking place in the parliamentary precincts, in order to practise and validate national counter-terrorist management arrangements and test and develop counter-terrorist capabilities. Parliamentary security services played a significant role in the exercise, which achieved its objectives.

As noted in last year's annual report, the Podger review recommended changes to improve the administration and management of parliamentary security. Following the acceptance by the Presiding Officers of those recommendations, considerable work was undertaken on their implementation. The detail of the changes is discussed below.

Management and administration

The implementation of the Podger review recommendations will significantly improve governance and administrative arrangements in relation to security. During 2002–03 the interim Security Management Board (SMB), established in response to the review last financial year, became a permanent body with overall responsibility for security at Parliament House. The SMB, which meets at least monthly, comprehensively reviewed security arrangements in Parliament House and advised the Presiding Officers on enhancing security measures.

The transfer of the security function and all security staff from the departments of the Senate and the House of Representatives to the Joint House Department, as recommended by the Podger review, is proceeding. Responsibility for the management of the administrative and managerial security staff was transferred to the Joint House Department in April 2003. We expect responsibility for operational security staff to be transferred early next financial year. The concentration of the security function in a single department will enable better coordination of security and a single, consistent approach to staffing the security service.

The departments of the Senate and the House of Representatives will continue to fund the security function, and a memorandum of understanding has been developed to cover the terms of the provision of the security service by the Joint House Department. The memorandum specifies the service levels and standards expected of the service.

Operational enhancements

Significant operational enhancements resulted from the SMB's comprehensive ongoing review of security arrangements at Parliament House. Physical security around the building was considerably enhanced, including through:

- installing permanent gates and barriers at the ministerial entrance, to restrict vehicle access
- installing electronically controlled boom gates at the Senate and House of Representatives underground car park entrances
- increasing restrictions on parking and leaving vehicles unattended at the Senate and House of Representatives entrances
- restricting pedestrians' access to the roof of Parliament House via the grassed ramps (pedestrians can still gain access from inside the building, having undergone security screening)
- installing barriers across the forecourt and main entrance at the front of Parliament House, to restrict vehicle access
- increasing the number of Australian Protective Service officers deployed in the precincts of Parliament House, and introducing explosive-detection dogs and specially trained bicycle patrol officers.

The SMB developed protocols and procedures for handling suspect mail items and for allowing access to members' and senators' suites, and the department sought to raise awareness of those protocols and procedures among all staff.

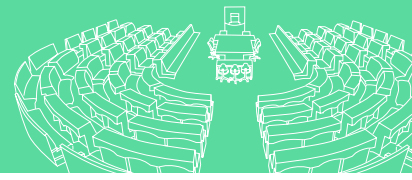
Events in the precincts

There were 42 events held in the Parliament House assembly area during the year, ranging from large demonstrations to solitary vigils. Although many of the events attracted considerable interest – from members, senators, the press and the general public – all protest activities and events were contained within the protest area and proceeded without disrupting the Parliament.

The Presiding Officers' *Guidelines for the conduct of protests and demonstrations in the Parliamentary Precincts* were redrafted during the year, to make them more readable and up-to-date. The major amendment restricted protest activities to the hours between sunrise and sunset, and arose from some protest participants' attempts to camp at Parliament House overnight.

Visits by foreign dignitaries

The Security Controller's Office – which until it was transferred to the Joint House Department in April 2003 was responsible to the Serjeant-at-Arms – consulted extensively with law enforcement and intelligence agencies regarding security for 127 visits by foreign dignitaries and many other formal visits to Parliament House during the year. The Parliamentary Security Service and Australian Protective Service provided personnel to facilitate all the visits of foreign dignitaries, which proceeded without any security incidents. The Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which arranges such visits, commented favourably on the efficiency and cooperation shown by the Parliamentary Security Service.



Improving performance

The in-house printing service improved its performance during 2002–03, particularly in relation to its services for members. Printing staff were trained in the use of Digipath, enabling greater flexibility in staffing arrangements, and the trialling of new staffing arrangements in the publishing office resulted in the streamlining of the flow of work to the printing service.

The process of reviewing and refining the presentation of information on the House of Representatives website will be assisted by the implementation of the latest version of Webtrends – a web usage analysis tool – and specialised training undertaken by staff. Staff from the Information Systems and Publishing Office were recently trained as Webtrends administrators and will be able to assist work areas in the department to generate and analyse web usage reports. This should improve the information provided to members and the public on our website.

During the year, several work areas were staffed by ongoing staff members supplemented by part-time or sessional staff as needs arose. This strategy resulted in considerable savings and the ability to match staffing arrangements to our clients' needs.

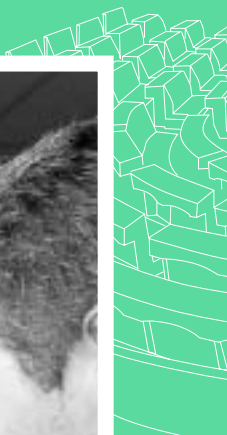
Finally, as outlined previously, the security arrangements at Parliament House were significantly enhanced during the year.

Outlook

It was noted last year that a more effective system would be devised and implemented for obtaining regular feedback from members about their needs and their expectations of the department's services. As mentioned in the Clerk's review, the first of the new-style annual surveys of members was completed in 2002–03 (more detail is provided in the Management and Accountability chapter). The survey provided, and will continue to provide in future years, valuable information that will enable us to cater even more effectively for the needs of members.

An upgrade to the department's intranet software is planned for the coming year. This will streamline the log-in process and improve functionality for all users of the system, with particular benefits for our publishing staff.

The challenge in the security area will be to sustain the increased security effort for the foreseeable future, perhaps in the face of an even more serious threat. The changes in the governance of parliamentary security made during 2002–03 place us, together with the other parliamentary departments with responsibility for security, in a strong position to respond to future challenges.



Andres Lomp demonstrates the House for the Nation touchscreen kiosk.