

Raymond Knight at the Table Office inquiry counter.

# Performance

## Output Group I – Chamber, Main Committee and community awareness

Chamber and Main Committee operate effectively

Community understanding of, and interaction with, the work of the House of Representatives and the Commonwealth Parliament

### Description

The Table Office, the Chamber Research Office and the Liaison and Projects Office are the primary contributors to this output group. The departmental Executive, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office and, when required, staff from other departmental offices also contribute.

Staff supporting the output group assist the House of Representatives Chamber and Main Committee to operate effectively by providing procedural and programming advice, undertaking research, producing documents of record and documents for members, and managing and providing general secretariat support for the Chamber and Main Committee. The output group also encompasses parliamentary outreach and educational functions within Australia.

In 2002–03 the expenses for the provision of those services by this output group were \$3.56 million, while the budget allocation was \$5.25 million. A summary of the financial resources for the output group is provided in Table 1 and staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 10.

### Performance

There was a continuing high level of client satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of services provided through the output group. In the survey of members, conducted in June 2003, 95 per cent of responses recorded extreme or high satisfaction (and the remainder satisfaction) with the work of the clerks on duty at the table in the House and Main Committee and with advice and services for members. All members who had used the department's legislative drafting services were satisfied.

Ninety per cent of members reported either extreme or high satisfaction with procedural and statistical publications.

In 2002–03, the number of sitting days was some 38 per cent higher than in 2001–02, with similar levels of activity in regard to legislation. Table 2, Appendices 1 and 2 and the department's publication *Work of the Session* (available through the department's website) provide more detailed quantitative information.

**Table 2 Performance summary, Output Group 1**

Aspect of performance	Result	
	2001–02	2002–03
Number of sittings of the House	53	73
Number of meetings of the Main Committee	31	47
Hours of sitting of the House <sup>(a)</sup>	465	659
Hours of meeting of the Main Committee <sup>(a)</sup>	99	186
Number of bills introduced	214	203
Number of bills passed both Houses and assented to <sup>(b)</sup>	143	160

<sup>(a)</sup> Excludes suspensions.

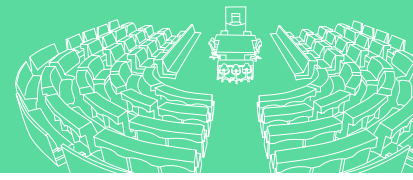
<sup>(b)</sup> Includes bills which passed both Houses in the financial year but were assented to in the following financial year (13 bills in 2001–02 and 12 bills in 2002–03).

## 1.1 Procedural advice and support services

Provision of policy advice, facilities and services in support of the operation of the Chamber and Main Committee

### Advice

The Clerk, Deputy Clerk and other staff members provided advice on the procedures and practices of the House, helping to ensure the proper functioning of the Chamber and Main Committee. As in previous years, the clerks were called on during the year to provide the Speaker and members with advice on the application of the law and rules under which the House operates. For example, they provided advice on issues ranging from the constitutional powers of the House in respect of legislation, through issues of members' interests, to the law and practice surrounding parliamentary privilege. The clerks on duty at the table during proceedings of the Chamber and Main Committee provided immediate advice on the procedures and practices of the House. Written and oral advice was also provided by the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Clerks Assistant, staff of the Table Office and the Chamber Research Office at other times.



The department also provided assistance in the preparation of legislation and legislative amendments, in particular to members of the shadow ministry (the Office of Parliamentary Counsel provides drafting assistance for the Executive). In addition, the department gave ongoing procedural advice and assistance to all those involved in supporting the operation of the House of Representatives, including staff in the offices of ministers, shadow ministers and whips, and public service and parliamentary staff.

The following sample illustrates the range of subjects dealt with by the Chamber Research Office in providing advice:

- advice to the Speaker and other members, on precedents and examples relevant to the application of the standing orders, comparative information from other parliaments, and statistical information relating to procedure and practice
- advice to other parliaments, including information on procedure and practice as well as statistical data
- advice to members of the public, relating to how the Parliament operates and why certain actions are taken.

Feedback from the Speaker, members and others indicated their high level of satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of advice – 95 per cent of members surveyed reported high or extreme satisfaction.

In relation to applications of technology in this area, there were two major developments during the year. Firstly, the Votes Officer's Minutes – the electronic record of the proceedings of the House compiled progressively throughout the sitting day – were made available through the parliamentary computing network to all occupants of the building. This provided members and others with an online record of the progress of business in the House and the Main Committee, updated at least every minute throughout each sitting day.

Secondly, following the report by the internal working group referred to in last year's report, the department decided to enhance the quality of captioning provided via the internal broadcasting system and the internet webcast of proceedings. The Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff agreed to our request for enhancements to the Events in Progress software used for captioning. The project had commenced by the end of the year.

### Document provision

In accordance with departmental service standards, House documents such as the *Notice Paper*, the *Daily Program*, the *Votes and Proceedings*, the *Daily Bills List* and the *Disallowable Instruments List* continued to be available in a timely fashion both in hard copy and electronically via the web. Other documents for the use of ministers and members during proceedings – including bills, explanatory memoranda and amendments, papers and Chamber procedures prepared by the department – were also provided in accordance with service standards and in a timely fashion. The survey of members indicated a high level of satisfaction with the timeliness of such documents, and with their accessibility. Members and staff were again encouraged to access the documents in electronic form. Changes to the delivery of documents such as the *Notice Paper*, identified in last year's report, are now well established.

The department continued to monitor stock requirements for the tabling of government documents and committee reports, and made reductions where possible. For example, the hard copy stock of the 2003–04 Budget documents and related papers was reduced, and members were encouraged to access documents electronically. In addition, from 2003–04, the department will reduce its stock requirements for the tabling of government documents by 25 per cent (stock requirements were previously reduced by 38 per cent in 2000–01). All member requests for hard copy were met during the year, and there was a reduction in the department's stock requirements, leading to significant savings in printing for other departments and agencies.

The Chamber Research Office continued to provide updated versions of the standing orders. The current hard copy version is dated 16 September 2002. Inserts are circulated on the same day as changes to the standing and sessional orders are made by the House.

### Chamber practice

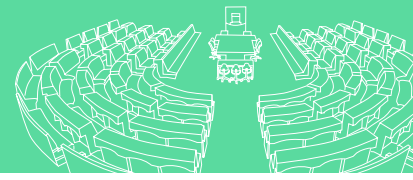
During 2002–03 work commenced on producing an update supplement to the House's authoritative document on practice and procedure, *House of Representatives Practice* (fourth edition). The supplement is to be a published document and will also be available online. The printed version remains the authoritative version for use in the Chamber.

The Chamber Research Office continued to maintain a parliamentary procedural database, the Procedural Records System, and regularly distribute to the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, members of the Speaker's Panel and others a chronological list of matters of procedural significance, *Procedural Extracts*. During the year, the format and content of the extracts were reviewed to enhance their readability, and a new document, the *Procedural Digest*, was launched. The new digest entries are grouped by subject matter and written in narrative style with improved layout and presentation, increasing the value of the document as an educational resource. All members surveyed were satisfied with the quality and availability of procedural and statistical publications and 90 per cent reported extreme or high satisfaction.

The Chamber Research Office also continued to maintain a procedural research library containing, among other things, copies of historical documents and parliamentary records dating back as far as 1901.

### Parliamentary committees

Staff supporting the output group provided secretariat support to five House of Representatives committees and a joint committee whose functions are concerned with the powers and structures of the House, namely: the Selection Committee, the Standing Committee on Publications, the Standing Committee on Procedure, the Committee of Privileges, the Committee of Members' Interests, and the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings.



The Committee of Privileges is appointed at the commencement of each Parliament to inquire into, and report on, complaints of breach of privilege referred to it by the House. It also makes recommendations concerning applications for a right of reply requested by aggrieved citizens mentioned in proceedings. The committee presented three reports during the year, including one on general issues relating to parliamentary privilege.

The Standing Committee on Procedure inquired into several issues during the year, including the effectiveness of the House's scrutiny of the Budget estimates, the conduct of divisions, and the operation of standing order 344 (relating to visitors at public hearings of committees). The committee's major task in 2002–03 was a comprehensive review of the standing orders. As part of the review, the committee issued a discussion paper in September 2002 – reviewing the Clerk's suggestions for revising the standing orders, referred to in last year's annual report – and held a number of meetings to consider possible revisions to the standing orders.

Details of other committee activity are provided in Appendices 3 and 4. The department received positive feedback on the output's secretariat services – particularly on the timeliness and quality of briefing papers and technical advice provided by staff.

### **Procedural training**

Staff whose main duties were not in the procedural support area continued to take advantage of opportunities to serve as Clerks-at-the-Table in both the Chamber and the Main Committee. Appropriate training, development and experience are required to perform these roles. The Table Office 'shadowing' program continued, with staff from outside the output group working on sitting nights to assist the staff performing Table Office duties. During the year, the benefits of the shadowing program were demonstrated on several occasions, when the 'shadow' undertook the duties of a particular position because the occupant was unable to work on a sitting day.

Building the procedural competence of staff also continued following sitting periods, with targeted briefings and weekly or fortnightly debriefing meetings to discuss procedural issues that arose during each period. To facilitate learning by staff, records of the debriefings were made available through the departmental intranet. Staff were also involved in discussions with visiting parliamentary officials from Australian and overseas parliaments and benefited from the exchange of views and information on practices.

This year, the department continued its program of recruiting university students to work as parliamentary assistants for an average of 12 hours per week. As in previous years, the parliamentary assistants spent most of their time performing the duties of messengerial attendants, particularly in the Chamber.

At the end of 2002 all parliamentary assistants appointed in 2002 were invited to reapply, to become 'senior' parliamentary assistants to assist with the incoming team for 2003; one from 2002 became a 'senior' assistant. From January 2003 six new parliamentary assistants were appointed. The students are from the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland.

One of the parliamentary assistants appointed in 2001 became a full-time member of the department's staff in 2002–03, while two from the 2002 intake also continued with the department, one on a sessional basis in sitting weeks and one on a part-time contract to the Committee Office while completing his studies at the Australian National University.

At the national level, the development of specialist training for parliamentary staff continued to be examined by the Education Sub-Committee of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table. In February 2003, a proposal was submitted to Australian and New Zealand clerks outlining an accredited tertiary level program of study into the law and practice of parliamentary procedure, involving a residential component. (This followed an earlier proposal for competency based training, which had been supported by many but not all the clerks.) At the end of the reporting period, many clerks had responded supporting the proposal, and outstanding responses were being followed up. The Clerk Assistant (Table) is a member of the Education Sub-Committee.

### Information technology

The department's adoption of a new software platform, OneOffice, was a significant issue for the output group, given the House's high reliance on information technology. An important aspect was the need to coordinate with timetables in certain other parliamentary departments and external agencies, because of the degree of interdependence of Chamber and legislative information technology systems. The changeover for the Table Office took place in January 2003 and was managed successfully, as confirmed by internal audit, ensuring the essentially seamless transition of the specialised databases and Chamber based applications that support the House's operation.

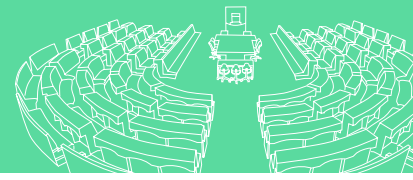
The migration of the bills systems was coordinated with the Attorney-General's Department, the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and the Department of the Senate. The migration of the Document Production System (DPS) software was coordinated with the Departments of the Senate and the Parliamentary Reporting Staff, and all three departments now use a single, more robust baseline version of the DPS product. Change management procedures, to be agreed to by the same three departments, were in draft form at the end of the reporting period. A future maintenance contract for the DPS, to be shared by the three departments, is planned for the coming year, and should achieve some economies of scale.

## 1.2 Legislation and research services

Provision of legislative drafting and research services and the processing and production of bills and associated materials

### Legislation

During the year, 203 bills were introduced (214 in 2001–02), 194 of which were initiated in the House of Representatives and nine of which were received from the Senate. Of the bills introduced, 17 were private members' bills, for which the department provided drafting assistance. Details are provided in Table 15 in Appendix 2.



The House amended 28 bills, requiring the Table Office to incorporate the amendments and reprint the bills prior to their transmittal to the Senate. In addition, 32 bills were amended by the Senate and agreed to by the House, requiring further processing by the Table Office before their presentation to the Governor-General for assent. In total, the Table Office prepared, printed and checked for accuracy 160 bills prior to assent (143 bills in 2001–02). The department provided drafting assistance for the second reading (in principle) amendments and detailed amendments to bills moved by private members during the year (see Appendix 2). As previously mentioned, all members who had used the department's drafting services were satisfied.

The Table Office maintained very high levels of accuracy during all stages of processing legislation and met all deadlines. No significant errors arising from the department's processing of bills were identified during the year. With the transfer of the computer system to the OneOffice platform referred to above, the department made sure that the specialised software used to edit bills was updated to allow processing of legislation to continue on the new platform.

During 2002–03, the department conducted further testing on various software products used for comparing electronic documents. The department subsequently purchased Workshare's Deltaview document comparison technology, and used it in parallel with the traditional manual checking processes for several months to ensure its effectiveness with all types of legislation. Following the success of that trial, the traditional 'reading school' process was largely eliminated, saving staff time and ensuring continued application of rigorous quality assurance checks in the processing of legislation. The Table Office now checks all legislation using the document comparison software, complemented by limited manual checks of some aspects of the final document. Protocols for the use of the technology were developed and applied.

### **Document management**

The department continued to relocate House records in archival quality containers, focusing on parliamentary papers and original Votes and Proceedings records. This work originated from an internal review of document management and archiving practices conducted in 2000. It will continue as resources allow, taking several years for full implementation.

As an adjunct to this work, the Table Office devoted some resources this year to transferring data on miscellaneous papers tabled in the House from a card reference system to an Access database. Staff completed the initial data entry of information held on approximately 8,000 cards. They also finished checking duplicate entries or missing entries, and should complete a quality assurance review of the electronic information by the third quarter of 2003. Having this information available electronically will allow quicker searching and identification of material, and speedier retrieval of documents to meet client needs.

## I.3 Community awareness

Provision of information and education services to promote public knowledge and awareness of, and interaction with, the work of the House of Representatives and the Commonwealth Parliament

### Publications for the community

The department published five issues of the magazine *About the House* during the year. More than 13,000 copies of each edition were distributed across Australia, with the mailing list growing weekly through direct requests from the public.

We included a survey with the November/December 2002 edition and received more than 500 responses – well over 90 per cent of which rated the magazine as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ in its range of topics, content, readability, layout and design. Ninety-five per cent of respondents said that reading *About the House* had increased their knowledge about the work and procedures of the House. More than 80 per cent read most or all of the entire magazine. Some noted particularly that the magazine brought them news and information unavailable elsewhere. Others were impressed with the writing style and the length of articles.

The editorial team reviewed the responses with a view to ensuring that the magazine continued to meet the needs of its readers and included some articles taking up specific topics suggested by readers.

The departmental survey of members also indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the magazine. Ninety-four per cent of members familiar with the magazine rated it as good or excellent.

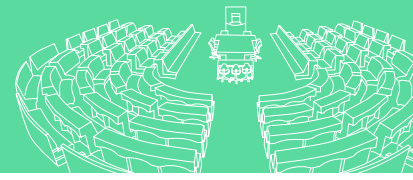
As a way of recovering some of the costs involved with the production of the magazine, limited advertising space was made available. At the end of the reporting period, one full-page advertisement had been placed.

‘Infosheets’ – short publications on procedure, produced primarily for members of the public – were distributed in hard copy and made available on the department’s website. In order to monitor and, if necessary, better target the community’s need for information on the Parliament, an evaluation form was produced and distributed with both printed and electronic versions of the Infosheets.

A small pocket booklet, *House of Representatives Facts and Figures: Fortieth Parliament*, was produced primarily for the use of the Parliament House visitors’ guides. The booklet was well received by the guides and others and appears to be fulfilling its aim of providing accurate and relevant information for members of the public who visit the Parliament.

### Seminars

The seminar program was popular again in 2002–03. There were 470 registrations – 30 more than in 2001–02 and 70 more than in 2000–01. Once again the majority of participants were public servants from Australian Government agencies.



The department conducted nine seminars in 2002–03 (the same as in 2001–02), eight in Canberra and one in Melbourne. The topics ranged from a general overview of the House to detailed explanations of the legislative, committee and budget processes of the House and the Parliament.

Of those attending, 46 per cent completed evaluations (40 per cent in 2001–02), with more than 95 per cent of evaluations expressing satisfaction with the seminar attended. The average rating of satisfaction for seminar content was 8 on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent), the same as the rating achieved in 2001–02.

The seminar program was supplemented with a range of specialised presentations and briefings, including some for Commonwealth agencies and international visitors. In addition, a free public presentation was conducted on the Gold Coast in response to a request from the Member for McPherson.

### University lecture program

In 2001–02 the department initiated the trial of a guest lecture program: members of the House and senior managers made presentations to university classes, studying politics, law and other relevant subjects, on the realities of working in today's House of Representatives. The aim of the program was to broaden links between the House and tertiary institutions. Following the success of that trial, in March 2003 universities all over Australia were invited to participate in the program. A number of universities welcomed the opportunity, and lectures were held at the Australian National University, the University of New South Wales, the University of Southern Queensland and Griffith University, with further lectures scheduled to be held at several other universities in 2003–04.

### Advertising

Advertising costs per inquiry were reduced as a result of committees making greater use of combined advertising and other cost-effective avenues for publicising their inquiries. The combined advertising involved the placement of a fortnightly advertisement on the work of committees in *The Australian* newspaper. Committees could contribute items to each advertisement, so they no longer needed to place more expensive individual advertisements in newspapers. Committees also took advantage of alternative publicity avenues – such as the *About the House* magazine, the House News website, media liaison and direct mailing. This resulted in cost savings while still achieving the desired outcome of informing the public about the work of the committees.

### Media and community liaison

Three initiatives were implemented during the year to improve public access to information about the work of parliamentary committees. A free email alert service, providing regular information on the work of parliamentary committees, was made available to the media and public. More than 600 organisations and individuals subscribed to the service in 2002–03, with numbers steadily increasing. A regular column on the work of the Parliament and its committees was established in the *Campus Review* newspaper, which reaches around 86,000 people, most of them educators and in the tertiary sector. A regular column on the work of committees was also produced for the Canberra Business Council's monthly e-newsletter, *Business Link*.

Effective media liaison remained a priority, with the Liaison and Projects Office continuing to provide a coordinated approach in relation to media advice and services. Feedback from members of the parliamentary press gallery and from metropolitan and regional media outlets indicated that this coordinated approach was valued by the media and gave committees the best possible opportunity to attract coverage for their work.

## Projects

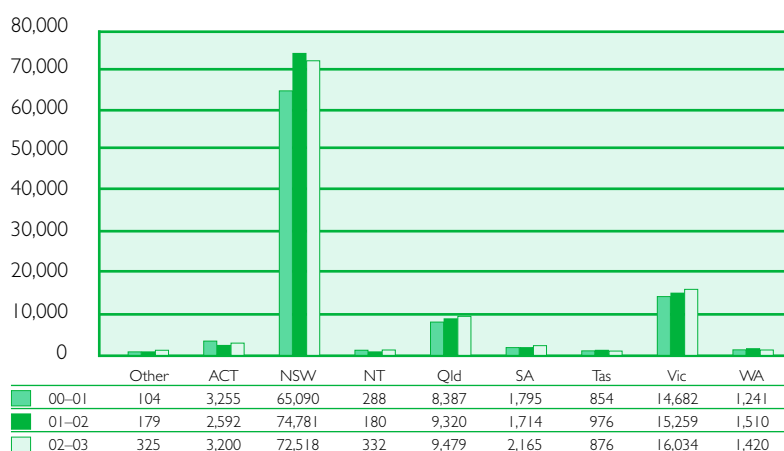
The CD-ROM and documentary *A House for the Nation*, commissioned to mark the centenary of the House of Representatives, were completed and released publicly. The products provide a comprehensive collection of facts, stories, images, sound recordings and video clips from the first century of the House, thereby giving Australians unprecedented access to historical information on the Australian Parliament. In recognition of the quality of the research undertaken for the project, the CD-ROM was selected as a finalist in the prestigious Australian Teachers of Media Awards for 2003 in the category of 'best tertiary educational resource'. A touchscreen kiosk and website were also developed to allow the public free access to aspects of the historical research undertaken for the project.

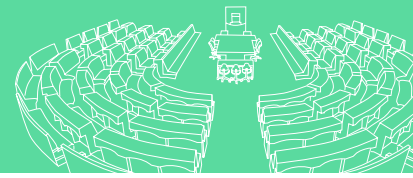
## School visits to Parliament House

The number of students visiting Parliament House as part of an organised school group was 106,349, similar to the 106,511 in 2001–02. An analysis of the school groups indicated that close to 70 per cent of school visitors came from New South Wales, approximately 15 per cent from Victoria and about 9 per cent from Queensland. The high cost of visiting Canberra from more distant locations resulted in less than 1.5 per cent and 0.5 per cent visiting from Western Australia and the Northern Territory respectively. The relative ratios of visitors from the various states and territories have remained fairly constant over the past three years.

The following figure clearly shows the great differences between numbers of students visiting from various locations in Australia over the past three years ('other' students are those who were not part of an organised group).

**Figure 5 Numbers of school students visiting Parliament House, 2000–01 to 2002–03**





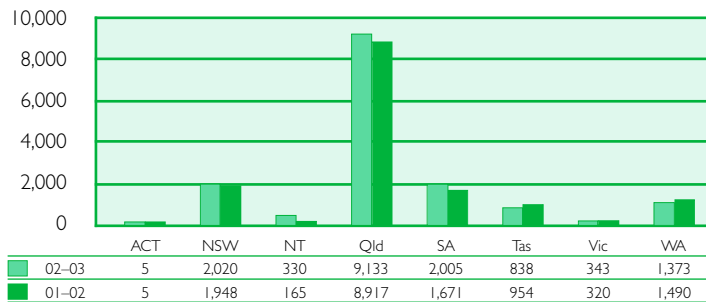
Enhancements were made to the schools' booking program software during 2002–03, resulting in early advice to members about groups visiting from schools in their electorates. The Parliament House visitors' guides were given read-only access to forward bookings so that their staffing levels could be managed more efficiently by the Joint House Department.

### Citizenship Visits Program

The Citizenship Visits Program (CVP) continued to provide a subsidy for school students who travelled more than 1,000 kilometres to visit and participate in the programs for students offered in Parliament House. Participation rates have increased by 17 per cent over the past four financial years, with expenditure in this financial year being \$1.02 million, marginally up from \$1.01 million in 2001–02. All claims for subsidy were processed within two working days of the receipt of completed documentation. During 2002–03 payments were made electronically into school bank accounts, speeding up the payment process.

The number of students participating in the program this year was 16,047 from 546 schools compared with 15,470 students from 535 schools assisted in 2001–02. This year, 79 per cent received a \$40 subsidy, almost 10 per cent received a \$100 subsidy and almost 11 per cent received \$200 per student. Participation rates in the CVP by state or territory are shown in the following figure.

**Figure 6 Numbers of school students receiving CVP subsidies, 2001–02 and 2002–03**



The total number of secondary students was 5,017 and there were 11,030 primary students. The largest percentage of secondary students came from the students travelling farthest to visit Canberra, with more than 55 per cent of them travelling from South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania or the Northern Territory. The Queensland students receiving the subsidy were predominantly primary students – 7,779 (85 per cent) out of 9,133.

The CVP is jointly funded by the department and the Department of the Senate. In the 2003–04 Budget, the program was granted additional funding of \$804,000, payable over four years, to be shared equally between the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate. The additional funding will enable assistance to be available for the increasing numbers of students accessing the program and to increase the rates for students from more distant areas.

### Parliamentary Education Office

The Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) provides parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students. The Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate both fund the office, which is staffed by the Department of the Senate and reported on in that department's annual report.

As part of its role in supporting parliamentary education, the department provided advice to the PEO on the content of its educational programs. This helped to ensure that the work of the House and its committees was reflected appropriately in the programs being provided to teachers and students. The department also worked in partnership with the PEO where there were mutual benefits – for example, in the marketing of the CD-ROM, *A House for the Nation*, and in publicising committee activities with particular relevance to student audiences, such as the twice-yearly appearance by the Governor of the Reserve Bank before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration. The Clerk Assistant (Table) attended, as an observer, meetings of the PEO Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the Deputy Speaker.

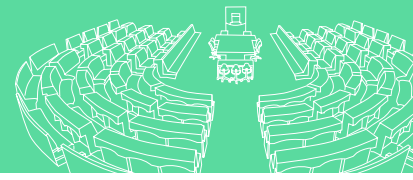
### Parliamentary internship program

The parliamentary internship program which operates under an agreement between the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University and the Presiding Officers celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2003. Australian and foreign students enrolled under the program have an internship placement of about 10 weeks as part of their formal course of study. In 2002–03, 40 students were placed with senators, members and parliamentary committees. The department and the Department of the Senate conducted seminars on the role and functions of the Parliament for the parliamentary and other interns. The program provides students, who come from a range of academic disciplines, with an opportunity to perform applied policy work and to complement their academic studies through first-hand experience of the complexities of parliamentary government in Australia.

### Improving performance

The strategies to improve performance referred to in last year's annual report were continued during 2002–03. These included planning, monitoring and reviewing processes to ensure client requirements were identified and addressed effectively in the short and longer terms, making the best use of technology, and developing staffing capability. The success of these strategies was demonstrated during 2002–03 by indications of improved performance throughout the output group. As outlined previously, new products and services were introduced whilst the high quality of existing advice and services was maintained, expenditure was not increased, and the capability of staffing, systems and processes was sustained or enhanced.

Staff from the output group held planning days organised by the various offices to review all aspects of the functions of each area. A number of suggestions, focusing in particular on clarifying client needs and improving liaison with clients, emerged from those sessions and were followed up after those sessions. Progress was monitored informally and formally throughout the year through departmental reporting and performance management systems.



Building on work commenced in 2002–03, information technology initiatives to improve Chamber and Main Committee support during the coming year are expected to include the further development of captioning of the telecast proceedings. The department will also continue to monitor scope for greater use of electronic delivery modes (including, for example, electronic petitions) to improve service quality and achieve efficiencies. Access to Chamber related parliamentary material on the internet will be monitored through new and tailored web trend reports. Change management procedures and a future maintenance contract for the DPS will be established.

There will continue to be a strong emphasis placed on the development of Chamber support skills in 2003–04, not only through the continuing shadowing system, parliamentary briefings and debriefings, but also through staff rotation and on-the-job training.

In relation to the department's community outreach program, the output group will continue to improve and refresh products and activities in order to keep people interested, keep people coming back, and generate new contacts with the community. Using the results of the magazine survey, the editorial team of *About the House* will continue to refine the content of the magazine to meet the needs of its readers. Other aspects of the community outreach program will also be monitored and reviewed on a continuing basis to ensure that the current high levels of public interest and client satisfaction are maintained. Use of the department's web based outreach products will be closely monitored.

## Outlook

High levels of activity are expected to continue in all areas covered by the output group in 2003–04.

Our focus will continue to be on the provision of advice and services of the highest standard to support the Chamber and Main Committee, complemented by the ongoing development of staffing capability, and the maintenance and further development of information technology applications.

Maintaining and building on the quality of the community outreach program will also be emphasised in the year ahead. Efforts will particularly be directed to broadening the university lecture program. Priority will also be given to marketing the CD-ROM and documentary *A House for the Nation*, to ensure that the public are aware of the resources on the history and workings of the House now available to them. The department will also look at other ways multimedia might be used to promote the work of the House and its committees.

Staff supporting the output group will continue to strive to sustain and improve performance.

## Output Group 2 – Committee services and parliamentary relations

Committees fulfil their role in the parliamentary consideration of policy and legislation and the scrutiny of government

Productive and amicable international and regional relationships with other parliaments, parliamentary bodies and organisations

### Description

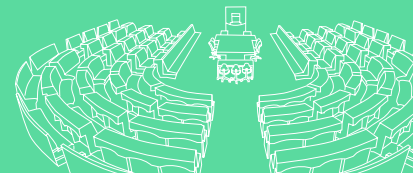
Output Group 2 provides advice and support for House committees and joint parliamentary committees administered by the House, and fosters and maintains interparliamentary relations at both the international and regional levels. The functions and services of the output group are performed primarily by the Committee Office and the Parliamentary Relations Office (PRO).

Committee Office staff provided administrative, policy and procedural support for the committee system. They were involved in the conduct of individual inquiries, from advertising to reporting and placing government responses to reports on the website.

During the reporting year 2002–03 the Committee Office supported 22 House and joint committees, with the workload distributed across nine secretariats.<sup>1</sup> The investigative committees supported by the department are listed in Table 3.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition, five House committees and a joint committee were supported through Output Group 1.



**Table 3 Committees supported, 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003**

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**House committees**

Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
 Standing Committee on Ageing  
 Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
 Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts  
 Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration  
 Standing Committee on Education and Training  
 Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations  
 Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage  
 Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs  
 Standing Committee on Industry and Resources  
 Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs  
 Standing Committee on Science and Innovation  
 Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services  
 Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires (from March 2003)

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**Joint committees**

Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD  
 Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
 Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
 Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories  
 Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit  
 Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works  
 Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

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The PRO was responsible for organising and managing incoming and outgoing parliamentary delegations and providing support for interparliamentary conferences and for the Clerk in his executive role in the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments. The PRO also supported the training of staff of other parliaments, and advised the Presiding Officers and members on international parliamentary matters.

Actual expenses for the provision of services by Output Group 2 were \$10 million, while the budget allocated was \$9.86 million. Table 1 provides a summary of the financial resources for the output group.

## Performance

The year 2002–03 was a busy one for the output group as new inquiries were initiated and the Parliament moved towards the peak of its operational cycle. The Committee Office supported an increased number of committees, without an increase in departmental funding, while the PRO operated under constraints imposed by heightened domestic and international security concerns.

Eighty-five per cent of members surveyed who had used committee services recorded that they were either extremely satisfied (25 per cent), highly satisfied (30 per cent) or satisfied (30 per cent).

## 2.1 Non-inquiry support services

Providing services to support the general (non-inquiry) activities of committees

### Global budgeting

Since the commencement of the Fortieth Parliament, committee secretaries have had increased responsibility for the management of global budgeting for both administrative and staffing expenses, in relation to both Output 2.1 and Output 2.2, and a mix of ongoing and non-ongoing staff has been employed. Some secretaries indicated that they appreciated the increased level of flexibility provided under the new system. The potential advantages in being able to redeploy savings from one budget sector to address shortfalls in other areas were recognised.

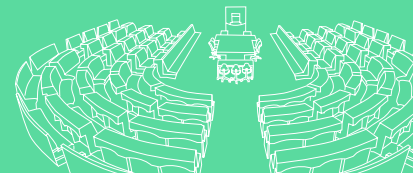
### Archiving of committee records

Throughout 2002–03, the department continued the implementation of the recommendations of the 2000 internal review of document management and archiving practices, commenced during the 2001 election period. The department committed further resources in July 2002 to re-sentencing committee files stored at the National Archives of Australia repository in Canberra.

During 2002–03 a team comprising one full-time and two part-time officers reviewed and reboxed some 750 shelf metres of archived files. During this period, 412.02 shelf metres were re-sentenced, and 243.72 shelf metres were culled under National Archives of Australia Records Disposal Authority 1404, in cases where file contents were duplicates, administrative procedural documents, press clippings or non-essential background material.

The team also tried to ensure that all photographs were labelled accurately and stored in the approved archival manner.

In late June 2003, some 350 shelf metres of files were still to be reviewed.



## 2.2 Inquiry facilitation

Providing procedural, research, analytical and administrative support for the conduct of inquiries and the publication of the final reports

### Members' satisfaction

Secretaries reported that oral feedback received from members remained very positive, and members frequently thanked secretaries and staff in statements to the House. As one committee member put it:

I also thank the committee secretariat. Quite often, people forget the enormous amount of work that is put in by the secretariat and they did a great job in collating this report.

House of Representatives Hansard, 14 November 2002, p. 9190

### Reports and responses

During the reporting period, the 22 scrutiny committees supported by the department tabled 34 reports, containing a total of 260 recommendations.

At the end of June 2003, the Government had yet to respond to 19 of the total number of reports tabled in 2002–03, but the three-month target time for government responses had not expired in respect of six of these reports. A summary of committee performance figures is provided in Appendix 1.

Two reports that generated particularly widespread comment during 2002–03 were *Boys: Getting it right*, a report by the House Standing Committee on Education and Training, which was tabled in the House on 21 October 2002; and *Human cloning: scientific, ethical and regulatory aspects of human cloning and stem cell research*, tabled on 20 September 2001 by the House Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

*Boys: Getting it right* detailed the findings of an inquiry into the education of boys. The inquiry, notable for both its length and its scope, began in March 2000. Over two years, the committee involved some 21 members of the House, received 231 written submissions and heard evidence from 235 witnesses. The report, which made 24 recommendations supported unanimously by the committee, generated much discussion in the Chamber and the Main Committee, and was the subject of a great deal of public and press attention.

The report *Human cloning: scientific, ethical and regulatory aspects of human cloning and stem cell research* was not tabled during the reporting period. However, it contributed considerably to debates held during the latter part of 2002 on the Prohibition of Human Cloning Bill 2002 and the Research Involving Embryos Bill 2002. The bills resulted from an agreement reached by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in April 2002 to implement nationally consistent legislation in the areas of human cloning and stem cell research. The COAG agreement had been based largely on the findings in the report.

### Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires

The workload of the Committee Office was increased during the reporting year by the establishment of the Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires, bringing the total number of committees supported to 22. Existing departmental personnel were redeployed to support the new committee.

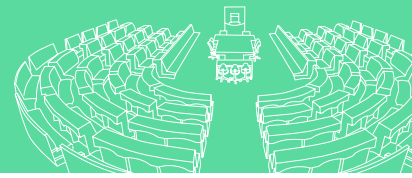
This select committee, established in response to the bushfires that devastated large parts of south-eastern Australia in early 2003, was the first select committee to be established by the House during this Parliament. At the end of the reporting period the inquiry had generated over 300 submissions, demonstrating the level of community concern surrounding the issue. The committee is required to report its findings by 6 November 2003.

### Public participation

All investigative committees aimed to become better informed about community concerns and attitudes with regard to the issues under examination. To this end, secretariats sought to facilitate and increase public participation in committee inquiries and solicited input from members of the general public and expert witnesses. This required the coordination of advertising for inquiries, assisted by the department's community outreach and media body, the Liaison and Projects Office, and the organisation of public hearings, seminars, workshops, forums, and surveys. These activities were conducted using a variety of media (see Output Group 1 for more information on initiatives in advertising).

The Committee Office used some innovative methods to increase public participation in inquiries. One such method involved round table hearings where committee members were placed among the public participants to promote free-flowing discussion. Another method involved questionnaires to canvass opinions on particular issues, the responses to which could be returned by email, fax or post. The Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories utilised the immediacy and reach of a televised hearing to good effect by soliciting, during a hearing, email responses to a series of questions on how viewers in the Parliamentary Triangle had travelled to work that morning. This survey generated over 450 responses, giving the committee a useful 'snapshot' of the transport situation on that day.

Secretaries reported that witnesses appearing before committees were grateful for the opportunity to present their views to the Parliament. In a letter to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, one witness thanked members and staff for providing a 'fantastic and all-inclusive opportunity' for participants to express their views. Witnesses also personally thanked secretariat staff for helping them through the sometimes confusing and intimidating process of presenting evidence.



## 2.3 Interparliamentary relations

Provision of advice and support to facilitate the conduct of the Parliament's international and regional affairs

### Delegations and visits

The primary focus of interparliamentary relations continued to be on fostering direct relationships between the Australian Parliament and parliaments of other countries. The department coordinated programs for 31 bilateral visits to other parliaments and 14 visits to the Australian Parliament from other parliaments during 2002–03 (see Appendices 5 and 7). We also provided support for the participation of senators and members in 12 interparliamentary conferences and seminars. Figures relating to the delegations, visits and memberships of interparliamentary organisations can be found in Tables 10 and 12 in Appendix 1. Noteworthy in the outgoing program was the first official visit to Iran since 1992. The visit succeeded in continuing the Australian Parliament's efforts to build and develop strong bilateral relationships with parliaments in the Middle East.

The incoming visits program included the visit of a Canadian parliamentary delegation led by the Hon. Don Boudria MP, the Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the Canadian House of Commons. He examined parliamentary process and procedures in the Australian Parliament as part of his role in the modernisation process of the Canadian Parliament. We prepared a comprehensive program for the delegation members, who were pleased to acknowledge its quality.

International developments significantly affected the work of the PRO throughout the reporting period. Both outgoing and incoming parliamentary delegations required increased attention to security considerations. The impact of global events also affected the management of programs for incoming delegations, as several proposed visits were deferred or rescheduled in response to particular events. The rescheduling of programs and the requirement for heightened security awareness increased the workload associated with the overall management of programs.

Nevertheless, we provided timely administrative support for official incoming and outgoing delegations, including through briefing meetings, debriefing meetings and associated documents. This helped to ensure that delegates were able to both contribute effectively to conferences and seminars and represent the Parliament's and the nation's interests in their bilateral meetings and visits.

The members' survey recorded that 88 per cent of members who had experience of outgoing delegations were extremely or highly satisfied with arrangements made for them. Incoming participants gave very positive feedback on the programs which focused on their expressed areas of interest and also on areas of interest to the Australian Parliament and the nation.

### Support for other parliaments

The Parliament began its official contact with the Parliament of East Timor when the Australian National Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union agreed to fund a training program for

parliamentary staff from East Timor. With the support of Australian diplomatic representatives in Dili, arrangements were made for two Timorese staff to participate in a comprehensive two-week training program involving the Australian Parliament and the parliaments of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

The department also contributed to the development of democratic institutions in Kosovo. Over a six-month period, two staff members served as consultants to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. The staff members took turns to act as Head of the Department of Legal Advice and Procedural Advisory Services in the Assembly of Kosovo and helped train the procedural and committee staff of the fledgling assembly.

### **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**

The Parliament continued to maintain and develop relationships with parliaments in the Pacific region, particularly through its membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). This involved a range of bilateral visits, and training and equipment were also provided to these regional parliaments in various ways. The Australian Parliament provided a regional secretariat to assist both the Australian and the Pacific regions of the CPA, and the Regional Secretary provided support for training, seminars, conferences and visits at both the regional level and individual branch levels.

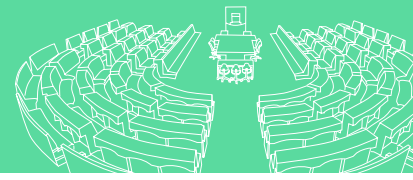
The CPA Education and Training (Trust) Fund – monitored by trustees from each of the parliaments in the Australian Region of the CPA and administered by the Regional Secretary – financially supported training of parliamentary staff and provided equipment to seven Pacific region parliaments in 2002–03.

### **Interparliamentary study program**

The second interparliamentary study program was held from 7 to 17 October 2002. Senior staff of the national parliaments of Canada, Chile, Cook Islands, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Namibia, New Zealand, Samoa, Scotland, Sweden, Tanzania and Zambia, and the state parliament of Victoria, participated.

The program was launched in 2001, with the following objectives:

- to streamline and make more effective the administration of the visits program for officials from overseas parliaments
- to offer the participants the opportunity to mix widely, establish contacts and exchange views on a variety of parliamentary and political systems
- to give an opportunity to the participants to consider the role and the working of their own parliament, and observe the relevance of Australian management practices to the administration of their legislature
- to offer to the participants an overview of Australia's system of government; the functioning of the Australian Parliament, including its key players, administration, and publications; how laws are made; how committees operate; what occurs on a parliamentary sitting day; and the functions of the parliamentary departments.



The program was evaluated both by participants and presenters. Participants agreed unanimously that the program was a success and gave them a good insight into the workings of the Australian Parliament, and nominated a number of areas with potential for improvement. Presenters also suggested some changes to the format for the next program.

### Improving performance

As discussed, the Committee Office particularly sought to improve its performance in 2002–03 by encouraging and facilitating greater participation in parliamentary committees by members of the public. Anecdotal evidence suggested that efforts to increase public participation in the inquiry process were appreciated by both committee members and the broader community.

Committee secretariats also sought to add value to their websites by offering additional background documents and links to relevant external sites. Such innovations have transformed the committee website from a passive advertising medium for inquiries to a useful source of information on the issues under investigation.

Secretaries reported that, while still a significant budget item, newspaper advertising for committee inquiries had been more cost-effective since regular advertisements had been placed in *The Australian* to advertise the forthcoming inquiries of all committees. The effectiveness of the strategy in terms of public response was more difficult to gauge, but it was reported to be at least as useful as conventional, single-inquiry advertisements.

During 2002–03, the department initiated a program of briefings for staff on procedural and practical issues relevant to the work of committees. The seminars gave staff opportunities to learn from and discuss practice and arrangements for the conduct of inquiries and the execution of general duties outside their immediate work areas.

The interparliamentary study program continued, following its successful introduction in 2001. There is now a comprehensive training program in place for overseas and interstate parliamentary staff, resulting in fewer ad hoc visits, ensuring higher quality programs and utilising staff resources more effectively than in the past.

The review of processes and procedures for the support of interparliamentary delegations continued and the relevant manuals continued to be updated. Programming of both incoming and outgoing delegations was much more actively managed in 2003 in order to ensure that visits were spread more evenly throughout the year. There was limited success, due to a significant increase in activity, and further refinements will be made to the approval process during preparations for 2004 programs. The improvements will enhance the effectiveness of visit programs and the utilisation of resources.

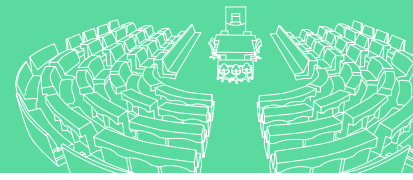
### Outlook

The 2003–04 reporting period will see the peak of the Fortieth Parliament's cycle, particularly its committee activity, resulting in increased demands on both committee support elements of the output group. The Committee Office will continue to support the additional select committee during this period within existing resources, and to use a mix of ongoing and non-ongoing staff. Emphasis will be given again to the development of staff skills.

Attention will be given to feedback from the June 2003 members' survey.

In view of the successful training program undertaken in 2002–03 for parliamentary staff from East Timor, the PRO anticipates that a similar exercise will be undertaken during 2003–04. An exchange of parliamentary delegations with East Timor is also planned for next year.

The Fifteenth Joint Australian and Pacific Regional Parliamentary Seminar is due to be held in September 2003, and the program of incoming and outgoing delegation work is expected to reach high levels of activity.



## 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.

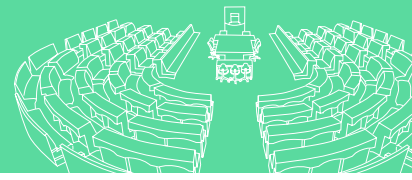
#### Accommodation services

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**

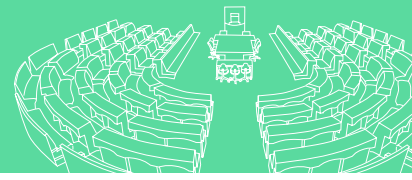
The department's in-house printing centre continued to print those documents that were needed within short time frames for the efficient running of the House. The overall print room output was in the order of 14.76 million impressions. While this is an increase on the total reached in the previous reporting 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.

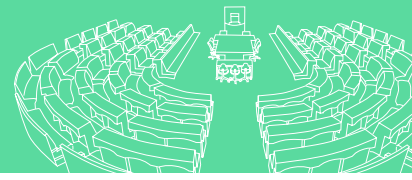
### **Events in the precincts**

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.

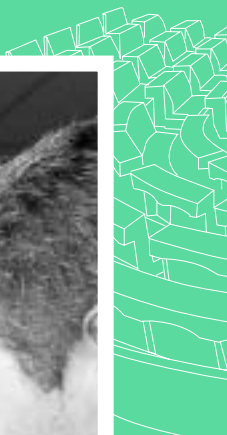
Finally, as outlined previously, the security arrangements at Parliament House were significantly enhanced during the year.

## 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.*