

on the amendment moved by Mr Mackin (Deputy Leader of the  
Opposition). Question put on amendment. Second reading.  
Speaker to report a message from the Governor-General recommending  
appropriation.  
Consideration in detail, third reading, by leave.  
At 2 p.m.  
Speaker to call on —  
Questions without notice — Speaker  
Presentation of documents — Speaker

# PERFORMANCE

Ministers  
Ministerial statements, Mr Abbott (Leader of the House) to move  
DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF — Mr Abbott (Leader of the House) to move  
Terms will be circulated to Members of the House on 9 August 2005  
SPEECHES — Mr Abbott (Leader of the House) to move for  
That the House, do adjourn until Tuesday, 9 August 2005, at 10.30 a.m.  
2.00 p.m., unless the Speaker for some alternative  
meeting — Mr Abbott (Leader of the House) to move for  
LEAVE OF ABSENCE — Mr Abbott (Leader of the House) to move for  
leave of absence to all Members of the House.  
Reports from Main Committee  
Speaker to present reports from the Main Committee.  
Reports from committees  
COMMITTEE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS — Mr Ciobo (Chair — Moncrieff) to  
present the following document from the Committee of Members'  
Interests:  
Register of Members' Interests — Notifications of alterations of interests  
and Statements of Registrable Interests received during the period 10  
February 2005 to 22 June 2005.  
PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE — Mrs Draper (Chair — Makin) to present  
report (copies available to Members in Chamber).  
Mrs Draper, by leave, to move that the report be agreed to.  
Business — continued  
Small Business Employment (Small Business Employment  
continued second reading; sec



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## OUTPUT GROUP 1.1 — CHAMBER AND MAIN COMMITTEE

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### DESCRIPTION

Output Group 1.1 is delivered through a number of work areas, including the Clerk's Office, the Table Office, the Chamber Research Office and the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. Other departmental offices contribute as required.

Our staff coordinate the program for the business items of the House and of government and private members. In the Chamber, they act in accordance with the Parliamentary Service Values to provide procedural advice to members on both sides of the House. Behind the scenes, our staff:

- process legislation
- help to draft bills, motions and amendments
- maintain the official record of proceedings
- record statistics and procedural precedents
- maintain the standing and sessional orders.

Staff supporting Output Group 1.1 facilitate meetings of the House by providing secretariat support for the Chamber and Main Committee, the Committee of Privileges, the Standing Committee on Procedure, the Selection Committee, the Committee of Members' Interests and the Standing Committee on Publications.

In the department's 2004–05 Portfolio Budget Statements and Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements, Output Group 1.1 appeared as the Chamber and Main Committee outputs (outputs 1.1 to 1.4) of Output Group 1 (Chamber, Main Committee and community awareness).

The expenditure for Output Group 1.1 in 2004–05 was \$3.14 million. The budget allocation was \$4.12 million. Output group financial resources are summarised in Table 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 10.

## PERFORMANCE

Throughout 2004–05, informal feedback from members was consistently very positive about the services provided by the output group. For example, in his end-of-year valedictory remarks on 9 December 2004, the Prime Minister remarked that the Clerks at the Table ‘exemplify the very best traditions of independence and integrity in the discharge of their duties’. In the same debate, the manager of opposition business recorded the opposition’s thanks for ‘the Chamber research staff, on whom we are all so very reliant’.

The results of the department’s annual members’ survey again indicated a high level of satisfaction with our work, supporting the informal feedback. Of the responses, 89 per cent (88 per cent in 2004) recorded extreme or high satisfaction and the remainder recorded satisfaction with the work of the clerks on duty at the table in the House and Main Committee. In respect of advice and services provided for members in relation to Chamber and Main Committee duties, 79 per cent of responses (87 per cent in 2004) recorded extreme or high satisfaction (and the remainder who used the service recorded satisfaction). In 2005, as in 2004, all members surveyed who had used the department’s legislative drafting services were satisfied. In both years, all members surveyed were also satisfied with procedural and statistical publications.

In 2004–05, sitting days totalled 51, reflecting an expected decrease (31 per cent) in meeting hours of the Chamber and Main Committee because of the election held in October 2004. Despite the decrease in sitting hours, increased legislative activity characterised the end of the Fortieth Parliament in 2004 and sittings of the Forty-first Parliament in the first half of 2005. Figure 7 provides a comparative analysis of the number of bills introduced into the House during the past four years. Table 2, appendices 1 and 2 and the department’s publication *Work of the Session* (available on our website) provide more detailed quantitative information.

### Contribution to outcome, Output Group 1.1, 2004–05

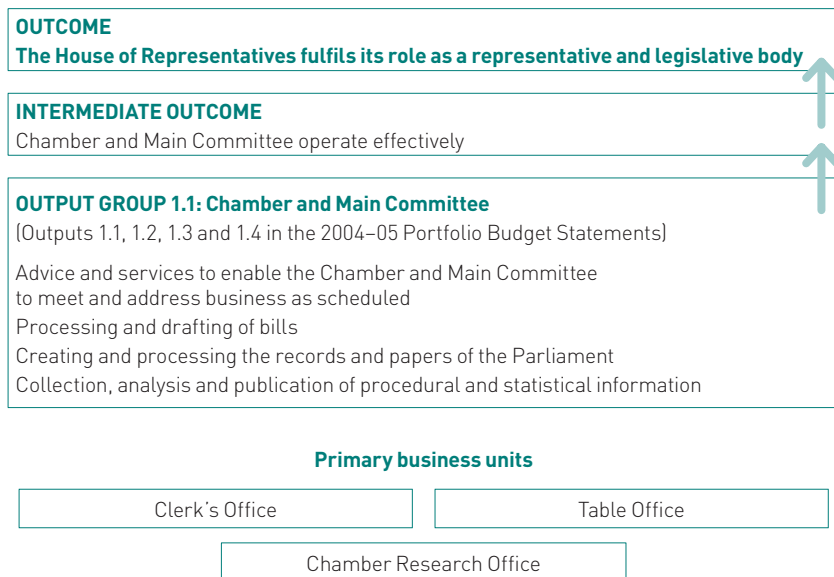


Table 2 Performance summary, Output Group 1.1

| Aspect of performance   | Result  |         |
|---|---------|---------|
|   | 2003–04 | 2004–05 |
| Number of sittings of the House                                 | 78      | 51      |
| Number of meetings of the Main Committee                        | 46      | 31      |
| Hours of sitting of the House <sup>a</sup>                      | 695     | 467     |
| Hours of meeting of the Main Committee <sup>a</sup>             | 154     | 123     |
| Number of bills introduced                                      | 195     | 215     |
| Number of bills passed both Houses and assented to <sup>b</sup> | 191     | 139     |

a Excludes suspensions.

b Includes bills that passed both Houses in the financial year but were assented to in the following financial year (11 bills in 2003–04 and 18 bills in 2004–05).

## Advice to members and House secretariat support

### Advice

The Clerk, Deputy Clerk, other senior managers and other Output Group 1.1 staff continued to advise the Speaker and members on the practice and procedures of the House of Representatives.

Complex, detailed advice must often be provided very promptly, usually during peak periods of House activity. To sustain a rapid response, all departmental staff undergo continuing training. We help disseminate chamber knowledge and lessons learned from experience through a staff debriefing at the end of each sitting week. Our regular, specialised staff seminars are a very important part of the foundation of skills and knowledge that underpins the activities of the House.

During 2004–05, staff presented segments on chamber practice and procedures as part of the orientation seminar for newly elected members. Acknowledging the results of the 2004 survey of members, we endeavoured to follow up the formal seminar with informal contact and support. New members and their staff welcomed the follow-up.

We improved the procedural knowledge of members and their staff during 2004–05 by providing many individual briefings and holding regular general briefings (six) about procedural aspects of Chamber and Main Committee operations. Subjects included chamber documents; the legislative, budget and parliamentary committee processes; and opportunities for private members.

Our oral and written advice to members ranged from the provision of immediate support in the Chamber to the preparation of guidelines for occupants of the Chair, and covered such topics as the application of the law and standing orders of the House, constitutional issues, procedural aspects of passing legislation, and motions to disallow subordinate legislation. We also gave practical advice on the daily conduct of House business and the requirements of the standing orders.

New rules—the standing orders of the House—came into effect on 16 November 2004, the first sitting day of the Forty-first Parliament. On 1 December 2004, the House

gave the Clerk an ongoing authority 'to correct clerical errors or inconsistencies in the wording of the standing orders, but not so as to cause a change to the meaning of any standing order'. We published and distributed a second edition of the standing orders in February 2005 to resolve some minor inconsistencies in the first edition.

### Chamber practice

The project to improve the captioning of chamber proceedings via the internal broadcasting network, known as the Events in Progress system, was completed in early 2005, and the system began operating for the budget sittings in May. The project involved staff from the department and the departments of the Senate and Parliamentary Services. Initial feedback, particularly from whips and independent members, has been very positive. The system continues to be refined as issues arise.

The new system (pictured in Figure 6) features dedicated caption channels for the House, the Main Committee and the Senate. It is managed by Table Office staff with assistance from chamber attendants. Maintaining the captions service is a challenge during periods of peak activity on sitting days, but few problems have been encountered so far. The caption service is used as a key management tool by the chief whips' offices, and its display on lobby monitors helps members and advisers working on the periphery of the Chamber and Main Committee.

Figure 6 House of Representatives Chamber caption as broadcast on Channel 3 of the Parliament House monitoring service



During the year, Chamber and Main Committee email communications protocols were improved, leading to more efficient information flows to and from the Chamber and Main Committee. This proved particularly useful during periods of intense activity, such as the last days of the spring, autumn and winter sittings.

The election of a new Speaker for the Forty-first Parliament provided the opportunity for the Speaker to make statements to the House about the future application of various practices, such as the rule of relevance. Our staff supported the Speaker by providing prompt, high-quality research and advice.

### *Document provision*

The trend to provide more chamber documents to members, staff and others in electronic form where possible continued. The *Notice Paper*, *Daily Program* and *Votes and Proceedings* are available in hard copy as well as in electronic format, but an increasing number of users appear to be satisfied with the electronic documents. The introduction of the senators' and members' portal referred to in last year's report—a gateway to computer programs and documents of particular use to members, such as notices of motion—increased this satisfaction.

As mentioned, new standing orders came into effect on the first sitting day of the Forty-first Parliament. The standing orders were redrafted in plain Australian language and reorganised to make them easier to understand (and thus more accessible) for members and other users. This was the most significant change made to the format and wording of the standing orders in many decades, and necessitated complementary revisions of many chamber documents and underlying information technology systems, procedural documents, and publications about the work of the House.

During the period, the House made one amendment to the new standing orders (affecting two orders). We prepared and circulated an insert on the day of the amendment.

### *Parliamentary committees*

Staff contributing to the output group continued to provide secretariat support to a number of House committees and to one joint committee dealing with the powers and procedures of the House. These were the Selection Committee, the Standing Committee on Publications, the Standing Committee on Procedure, the Committee of Privileges, and the Committee of Members' Interests, and the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings.

Since the commencement of the Forty-first Parliament, the Standing Committee on Procedure has presented a report on the application of the 'anticipation rule'. The recommendations made in the report have been adopted by the House. In February 2005, the committee marked the twentieth anniversary of its establishment.

The Selection Committee continued to play a significant role in arrangements for the presentation of committee and delegation reports and private members' business for Mondays. During 2004–05, it became apparent that there was a degree of dissatisfaction among members with chamber arrangements for the tabling of

committee reports and the time allowed for members to debate such reports on, or very soon after, the day of their presentation. This issue was brought to the attention of the Selection Committee and is the subject of an ongoing inquiry by the Procedure Committee.

The Committee of Privileges presented one report during the period.

### *Procedural training*

Staff kept abreast of relevant knowledge:

- by attending regular detailed briefing sessions on practice and procedural developments organised by the Deputy Clerk
- through Chamber and Main Committee debriefing sessions at the end of each sitting week
- through monthly Committee Office debriefing sessions
- by attending national and international parliamentary conferences on practice and procedure
- by participating in an Australia and New Zealand School of Government tertiary course and a Queensland University of Technology short course on parliamentary law and procedure run on behalf of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table
- by participating in courses on the design, use of and modification of parliamentary electronic databases.

### *Main Committee*

Our staff worked with the Department of Parliamentary Services on further preparatory work for a possible new venue for the Main Committee, a project recommended in several reports of the Procedure Committee in previous years. While the committee has been motivated by practical and procedural considerations, it has also been keen to return the current venue of the Main Committee to its original function as a multipurpose committee room. The architects engaged to give preliminary advice on the project gave several presentations to a representative group of officeholders, members and staff.

Programming of business in the Main Committee continues to develop. Late in the winter sittings, a trend emerged towards longer sittings to allow more time for members' three-minute statements, extra sittings on Mondays and Tuesdays, and extended adjournment debates.

A broader range of our senior staff was rostered on for duty as Main Committee Deputy Clerk. This position continued to provide a valuable training opportunity to introduce staff to the challenges of clerking at the table. Staff newly rostered for duty as Deputy Clerk receive briefings before their debuts, as well as follow-up advice and guidance.

## Processing and drafting of bills

### Legislation

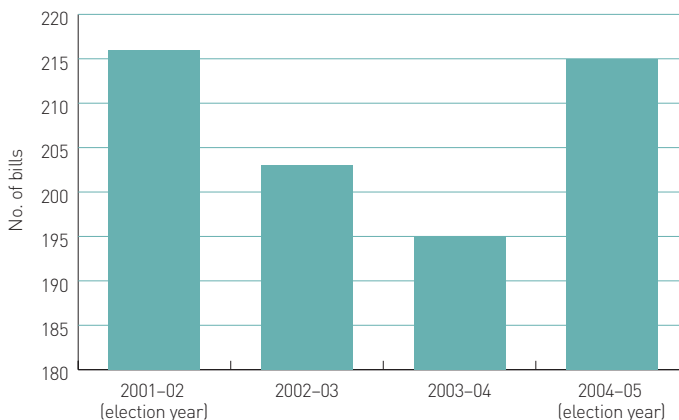
Table 2 shows the total number of bills introduced in the House (including those first introduced in the Senate) for 2003–04 and 2004–05. Figure 7 provides comparative data over four years.

During the year, 215 bills were introduced (195 in 2003–04), of which 192 were initiated in the House of Representatives and 23 were received from the Senate. Of the bills introduced, eight were private members' bills for which the output group provided drafting assistance for the bills themselves and, in some cases, for the accompanying explanatory memoranda. See Appendix 2 for further details.

The House amended seven bills that were initiated in the House, which resulted in the Table Office incorporating the amendments into the text of the bills and arranging for their reprinting before transmittal to the Senate. In addition, 11 bills were amended by the Senate and agreed to by the House or amended by the House at the request of the Senate, requiring further processing by the Table Office to incorporate the amendments before the bills were presented to the Governor-General for assent. In total, the office prepared, printed and checked for accuracy 117 bills prior to assent (181 bills in 2003–04). In addition, the output group provided drafting assistance for second reading (in principle) amendments and detailed amendments to bills moved by private members during the year (details are in Appendix 2).

In the 2005 members' survey, members indicated their satisfaction with the drafting service that we provided.

Figure 7 Total bills introduced, 2001–02 to 2004–05



We met all deadlines, and continued to maintain very high levels of accuracy during all stages of processing. No errors arising from our legislative work were identified during the year. The Table Office continued to use Workshare's DeltaView document comparison technology, supplemented with some limited manual checking, in preparing all types of legislation. An officer of the New Zealand Parliament visited the Table Office to study the document comparison technology and our methods for processing bills, with a view to that parliament adopting a similar approach.

We used the period between the Fortieth Parliament and the Forty-first Parliament to undertake 'end of Parliament' and longer term tasks and to prepare for the opening of the new Parliament. This included producing bound volumes of the bills of the Fortieth Parliament for permanent record. Thirty-nine volumes were produced.

The bills subscription agreement with Canprint Communications, which was arranged following the closure of the Australian Government Bookshop network in October 2003, was extended for a further year.

## Record of proceedings and House documents

### *Votes and Proceedings*

The electronic compilation of *Votes and Proceedings* (the formal record of the House) continued successfully, in conjunction with the production of the Votes Officer's Minutes (the real-time electronic record of the proceedings of the Chamber and the Main Committee compiled progressively throughout each sitting day). The Votes Officer's Minutes document, which is refreshed every 15 seconds, is available through the parliamentary computing network to all network users in Parliament House and electorate offices. Informal feedback from a number of sources indicates that this document is extremely useful. Members and their staff increasingly use the electronic Votes Officer's Minutes to follow events as they unfold in the Chamber. Parliamentary departmental staff also use them to check on events that have occurred earlier in the day and to confirm decisions of the House.

The proof *Votes and Proceedings* is provided electronically and incorporated in the printed volumes of Hansard for each sitting day. With proposed reductions in the supplies of hard-copy Hansards for members and parliamentary staff, the electronic availability of *Votes and Proceedings* has become more important.

During the period work was progressed on 'end of Parliament' tasks—preparation of *Votes and Proceedings* volumes and the indexes to the *Votes and Proceedings* and parliamentary papers for the Fortieth Parliament. This work was nearing completion at 30 June 2005.

### *Documents presented to the House*

The system to organise the many hundreds of documents 'deemed to have been presented to the House' pursuant to standing order 199 underwent change in 2004–05, arising from the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003*, which came into operation in 2005. Under the Act, all non-exempt legislative instruments in force before the commencement of the Act need to be registered in a central database.

We have seen a very large increase in subordinate legislation presented to the House through the deemed document mechanism. More than 15,000 documents and disallowable instruments were processed in 2004–05, an increase of the order of 300 per cent. Most of this increase was from the rescinding and remaking of approximately 11,000 Civil Aviation Authority Air Worthiness Directives. We have maintained systems and processes to securely handle, catalogue and store this material. Appropriate modifications were made to the citation of subordinate legislation in the *Votes and Proceedings* and the disallowable instruments list. This development has substantially increased our workload in this area, and we are closely monitoring our resource allocation.

In May 2005, the Presiding Officers decided that, in view of the increasing electronic availability of documents in the Parliamentary Papers Series, from the beginning of 2006 distribution of free hard copies of papers in the series would be restricted to state libraries, state parliaments and tertiary education institutions. Municipal libraries, government departments, foreign embassies and political parties will no longer be entitled to free distribution. The Presiding Officers have also sought advice from the Joint Committee on Publications on possible further changes to the distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series. Such changes include the possibility of supplying the series in an electronic format, or providing a subscription or other cost recovery service. It is anticipated that the committee will inquire into these matters in 2005–06.

### *Custody of records*

We continued the long-term relocation of House records into archival-quality containers, culling and reboxing parliamentary papers. We made significant progress in the period between parliaments. The project, working forwards from papers from 1901, has reached the mid-1960s. The volume of documents created each year has increased significantly in recent decades, and the project will continue for some years.

A consultant from the National Archives of Australia inspected the on-site archive area and produced a report on the long-term preservation of House records. The report was positive about the conditions in which documents are kept and the progressive reboxing of records, but made a number of recommendations for further improvements. These will be addressed in 2005–06.

### *Research*

The Chamber Research Office continued to collect, store, analyse and publish a range of procedural and statistical information. The main procedural electronic database for the House, the Procedural Record System, was upgraded to include an additional field for the new standing orders.

## Advice

In addition to its routine publications, the office provided advice on a range of subjects, including:

- advice, or assistance with advice, to the Speaker and other members on the application of the standing orders and precedents in applying the standing orders and other House practices, and support to the Procedure Committee
- advice and publications on statistics of legislation and House practices
- advice and publications on precedents and procedural records
- advice to members of the public and to other parliaments on how the House operates.

Feedback from the Speaker, members and the public on the provision of chamber-related services and advice was very positive.

## Publications



*In June 2005 the fifth edition of House of Representatives Practice was launched by the Speaker. At the launch, from left, Deputy Clerk and Assistant Editor, Bernard Wright; Assistant Editor, Peter Fowler; the Speaker; and the Clerk and Editor, Ian Harris. Picture supplied courtesy of AUSPIC*

The fifth edition of *House of Representatives Practice*, the authoritative explanation of House history, practice and procedure, was completed and published in June 2005. The project involved comprehensive editing and rewriting to reflect the new standing orders and the changed use of some procedural terms in the standing orders.

The introduction of the new standing orders also necessitated rewriting the Infosheets series, a collection of 21 illustrated documents about the House that is available in hard copy and in electronic form from the department's website. The series aims to cater for students from upper secondary to tertiary levels and other members of the public who require a detailed knowledge of the way the House works.

The Chamber Research Office continued to publish and distribute two documents derived from the electronic precedent database, which is updated each sitting day. At the end of each sitting fortnight, the electronic entries were converted into *Procedural Extracts*, which is a chronological record of items of procedural interest, and the *Procedural Digest*, which is a subject-based record of proceedings.

Statistics on legislative activities and other chamber-related actions continued to be collected and entered into the various statistical databases maintained by the Chamber Research Office. Two editions of the statistical overview, *Work of the Session*, were published electronically and in hard copy during the year: *2003 Autumn and Winter Sittings* and *2004 Spring Sittings*.

### Information technology

The Table Office document production system continued to be of fundamental importance in meeting work objectives, and much significant effort went into its ongoing maintenance and improvement. A draft contract for ongoing maintenance of the system by an external provider, jointly negotiated by the three parliamentary departments, was under consideration at 30 June 2005.

We continued to work with the Department of Parliamentary Services to document the essential infrastructure and applications of critical business systems. We established protocols and contingency provisions to enable the Chamber support information technology systems and applications to continue to operate in the event of network failure. A risk analysis of core and critical systems in the Table Office was completed. The study confirmed the need for server redundancy (or back-up) identified for these systems during 2003–04, and the Department of Parliamentary Services has agreed to install an additional server. Updated business continuity plans for the Table Office and the Chamber Research Office were completed during the period.

Information technology also continued to be centrally important in the production and processing of legislation—the core business of the House. Maintaining our systems remained our primary means of avoiding problems in this risk area. In conjunction with the other parliamentary departments and external stakeholders, we began planning a project to identify systems redevelopment requirements for the BillsNet system (the system which supports web-based publication of bills and associated documents) and the Bills in Progress system (a secure file management and editing application). These systems are major elements of both the electronic management of legislation in the Table Office and the provision of public access to information about legislation. The systems are almost a decade old and are in need of major overhaul to improve functionality and accessibility.

The further development of certain aspects of chamber support software applications—for example, the implementation of a generic upload system package—has improved the efficiency and reliability of the process used to electronically export the *Notice Paper* and proof *Votes and Proceedings* to the ParlInfo repository at the end of each sitting.

The networked secure rack system we developed for storing Chamber and Main Committee laptops and the Speaker's personal digital assistant during non-sitting periods has boosted the reliability of these appliances, and enabled them to capture all parliament-wide system updates as they occur.

## IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

The many strategies to improve performance referred to in last year's annual report continued to be applied successfully during 2004–05. These included planning, monitoring and reviewing operations to ensure client requirements are met in the immediate and longer terms, making optimal use of technology, and having very effective staff.

The output group again sustained high levels of performance against departmental internal and external performance indicators (see Appendix 1 for external indicators), including achieving most of the targets in the annual business plan and performing well against budget. As may be expected in any election year, there was some under-expenditure against budget. The results of the annual survey of members in respect of the output group were again pleasing.

An internal review of the department's output structure in 2004–05 resulted in the removal of the lower level of the structure. This has produced a simpler structure for the output group, with some minor operational benefits.

Among the year's achievements, the following have specifically enhanced the output group's performance:

- implementing the Events in Progress captioning system, providing procedural captions to accompany the televised House and Main Committee proceedings
- reducing risk and achieving greater resilience in Table Office and Chamber Research Office information technology systems, through updating our business continuity plans and introducing contingency arrangements to allow stand-alone operation of Table Office computers in the event of network failure
- achieving greater depth of procedural knowledge and skills in the department, through shadowing arrangements, as referred to in previous years' annual reports; appropriate levels of staffing turnover in the Table and Chamber Research offices; and ongoing specialised training
- anticipating members' needs more effectively, and providing tailored information and briefing sessions to meet those needs.

Examples of our activities to meet members' needs proactively included: our special tailoring of procedures for an extended consideration in detail stage of the Migration Amendment (Detention Arrangements) Bill, to reflect a strategy negotiated between the government and the opposition; a party room briefing on the legislative process that we provided for the opposition; and our reworking of certain procedural scripts used in the Chamber and the Main Committee, to make them more user friendly.

## OUTLOOK

We will continue to focus on providing advice and services of the highest standard to support the Chamber and Main Committee of the House of Representatives, developing and sustaining staff knowledge and skills, and deploying suitable information technology and applications.

Demand for Chamber support advice and services will depend largely on the sittings of the House and the business it conducts. The year 2005–06 will be the middle period of the three-year parliamentary cycle, meaning it is likely that a heavier legislative workload and greater number of sittings will be experienced. Demands on budget resources will increase.

The 2005–06 reporting period will see a new phase in the evolution of the Parliament and its support services, with a government majority in the Senate from 1 July 2005. This may lead to changes in the operation of the House of Representatives. For example, in the winter 2005 sittings, a trend was emerging for the ‘consideration in detail’ stage of bills to be longer and more complex. This necessitated changes in the nature and level of support we provide, and had implications for the programming of government business, which can be expected to continue in 2005–06.

The project to identify requirements for redevelopment of the bills systems will be undertaken in conjunction with the other parliamentary departments, the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and the Attorney-General’s Department. Depending on the outcomes of the project and the case for redevelopment, redevelopment of these systems will commence.

Our computer desktop platforms are scheduled to be upgraded early in the next period. Experience suggests that careful management of the migration process will be important to achieve a seamless transition and maintain full functionality during and after the changeover period.

Support for Output Group 1.1 committees will be maintained. The Procedure Committee has been particularly active in recent years and it is anticipated that this level of activity will continue. The anticipated inquiry by the Publications Committee into the Parliamentary Papers Series will be appropriately supported.

Finally, the preservation and conservation of the records of the House will receive further attention during the period, as will the scope for digitising certain records to ensure their ongoing availability and greater public access.



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## OUTPUT GROUP 1.2 — COMMUNITY AWARENESS

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### DESCRIPTION

Output Group 1.2 is the principal focus of the Liaison and Projects Office, a significant area of responsibility for the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, and staff from all offices in the department contribute to the community outreach services provided under the output group.

To increase knowledge about the House, we publish procedural and news documents, organise and participate in internal and external seminars and lectures (in Canberra and at many locations and campuses across Australia), and disseminate detailed information via a comprehensive series of internet listings and in response to email queries from individuals and organisations.

Information about members is kept current, published on the department's website and disseminated on request. To facilitate school and public visits to observe proceedings, we manage seat bookings in the Chamber galleries and security arrangements for the Chamber, the Main Committee and all committee rooms. Directly and indirectly, we assist interested people to better understand and participate in the work of the House, its committees and the Parliament.

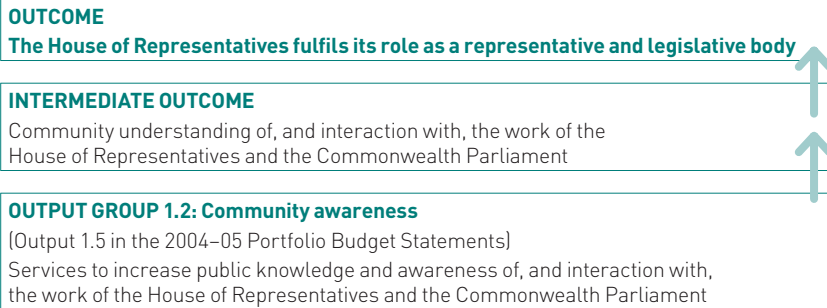
In the department's 2004–05 Portfolio Budget Statements and Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements, Output Group 1.2 appeared as Output 1.5 (Public information and education) of Output Group 1.

In 2004–05, expenditure on Output Group 1.2 was \$1.27 million. The budget allocation was \$1.13 million. Output group financial resources are summarised in Table 1. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 10.

## PERFORMANCE

Our community outreach program expanded during the year, with increases in subscriptions to our magazine and email alert service, an increase in the number of seminar participants, and the introduction of a monthly television program. The school visits program also grew during the year.

Contribution to outcome, Output Group 1.2, 2004–05



### Primary business units

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Liaison and Projects Office | Parliamentary Education Office <sup>a</sup> |
|-----------------------------|---|

<sup>a</sup> The Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate jointly fund the Office, which is administered by the Department of the Senate

## Community liaison

*About the House* magazine, now in its seventh year, remained a key publication for informing Australians about the work of the House of Representatives and its committees. The mailing list grew significantly during 2004–05. Around 15,000 copies of the May 2005 edition were distributed across Australia (showing a significant increase, compared with 14,000 copies for the June 2004 edition). The estimated readership of the magazine is around 50,000 (based on publishing industry estimates that each copy of a magazine is usually read by three or four people).

Feedback was extremely positive, with readers complimenting us on the content and layout of the magazine. Comments from readers included: 'it is top quality, non-political and very informative', 'it is so worthwhile and media unadulterated', 'the issues in this magazine correspond to the issues that I teach', and 'it was the best of those I've seen in terms of imaginative layout, headings and illustrations'.

The magazine was not published during the period leading up to and immediately after the October 2004 election, so only two editions of the magazine were published during the year instead of the usual five.

We maintained a detailed advance summary of the expected business of the House and Main Committee on our website throughout the period. Feedback from consumers of this service suggests that it is keenly embraced.

Our free email alert service, providing up-to-date information on the work of committees, also experienced strong growth in subscriptions. More than 1,400 organisations and individuals subscribed to the service, up from 600 in 2002–03 and 950 in 2003–04. Subscribers included more than 500 media outlets.

Media liaison services provided through our media adviser helped to bring committee work to the attention of the Australian media, and generated broader and more detailed coverage of committees. The value of having a media adviser working with committees was recognised by the Secretary of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery and Australian Associated Press Bureau Chief, James Grubel, when he appeared before the House of Representatives Procedure Committee for its inquiry into media coverage of House proceedings. Mr Grubel told the committee that having a media adviser for House of Representatives committees was 'a fantastic thing', because the media adviser alerted the press to upcoming committee work and activities.

### Seminars and presentations

The seminar program on the practices and procedures of the House, now in its eighth year, continued to grow, with more participants and increased demand for presentations. A new seminar, *Working with the House*, was added in 2005 to give a practical guide to House operations for people in ministerial and parliamentary liaison areas in government departments and agencies, who work with the House on a daily basis. Our staff substantially reworked the program's introductory seminar, *About the House*, to cater for the changing needs of the client audience. Feedback about the revised seminar has been very positive and encouraging.

The advertised seminar program involved nine seminars, but we arranged six additional seminars for such organisations as the Australian Public Service Commission in Adelaide, AusTrac and Hearing Australia in Sydney, and Centrelink in Canberra. We conducted programmed seminars in Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, and received very positive feedback from participants.

The seminars were conducted on a cost recovery basis. In 2004–05, 602 participants registered (a big increase from 470 in 2002–03 and 473 in 2003–04). Each seminar received an overall rating of 'extremely satisfied' from participants.

During the year, Murdoch University, Warrane College at the University of New South Wales, Newcastle University and Bond University participated in our House Calls university lecture program, in which senior officers and current members of the House of Representatives present two-hour lectures to politics and law students. The program aims to improve links between universities and the House. Feedback from lecturers and students indicated that the program is a valuable mechanism for improving students' understanding of how the House works.



*The House Calls lecture program at Murdoch University was presented by the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Kim Beazley, and the Clerk, Ian Harris.*

## Projects and events

A monthly television program on the work of the House and its committees was developed and has been screened on the Sky News channel since February 2005. The program, which focuses on issues being investigated by parliamentary committees, is produced by the Liaison and Projects Office in association with the Department of Parliamentary Services.

A study guide was produced on the House of Representatives multimedia history project, *A House for the Nation*. The project includes a CD-ROM, a documentary and a website on the first 100 years of the House. The study guide will help us market the project to universities and secondary schools. More than 1,000 copies of the CD-ROM and more than 200 copies of the documentary have been sold, with the CD-ROM being adopted as a learning resource at a number of tertiary institutions.

## Public visits to observe proceedings

While schoolchildren comprise the largest grouping of visitors to the chamber galleries, large numbers of non-school visitors book seats in the galleries during sittings to observe question time proceedings. Other peak times for gallery attendances were Budget night, the opening day of the Forty-first Parliament, and the days on which new members made their first speeches. The attendance of non-school visitors is 1,658 as a daily average during a sitting week, peaking at some 3,200 on Budget day.

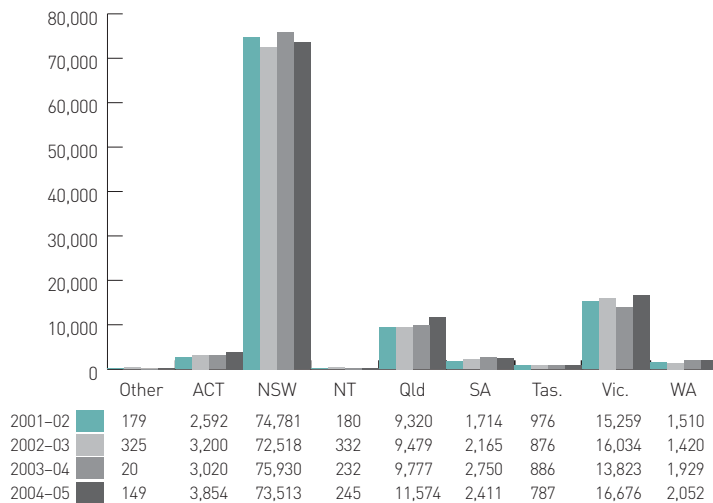
## School visits to Parliament House

The school visits program continues to expand. In 2004–05, a total of 111,261 students visited Parliament House, an increase of 3 per cent on the total of 108,367 reached in 2003–04. Groups from many schools visit each year, and once new schools see the value of visiting the national capital and the great importance of visiting Parliament House they make the trip an annual event.

Bookings for prime days and times are filling very early each year, making it difficult for new schools to access the times and programs they seek. More than 74 per cent of students visiting Parliament House do so in the six months between June and November inclusive. The Parliamentary Education Office will be trialling additional education programs after 5 pm each day during the very busy periods of August and September in an attempt to meet the needs of more visiting groups. These additional programs will particularly help on sitting days when parliamentary committees are meeting and when the pressure on available spaces for students is greatest.

Figure 8 shows the breakdown for the past four years, by state and territory, of students visiting Parliament House. The figures show that the relative costs of a visit to Canberra affect the number of students visiting from each state or territory.

Figure 8 School students visiting Parliament House, 2001–02 to 2004–05



Of the students visiting, all participated in a tour of Parliament House, including a visit to the House of Representatives galleries; 74 per cent participated in a parliamentary education program; and 78 per cent took part in refreshments provided by the department.

## Citizenship Visits Program

The number of students participating in the Citizenship Visits Program (CVP), which provides a subsidy to assist students travelling more than 1,000 kilometres to visit Parliament, continued to increase. In 2004–05, 18,741 students received the subsidy, an increase of 3 per cent on the total of 18,190 reached in 2003–04.

The rates of subsidy were increased on 1 January 2004. Of the visitors in 2004–05, 78.6 per cent (14,736 students) received the \$40 subsidy, 9.2 per cent (1,721 students) received the \$110 subsidy, and 12.2 per cent (2,284 students) received the \$230 subsidy. As in previous years, most of those who received the subsidy (74 per cent) were final-year primary students, while the remainder were secondary students. However, also as in previous years, the students who travelled from the remotest areas were mostly secondary students. Those travelling from Queensland were the most likely to qualify for the lowest subsidy, and 90 per cent of the students from Queensland were primary students.

Figure 9 CVP visits, by month, 2004–05

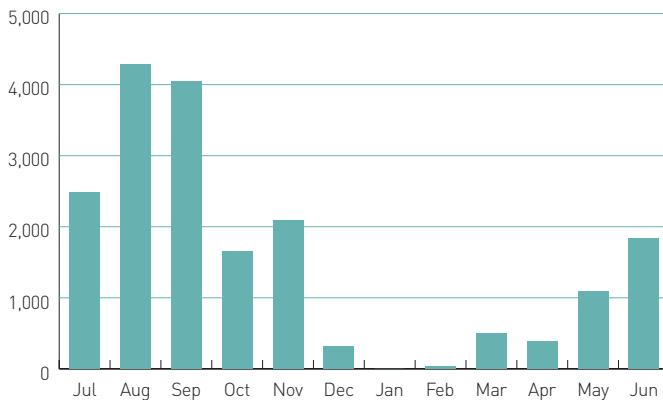
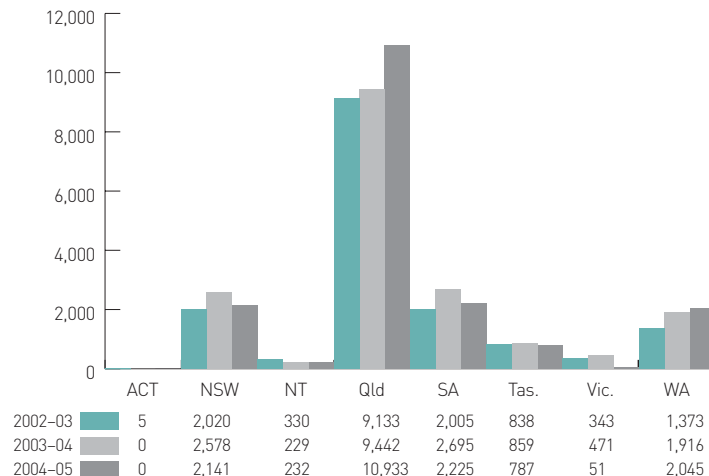


Figure 10 School students receiving CVP subsidies, 2002–03, 2003–04 and 2004–05



## Parliamentary Education Office

During 2004–05 the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) continued to provide parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students. The PEO has two main functions. First, through the Education Centre in Parliament House (a committee room which has been modified to represent a parliamentary chamber), the PEO provides an hour-long role-play for visiting student groups. Secondly, the PEO conducts outreach programs across Australia, often in association with local members and senators, and produces online publications for students and teachers who might not be able to visit Parliament House. 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.

During the year, the two departments jointly approved the PEO's administrative budget and annual work plans. One of the main responsibilities of the Department of the House of Representatives in relation to the PEO continued to be to advise the PEO on the content of its educational programs and material, including online resources. The department also continued to work in partnership with the PEO—for example, in relation to publications—where there were mutual benefits. The Clerk Assistant (Table) attended, as an observer, meetings of the PEO Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the Deputy Speaker.

## Parliamentary internship program

During 2004–05, the department continued to take part in the parliamentary internship program. This program, which operates under an agreement between the Presiding Officers and the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University, enables Australian and overseas senior tertiary students to spend ten weeks of their studies in the Parliament.

In 2004–05, 41 students (44 in 2003–04) were placed with senators, members or parliamentary committees, and completed research projects nominated by their hosts. An additional 36 students (38 in 2003–04) were placed outside the Parliament, in the public service, non-governmental bodies and the private sector. We and the Department of the Senate conducted seminars for all interns on the procedures and practices of the Parliament.

## Parliamentary assistants program

The department continued to employ university students under the parliamentary assistants program, which has elements of employment, educational and outreach programs. The parliamentary assistants program takes students from Canberra-based universities and employs them on a casual, part-time basis in support of the House of Representatives for one year. The objectives of the program are to give students an understanding of parliament and to interest them in future careers with the department.

## IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

During the year, we revamped the layout of the *About the House* magazine to maintain a contemporary look, and used additional writers to help strengthen its content.

The development of a television program for screening on Sky News helped bring parliamentary committee work to a new audience, giving members of the public more opportunity to learn about the work of the House.

Outcomes of an evaluation conducted in 2003 of the PEO Education Centre, referred to in previous reports, were implemented during the period. The outcomes included a revision of Education Centre scripts and increased flexibility for students.

## OUTLOOK

We will continue to refine and develop the key elements of our community outreach program, namely: *About the House* magazine, the television program, seminars and media liaison services. We will build on the quality of our products and services to ensure that they remain up to date and relevant to the community.

The study guide for the *A House for the Nation* history project will be marketed to schools and universities to ensure that the CD-ROM and documentary get broader exposure in secondary and tertiary institutions.

In relation to parliamentary education programs for schools, we will build on the working relationships we have nurtured with executive agencies that provide access to civics education programs. Good working relationships will ensure greater coordination between the offices administering various programs so that potential participants are aware of the programs available.

The PEO expects to continue to host record numbers of students at the Education Centre, while working with members and senators to provide educational resources for their constituents. It will continue to develop and enhance its parliamentary education agenda, including by completing a reorganised and interactive website and launching specific teacher-based and student-based learning resources.



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## OUTPUT GROUP 1.3 — COMMITTEE SERVICES

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### DESCRIPTION

Output Group 1.3 supports House of Representatives committees and some joint committees in fulfilling their roles in the parliamentary consideration of policy and legislation and the scrutiny of government.

In the department's 2004–05 Portfolio Budget Statements and Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements, Output Group 1.3 appeared as outputs 2.1 (Non-inquiry support services) and 2.2 (Inquiry facilitation) of Output Group 2.

The functions and services of the output group are performed by the Committee Office.

In 2004–05, the actual expenses for the provision of services by Output Group 1.3 were \$9.35 million, while the budget allocation was \$10.73 million. A summary of the financial resources for the output group is set out in Table 1; staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 10.

### PERFORMANCE

The House of Representatives was dissolved on 31 August 2004, and an election was held on 9 October 2004. Committees are dissolved when the House is dissolved, so uncertainty about the election timetable placed pressure on committees to complete their inquiries and table their reports before the dissolution. Output Group 1.3 met the challenge by meeting committees' objectives quickly, while maintaining high-quality services.

Committee Office staff provided administrative, policy and procedural support to committees. Our activities included supporting the conduct of inquiries, drafting reports, facilitating public participation in committee activities, and promoting the work of committees.

During the year, we supported 21 House and joint committees, with staff distributed across nine secretariats. The investigatory committees supported by the office at

30 June 2005 are listed in Table 3. Committees supported by Output Group 1.1 are discussed on pages 20–21.

In the 2005 survey of members, 28 per cent of members surveyed reported that they were extremely satisfied, 28 per cent highly satisfied and 33 per cent were satisfied with committee services (a total of 89 per cent who were extremely or highly satisfied or satisfied). This was a slight decrease over the 2004 survey, in which 94 per cent reported that they were extremely satisfied, highly satisfied or satisfied with our services.

### Contribution to outcome, Output Group 1.3, 2004–05

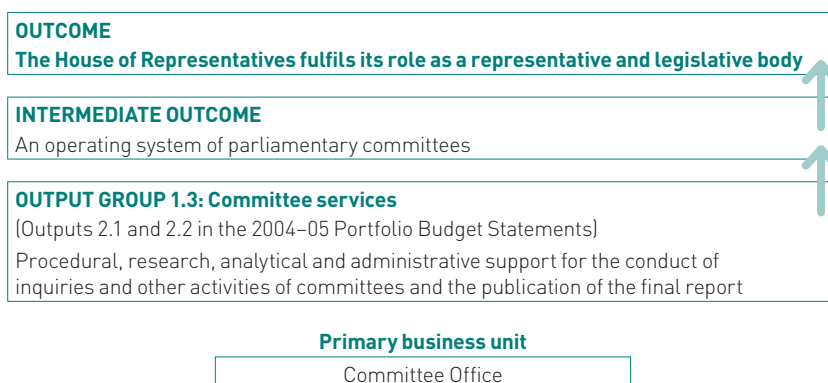


Table 3 Committees supported at 30 June 2005

| House   |
|---|
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs               |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry                         |
| Communications, Information Technology and the Arts         |
| Economics, Finance and Public Administration                |
| Education and Vocational Training                           |
| Employment, Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation |
| Environment and Heritage                                    |
| Family and Human Services                                   |
| Health and Ageing   |
| Industry and Resources                                      |
| Legal and Constitutional Affairs                            |
| Science and Innovation                                      |
| Transport and Regional Services                             |
| Joint   |
| ASIO, ASIS and DSD  |
| Electoral Matters   |
| Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade                          |
| Migration   |
| National Capital and External Territories                   |
| Public Accounts and Audit                                   |
| Public Works  |
| Treaties  |

Note: The committees supported in the Fortieth Parliament were the same as those shown in the department's 2003–04 annual report.

## *Non-inquiry support services*

The key service provided by committee secretariats is support for inquiries, but a significant amount of effort is also devoted to supporting the non-inquiry activities of individual committees, and initiatives common to all areas of the Committee Office.

The satisfaction of committee members with our advice and services is measured through a qualitative survey of members. Informal discussions initiated by the Clerk Assistant (Committees) and the Clerk of the House with committee chairs and deputy chairs and others also allow us to monitor satisfaction. The survey results and feedback indicated a continued high level of satisfaction during 2004–05.

## *Register of committee reports*

The Register of Committee Reports is a complete list of all House of Representatives and Joint Committee reports since 1901. The register has been converted to a searchable database, which is regularly updated and is accessible from the House of Representatives website. The list of reports can be browsed by Parliament, committee name or subject. Where an electronic version of a report is available, a link to the report is provided. The register also provides the date of the government response, if available, to a committee report.

The register is an effective tool for reviewing historical committee reports and, in particular, for examining issues currently under investigation by a committee that have previously been subject to committee scrutiny.

The register helps our staff provide research advice to committees, and makes access to this information by external researchers much easier.

## *Improved staffing flexibility*

Before the dissolution of the Fortieth Parliament, inquiry activity varied from committee to committee according to the stage of its inquiries. When it became evident that an election might be called in the second half of 2004, some committees determined that they would try to complete their outstanding inquiries, while others wound down their activities.

This resulted in considerable differences in the workloads of committee secretariats, but the Committee Office met the challenge by deploying staff flexibly and by using various temporary employment arrangements. Our approach helped to balance competing work demands and allowed us to make salary savings during the election period.

Our staff responded confidently to the pressure, proving highly effective and adaptable. Their performance benefited from the department's approach to training and knowledge management, which included producing effective training manuals and standardising work practices.

## *Re-establishment of committees*

Following the opening of the Forty-first Parliament on 16 November 2004, the Committee Office provided a range of services and advice for the re-establishment of committees. Our staff liaised effectively with government, with all party whips, and

with the chamber support areas of the department. This helped to ensure that most committees supported by the office were able to conduct their first meetings and begin developing their work programs before sittings ceased for 2004.

Recruitment and reallocation of staff were a feature of the post-election period as the new committees became operational.

## Inquiry facilitation

### *Committee activity*

During the reporting period, the 21 investigatory committees supported by the Committee Office tabled 28 reports—a decrease of 43 on the previous year's total. The number of full-year equivalent committee inquiries was 40. This was 15 per cent lower than the previous year's total of 47 committee inquiries. Reduced committee activity is expected in election years, which include a period during which there is no committee activity.

Committee members continued to express a high degree of satisfaction with inquiry facilitation, as demonstrated through the annual qualitative survey of members.

Speeches made in the House when committee reports are tabled also provide feedback for Committee Office staff. The following are examples of comments made by members when reports were tabled during the year.

I also thank our secretariat staff for their continuing tremendous effort.

*House of Representatives Hansard, 11 August 2004, p. 32,763*

My thanks also extend to the committee secretariat, who have been, as always, excellent.

*House of Representatives Hansard, 12 August 2004, p. 32,985*

I also put on record the committee's thanks to the secretariat ... for their continuing very professional and very helpful support to the committee.

*House of Representatives Hansard, 12 August 2004, p. 32,986*

My particular thanks goes to parliamentary staff assigned to the committee in the last parliament ... and to parliamentary staff assigned to the committee in this parliament ... for their professional guidance.

*House of Representatives Hansard, 14 March 2005, p. 2.*

Committee Office staff are increasingly assisting committees in their use of videoconferencing facilities. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services participated in a videoconference with the Scottish Parliament's Justice 1 Committee, by providing information about one of the inquiries it conducted during the Fortieth Parliament. The secretariat provided procedural advice on this matter and organised the necessary videoconferencing services

in Australia. While videoconferences are occasionally used by our committees to conduct meetings or hear evidence from witnesses in Australia, this was the first time a House committee provided evidence to a committee of another parliament in this way.

Appendix 3 summarises Committee Office performance in relation to inquiry facilitation and non-inquiry support services.

Details of committee reports and inquiries during 2004–05 are listed in Appendix 4.

## IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

### Election period training and knowledge management initiatives

With the dissolution of the House of Representatives on 31 August 2004, the focus of the Committee Office shifted to tasks and activities aimed at improving our overall capacity to support parliamentary committees and to achieve departmental objectives.

The election period gave staff an opportunity to broaden their knowledge of the operation of government and non-government agencies by undertaking secondments for up to three months. For example, staff worked with the Australian National Audit Office, the Australian National University and AusAID. Such placements help to improve the knowledge and performance of our staff in their provision of advice to committees. Through their informal ambassadorships, staff are also able to improve understanding of parliamentary processes in the organisations they visit.

In addition to the secondment training program, Committee Office staff also supported the department's objective of enhancing its knowledge management through a series of projects to develop specialised proposals, update documentation, review staffing structures and develop new guides to assist chairs and members of parliamentary committees. Chairs and committee members have responded favourably to these guides.

### Information technology

CommDocs is a web-based document distribution service that will provide committee members with a secure and easily accessible intranet portal for accessing and downloading documents. This system is expected to produce better service and efficiency improvements. Trials of CommDocs are expected to begin in August, and the service will become fully operational towards the end of 2005.

The design development phase of the information technology project was a model of successful consultation and user-driven processes involving many Committee Office staff.

## OUTLOOK

The 2005–06 period will see a rise in activity as a result of the commencement of the Forty-first Parliament.

Committee Office activity will focus on assisting committees to establish new inquiries, advertising terms of reference, and collecting evidence through submissions and from witnesses at public hearings. For inquiries with shorter reporting timeframes, our staff will assist by drafting reports and helping with tabling requirements.

The office will also ensure that new staff are able to attend a range of internal and external training courses and Inside Committees briefings, which will help them to quickly develop understanding and skills in committee processes and procedures.

The introduction of the CommDocs web-based document distribution service in the second half of 2005 is expected to raise service standards. It will demand considerable liaison and discussion with members during the introductory phase, to meet members' varying requirements and to achieve the best productivity gains and service improvements.

The Committee Office will continue to apply flexible staffing approaches to meet the changing expectations of members and committees, and to respond to staff needs. A review of administrative support structures has begun and will continue during 2005–06.

As part of the 2005 survey of members, some members commented on the inconvenience caused by frequent staff changes within secretariats. While staff movement is unavoidable because of promotions and training opportunities, its effect on committees and members needs to be monitored closely. Other issues raised in the survey will also be addressed.



*The Standing Committee on Procedure receiving evidence from members of the Press.  
Picture courtesy of AUSPIC*



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## OUTPUT GROUP 1.4 — INTERPARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS

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### DESCRIPTION

Output Group 1.4 provides advice and support for the conduct of the Parliament's international and regional affairs.

In the department's 2004–05 Portfolio Budget Statements and Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements, Output Group 1.4 appeared as Output 2.3 (Interparliamentary relations) of Output Group 2.

The functions and services of the output group are delivered primarily by the Parliamentary Relations Office (PRO). All offices of the department contribute in various ways in support of this output group.

In 2004–05, the actual expenses for the provision of services by Output Group 1.4 were \$1.98 million, while the budget allocation was \$1.92 million. A summary of the financial resources for the output group is set out in Table 1; staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 10.

### PERFORMANCE

During 2004–05, the PRO continued to provide advice and support to facilitate the conduct of the Parliament's international and regional affairs.

We organised many incoming and outgoing visits by parliamentarians and officials, helped overseas parliamentary staff to strengthen parliamentary institutions in their own countries, and supported the efforts of international parliamentary organisations.

Contribution to outcome, Output Group 1.4, 2004–05

**OUTCOME**

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

**INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME**

Maintain international and regional relationships with other parliaments, parliamentary bodies and organisations

**OUTPUT GROUP 1.4: Interparliamentary relations**

(Output 2.3 in the 2004–05 Portfolio Budget Statements)

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

**Primary business unit**

Parliamentary Relations Office

The Parliament's international relations are coordinated through the PRO, which is funded jointly by the House of Representatives and Senate departments and administered by the Department of the House of Representatives. The focus of activities and programs is on direct bilateral relationships between the Australian Parliament and other parliaments, and participation in the international and regional activities of parliamentary associations.

**Delegations and visits**

The program of visits to and from Australia by parliamentary delegations helps strengthen relations between parliaments, promotes good governance and contributes to the bilateral relationships between Australia and other countries. As in previous years, the program of visits had a particular focus on the Asia–Pacific region.

During 2004–05, the department coordinated programs for 15 visits to other countries and attendance at six conferences, seminars and workshops (see Appendix 7). There were also 11 official visits to Australia by parliamentary delegations from other countries as guests of the Australian Parliament, and 27 unofficial visits by parliamentary delegations from other countries (see Appendices 5 and 6). The department also provided support for the Australian Parliament's participation in programs and activities of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The Asia–Pacific focus was reflected in visits by Australian parliamentary delegations to China, Indonesia, Mongolia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and visits to Australia by delegations from Cambodia, China, New Zealand and Sri Lanka. An Australian parliamentary delegation also participated in the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum in Vietnam.

The May 2005 visit by the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Mr Wu Bangguo, was particularly significant. Following shortly after a visit to China by an Australian

parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker, Mr Wu's visit reflected the strength of the relationship between Australia and China.

Mr Wu was invited by the Presiding Officers and, because of the importance of the visit, was elevated to the status of guest of the Australian Government. The PRO worked closely with the Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to ensure the success of the visit.

In a media statement, Mr Wu said his visit to Australia was 'a complete success', in that it 'maintained the momentum of high-level contacts' and 'enhanced mutual understanding, deepened mutual feelings, and strengthened political mutual trust'. He said the visit 'promoted bilateral economic cooperation and trade, advanced long-term strategic cooperation between China and Australia in the field of energy and mineral resources, and expanded exchanges in the cultural field and among local regions'. In addition, the visit 'further developed the relationship between the Chinese National People's Congress and the Australian Federal Parliament'.

Also significant during the year were several parliamentary visits involving Indonesia, reflecting the growing relations between the Australian and Indonesian parliaments. The Chairman of the People's Consultative Committee, Dr Hidayat Nur Wahid, and members of the Regional Representatives Council of Indonesia visited Australia. An Australian parliamentary delegation visited Indonesia in July 2004, and another delegation visited in June 2005 to assess the humanitarian relief operations in Banda Aceh in response to the Indian Ocean tsunamis.

During 2004–05, our administrative support for all official incoming and outgoing visits met the required performance standards. Debriefing of outgoing delegations formed an integral part of each visit, and helped to ensure that lessons learned from one visit could be used in the planning of others.

A draft manual to advise members and senators about their participation in outgoing delegations has been completed and is awaiting advice from the Department of Finance and Administration in relation to possible changes to the administration of members' entitlements before it can be finalised.

### Support for other parliaments

The Australian Parliament continued to support other parliaments by providing training and related assistance for parliamentary staff and parliamentarians. Here, too, the emphasis was on the Asia-Pacific region.

During the year, there were five visits by parliamentary officials. The Interparliamentary Study Program was conducted for 13 officials, including officials from ten countries, the European Union and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The focus of the study program was on promoting accountability and transparency in parliamentary processes. In their evaluations, participants unanimously agreed that the program was a success.

To improve linkages between the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, two officers from the department were each seconded to work for ten weeks at the Inter-Parliamentary Union headquarters in

Switzerland. The Clerk of the House continued to serve as President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments during the year, and the secondments were one of several ways the department assisted him in that role. Outcomes from the secondments included the development of a new electronic bulletin for the association and the development of resources for training parliamentary staff.

A departmental officer was also seconded for three months to the Parliament of Papua New Guinea. The secondment was to support a parliamentary committee established to consider various reforms.

### Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Education and Training (Trust) Fund resumed its operations during the year, following a new determination under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, referred to in last year's report, governing the operation of the fund. Training and related support were provided to the parliaments of nine Pacific Islands countries.

## IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

During the year, we reviewed PRO staffing and agreed on a new team structure to provide greater depth in the future coordination of the Parliament's international relations. We have also created opportunities for other departmental staff to be involved in the work of the office, making available a broader base of personnel to assist with visits during periods of peak activity.

## OUTLOOK

In 2005–06, the new staffing structure for the PRO will be implemented to provide greater depth in delivery of programs, strengthen strategic planning and policy development, and improve the development of staff. For staff development purposes, and to help us manage peak periods of activity, we will continue to provide opportunities for other staff of the department to assist with the preparation of visits programs.



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# OUTPUT GROUP 1.5 — MEMBERS' SERVICES

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## DESCRIPTION

Output Group 1.5 focuses on advice, services and support for members. Our duties include the payment of salaries and allowances, support for accommodation at Parliament House, and the delivery of office and communication services, such as stationery, printing and information technology.

In the department's 2004–05 Portfolio Budget Statements and Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements, Output Group 1.5 appeared as Output Group 3 (Members' services).

From 1 July 2004, the parliamentary security function and its funding were transferred from this department and the Department of the Senate to the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS), which now reports on performance in that area.

The Serjeant-at-Arms represents the department on the Security Management Board, which was established on a statutory basis by amendments to the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* with effect from 1 April 2005. The board has overall policy and coordination responsibility for security at Parliament House. The Serjeant-at-Arms remains responsible, as the delegate of the Speaker, for managing security in the Chamber and its lobbies and galleries at all times.

The expenditure for Output Group 1.5 in 2004–05 was \$3.17 million. The budget allocation was \$3.55 million. A summary of the financial resources for the output group is set out in Table 1; staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 10.

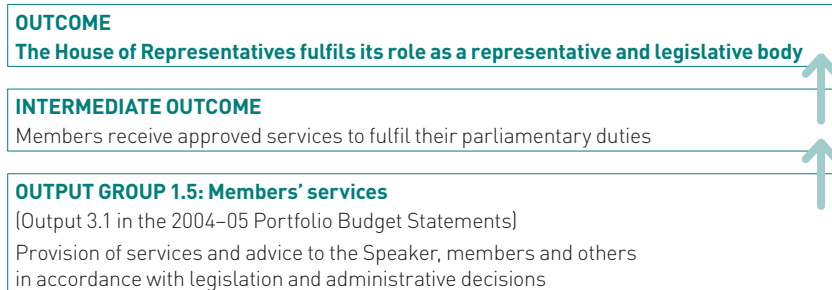
## PERFORMANCE

The strong performance by Output Group 1.5 in 2004–05 was achieved in response to the extra challenges typical of an election year. The period from the dissolution of the House of Representatives until the first sittings of the new parliament (from 31 August to 16 November 2004) was the busiest period in the parliamentary cycle for

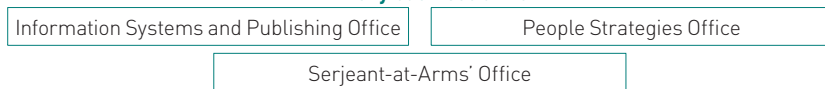
all offices contributing to this output group. The output group received positive formal and informal feedback for its achievements.

The results of the 2005 members' survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with our work, supporting the informal feedback. The detailed results of the survey as they relate to our specific services will be referred to later in the chapter.

### Contribution to outcome, Output Group 1.5, 2004–05



#### Primary business units



### Information services

Two editions of the members' bulletin, *House Update*, were published during the year (two less than the usual four, because of the federal election). The bulletin helps keep members and their staff informed about developments in the House.

The output group conducted a seminar for newly elected members and for new staff of members to help familiarise them with the work and procedures of the House and the services available to assist them. We supplemented this with a series of briefings, mainly on procedure.

Anecdotal feedback indicated that members and their staff valued the regular updates they received from the department.

### Accommodation services

As a result of the general election and a later by-election, the offices of ten retiring members and 13 defeated members were packed and readied for reoccupation by newly elected members. Changes in membership of the House, the ministry and the shadow ministry, and the election of a new leader of the opposition, resulted in 80 office relocations. Relocation requests were responded to within agreed timeframes and to the satisfaction of party whips and individual members.

The department's capacity to meet the accommodation needs of members (particularly parliamentary secretaries and shadow ministers) has been affected by competing demands for the limited space in the House of Representatives wing of Parliament House. Through the Senior Management Coordination Group, the department has suggested a review of accommodation across the building.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office received 599 requests to supply and move furniture, 81 more than in 2003–04. All tasks were performed within agreed timeframes and to agreed standards.

During the year, the office monitored modifications to one of the members' suites to ensure compliance with the Australian Government's disability regulations, amended since the building was first occupied in 1988. The modifications mean that one member's suite in the House of Representatives wing meets the new building code.

### Maintenance, access and transport services

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office manages responses to requests for emergency, routine and periodic maintenance work. A total of 359 emergency requests were processed during 2004–05 (351 were processed in 2003–04). As in the previous year, all were attended to within five minutes of receipt.

A total of 283 routine maintenance requests for repairs or alterations to suites or common areas were submitted to the DPS, 19 fewer than last year. Of those requests, 15 per cent resulted from pre- and post-recess checks, which allow the office to avoid a bottleneck of maintenance requests when members return for sittings. Periodic maintenance, such as painting and recarpeting suites and maintaining airconditioning equipment and building fabrics (timber, leather and brass), was organised with the agreement of affected members as part of the DPS program.

Major refurbishment, including recarpeting and painting, of the Committee Office accommodation was undertaken during the year.

The office received and dealt with 241 (147 in 2003–04) requests for assistance with telephone faults, relocations and allocation of telephone numbers. The increase is a consequence of the election. Of requests for telephone support, 11 (15) related to faults and were reported to the telephone support service within five minutes of receipt; all were acted on by telephone support officers within the agreed service standard of 45 minutes.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office processed 1,145 (759) applications for access to suites and general circulation areas. This significant increase in applications arose because of the work undertaken after the general election.

The office coordinated transport services for members, including managing the members' shuttle service during sitting weeks. Our target was to conduct the transport service without error, and for the 2,750 (4,800) bookings made we again achieved a success rate of over 99 per cent. The decrease in shuttle movements was due to the extended period during which the House did not sit.

The members' survey showed that the percentage of members either extremely or highly satisfied with services provided by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office rose from 69 per cent in 2004 to 85 per cent in 2005 and the percentage satisfied with the services rose from 94 per cent in 2004 to 95 per cent in 2005. Members felt the services provided by staff of the office are prompt, efficient and courteous, with staff going out of their way to be helpful.

## Software and hardware services

During 2004–05, no major information technology asset replacements were conducted. However, preliminary work was carried out to prepare for a major hardware replacement program (involving both desktop and laptop computers) planned to commence in early 2005–06.

In cooperation with the chamber departments, the DPS conducted a tender process for the supply of personal computers to the parliament. Preparations were also made for a tender process for the supply of laptop computers. Both processes were conducted under the revised Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines.

The general election saw a changeover of 22 members. Information technology equipment was retrieved from retiring members and any hard disks were sanitised. The equipment was then reallocated to new members.

During the year, an improved version of the Members' Information Database was developed and deployed. The database is used to manage essential information about members, which is stored in a central repository and used by many Parliament House computer systems.

Output Group 1.5 gave additional software services and training to committee secretariat staff, to help them provide services to members. The software included ISYS for file searching and version 6 of Adobe Acrobat to allow modification of PDF files. Further training is planned for committee staff, members and members' staff in the new financial year.

## Internet and intranet services

During the election break, a project to develop an online register of all committee reports was undertaken and successfully completed. The register, which is now available on the Parliament's internet site, contains descriptive details of all House of Representatives committee reports since 1901. Users can browse the collection by parliamentary term, subject matter or committee name. Where an electronic version of a report is available on the Parliament House website, the register provides a link to the report. For older reports that are not available on the website, the register links to the National Library's search engine.

To improve online accessibility to information published on the House of Representatives portion of the Parliament's website, we developed an HTML template for committee reports. From the start of the Forty-first Parliament, all committee reports will be published in two formats: HTML and PDF.

Substantial progress was made on a major project to develop a method of providing access to committee documents via the SMSP (the senators' and members' service portal). This project had its genesis in a request made by the Presiding Officers Information Technology Advisory Group in 2004. The CommDocs project began shortly after, in April 2004, with a study of the requirements of committee members and secretariat staff for electronic access to committee documents. The study identified the need to provide each committee with a centralised document repository and communications mechanism that is accessible only to committee members

and authorised staff. The repository will hold governance documentation, such as meeting agendas, briefing papers, and minutes of meetings.

To ensure that CommDocs meets the needs of its users, extensive consultation with committee secretariat staff and committee members was undertaken. In a series of workshops, staff commented on the system designs under development, providing valuable feedback. Testing of the first version of CommDocs began in June 2005, with more extensive testing scheduled for July 2005. A secretariat will pilot CommDocs in August 2005, when the Parliament resumes for the spring sitting. A full roll-out to the Committee Office is scheduled for January 2006.

## Printing

The department's in-house printing service prints documents that are needed quickly for the efficient running of the Chamber and committees and to meet the needs of members for printing within Parliament House. The print room output in 2004–05 was approximately 11.8 million impressions—slightly less than the output of the previous year, due to the election break.

Members have an annual in-house printing allowance that can be used only for parliamentary and electorate business. During the financial year, 5.6 million impressions were printed as part of members' in-house printing allowances, and 137 members used all or part of their allowances. Members may transfer a portion of their allowance to another member: during 2004–05, 13 members transferred portions of their allowances to other members.

A website for the printing service was developed and published on the department's intranet. The website, which is accessible by members through the SMSP, provides members with information about their allowances, an online catalogue and an online order system for school visit certificates. The site has been well received and feedback from members' staff has been positive. Hard-copy versions of the same information were also sent to members.

The feedback received through the annual members' survey indicated that the members who use the service were generally satisfied with the efficiency and helpfulness of staff. The percentage that were extremely or highly satisfied declined from 64 per cent in 2004 to 52 per cent in 2005 and those satisfied fell from 100 per cent in 2004 to 78 per cent in 2005 (although 11 per cent appeared not to use the service). Some members considered the range of printing options and materials was limited. The changes to the printing area resulting from the print review will take account of the changing needs of members.

A revised departmental set of stationery items was designed and produced during the year. Items such as business cards and compliments slips are ordered through the printing service's intranet site and printed in-house. A standard letterhead shell is now used in all departmental offices, including committee secretariats, with office details overprinted on desktop printers. This initiative has provided significant cost savings to the department.

A detailed review of the printing service began at the end of 2003–04, and analysed past, current and projected print demands for the central printing service and for local printing in the department's various offices and the competitiveness of the department's in-house printing. The review showed that, while there had been a shift in work from the centralised service to local printing, a centralised service was still needed. The review also showed an increase in digital imaging of hard-copy documents for the web, and indicated that the in-house service needed to contain costs. A strategic business plan to provide a cost-effective centralised print service and additional services in electronic publishing is being developed, with implementation due to commence during the 2005–06 financial year.

### Messenger services

During 2004–05, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office continued to provide messenger services to the standards specified in the service charter of the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. We received no complaints, either formally or through the feedback process identified in the charter.

The installation of pigeonholes in the distribution centre reduced significant double handling of members' mail during non-sitting periods, and minor changes to routine mail rounds streamlined mail distribution.

### Parliamentary assistants program

The department continued its program of recruiting university students to work as parliamentary assistants alongside messengerial attendants. This was the fifth year of the parliamentary assistants program, which has elements of employment, educational and outreach programs, and is managed through the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. As in previous years, parliamentary assistants performed the duties of messengerial attendants for an average of 12 hours per week. Duty rosters are planned around individual study commitments, with many students working in the chamber during the evening on sitting days, when they are not scheduled to attend lectures and tutorials.

At the end of 2004, all parliamentary assistants appointed in 2003 were invited to apply to become senior parliamentary assistants and assist with the incoming team. Four of them accepted and are providing valuable help in training four new parliamentary assistants appointed for 2005.

This year, the program attracted more than 200 applicants. The four appointed students are from the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victoria.

### Management and administration

#### *Members' salaries*

All processing of members' salaries and entitlements by the People Strategies Office was in accordance with the legislative and administrative framework. In the 2005 members' survey, 63 per cent of respondents (63 percent in the 2004 survey) were extremely or highly satisfied and 100 per cent (100 per cent in the 2004 survey) were

satisfied with our services in relation to members' base salary, electorate allowance and deductions.

Annual expenditure on members' salaries and other entitlements was \$21.15 million during 2004–05, a slight increase from the \$20.79 million spent the previous year. All performance targets for members' salary services were met, with all salary variations completed when required and with 99 per cent accuracy. The cost per transaction rose slightly, from \$5.41 to \$5.49.

We processed one pay rise during the year, with effect from 1 July 2004. The pay rise increased the members' base rate of pay to \$106,770 per year. Officeholders' salaries were also adjusted according to the formula outlined in the parent determination.

### *Staff of holders of public office*

The department administers the salary payments and some other conditions of service for the staff of holders of public office: namely, the Speaker's and Deputy Speaker's staff. The average staffing level in 2004–05 was 5.33, at an average cost of \$87,880 per staff member. Total salary expenses were \$468,404 for the year (\$431,000 in 2003–04). An additional \$250,633 was paid out in termination payments to staff who discontinued their service following the federal election.

The People Strategies Office processed all variations initiated by officeholders' staff, and maintained the 99 per cent accuracy rate achieved in 2003–04.

### **Improving performance**

As detailed above, Output Group 1.5 improved its performance in the provision of accommodation services; the development of new or improved information technology tools, such as CommDocs and the Members' Information Database; and the delivery of mail.

### **Outlook**

In 2005–06, demand for the services of Output Group 1.5 will return to the level of the peak non-election years of the parliamentary cycle. It is expected that there will be no work pressure arising from the retirement, defeat or introduction of members. The Chamber, committees and members will place demands on our services, and particularly on the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office and the Information Systems and Publishing Office.

The roll-out of new laptop computers to members will be a significant task in the new financial year. We expect that involving members closely—the approach we took in previous roll-outs—will smooth the process.

As a result of our review of the department's printing service, we expect to make significant changes, including by replacing equipment, introducing new services, and better controlling costs.

We will also implement the CommDocs project during the year. In the longer term, we expect CommDocs to improve the delivery of key committee documents to members, increase the use of electronic rather than printed documents, and improve the efficiency with which committee staff are able to service committees.



*The Serjeant-at-Arms escorts the Speaker into the Chamber of the House of Representatives.  
Picture courtesy of AUSPIC*