



Outcome 1— Effective provision of services

Outcome

The Department of the Senate has a single overarching outcome.

Outcome 1—Effective provision of services to support the functioning of the Senate as a House of the Commonwealth Parliament.

To achieve this outcome, the department ensures that the Senate, Senate committees, the President of the Senate, other senators and the members of the public are provided with a broad range of advisory and support services. The department is responsible to the Senate and all senators, and maintains complete impartiality in serving equally senators from all political parties and independent senators.

The department's four main areas of service provision are reflected in the following intermediate outcomes:

- effective support for the Senate chamber
- effective support for Senate and certain joint committees
- public awareness of the Senate and its work
- effective office and information technology support services for senators in their Parliament House offices.

Overall performance

The department's performance in achieving Outcome 1 is assessed using indicators that cover all the department's activities, as well as indicators that are specific to particular output groups.

The department-wide assessment indicators covering quality, timeliness, quantity and price are outlined in the table on page 14. Each output group chapter begins with a similar table, describing the group's planned outputs, performance indicators and results.

Outcome 1		
Effective provision of services to support the functioning of the Senate as a House of the Commonwealth Parliament.		
	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the accuracy, quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.	The department's regular survey of senators—the main formal feedback mechanism—was conducted in February and March 2005, and confirmed senators' high levels of satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of support.
Timeliness	Advice or material given on request of a senator in time to be used for the purpose for which it was required. Key business documents for the Senate and its committees, including minutes, agendas, messages and schedules of amendments and reports, produced in accordance with predetermined requirements and the requirements of the Senate and its committees.	All business documents were produced in accordance with predetermined requirements and agreed timeframes, in time to serve the purposes for which they were prepared.
Quantity	On the basis of recent experience, in 2004-05 the department would expect to support the Senate on approximately 70 sitting days and committees in accordance with their requirements.	The 2004 general election reduced the number of meeting days to below the average. The department supported the Senate on 41 sitting days and estimates committees on 15 days, and other committees in accordance with their requirements.
Price	The total price of the department's outputs in 2004-05 is estimated to be \$34.7 million.	The actual cost of the department's outputs in 2004-05 was \$22.5 million.

Analysis

Operational performance

In 2004-05, the department continued to provide comprehensive, timely, high-quality and cost-effective support for the operations of the Senate and its committees.

The performance indicator for quantity is based on days of sitting in a normal non-election year. The number of sitting days was reduced by the 2004 general election to below the long-term average of around 70 days.

Because of the election, estimates committee hearings were confined to the second half of the year. Procedural, advisory and legislative support services provided by the department continued to be highly concentrated on those estimates hearing days, but the department

maintained its high levels of efficiency in delivering a range of services throughout the year, including on the many days when committees met.

The department provided advice on a broad range of subjects, both in response to and in anticipation of senators' requirements, to facilitate senators' performance of their roles. Further details are provided in the report on Output Group 1.

The department's support for the Senate's conduct of its business and for the broader legislative process was timely and accurate. Documentation for meetings of the Senate was produced in advance of each sitting, and minutes of proceedings were generally published within an hour of the Senate's adjournment each day. Amendments were drafted for non-government senators generally in accordance with their requirements, although pressure of business resulted in some delays. Schedules of amendments with accompanying messages relating to the consideration of bills were produced to uniform high standards, as reported under Output Group 2 and Output Group 3.

The department supported Senate and certain joint committees as they conducted and reported on a large number and wide range of inquiries, including many time-critical inquiries on bills and many lengthy estimates hearings. Details of this work are provided principally in the report on Output Group 4 but also in the reports on output groups 1, 2 and 3.

In 2004–05, the department continued to provide senators with a wide range of logistical and information technology support in their Parliament House offices. Security measures were enhanced in response to instructions from the Presiding Officers, made on the advice of the interdepartmental Security Management Board.

The range of activities undertaken by the department to promote public awareness of parliamentary democracy in general, and the Senate and its committees in particular, continued during 2004–05. Programs conducted by the Parliamentary Education Office for schools, teachers and students continued to be relevant, innovative and well received. Likewise, the seminar, lecture, exhibition, fellowship and publications programs conducted by the Procedure Office provided audiences with appropriate information about parliamentary government. These activities were complemented by the efforts of individual staff members in writing articles for publication and making presentations to academic, professional and community groups. Further details of this work are provided in the report on Output Group 3 and in appendices 4 and 5.

Financial performance

In 2004–05, total expenses for the department were \$22.5 million, showing a decrease compared to \$36.1 million in 2003–04. The decrease in expenses is substantially attributable to the transfer of the security function (which accounted for 34 per cent of the department's expenses in 2003–04) to the Department of Parliamentary Services and the fact that it was an election year. The department made an operating surplus of \$2.7 million, showing an increase of \$2.2 million compared with \$0.5 million in 2003–04. More details are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Total resources for Outcome 1, 2004–05

	(1) Budget 2004–05 ^a \$'000	(2) Actual expenses 2004–05 \$'000	Variation (column 2 minus column 1) \$'000	Budget 2005–06 ^b \$'000
Administered expenses				
<i>Parliamentary Entitlements Act 1990</i>	1,073	1,472	399	1,173
<i>Remuneration and Allowances Act 1990</i>	10,840	10,826	–14	11,247
Support to office-holders	747	774	27	-
Citizenship Visits Program	707	652	–55	768
Total administered expenses	13,367	13,724	357	13,188
Price of departmental outputs				
Output Group 1—Clerk's Office	967	923	–44	971
Output Group 2—Table Office	2,854	2,550	–304	2,858
Output Group 3—Procedure Office	5,309	5,128	–181	5,312
Output Group 4—Committee Office	9,209	8,756	–453	9,229
Output Group 5—Black Rod's Office	6,543	5,191	–1,352	6,528
Total price of outputs	24,882	22,548	–2,334	24,898
TOTAL FOR OUTCOME 1	38,249	36,272	–1,977	38,086
(Total price of outputs and administered expenses)				
Average staffing level			2004–05	2005–06
			169	160

a Full-year budget, including additional estimates

b Budget before additional estimates

Variations to performance targets

There were no variations to performance targets during 2004–05.

Purchaser–provider arrangements

On 1 July 2004, the major activity previously conducted under a purchaser–provider arrangement, the provision of security services to the two chamber departments, was transferred to the Department of Parliamentary Services, along with the necessary funding (see the 'Clerk's review', and 'Developments that may affect future operations'). An amount of \$9.8 million in annual appropriation was transferred from the Department of the Senate to the Department of Parliamentary Services on the same day, along with a transfer of prior-year appropriation of \$3.1 million.

In 2004–05, the following services continued to be jointly funded by the chamber departments.

- The Parliamentary Education Office was staffed by the Department of the Senate, with all operating costs shared by the chamber departments.
- The Parliamentary Relations Office was staffed by the Department of the House of Representatives, with all operating costs shared equally by the chamber departments.

- The cost of the Citizenship Visits Program, funded as an administered item, was shared equally by the two chamber departments.

Evaluation

Satisfaction with services

The biennial survey of senators' satisfaction with services provided by the department is the major vehicle for evaluating all output groups' contributions to the department's outcome. The survey was conducted in February and March 2005. A tender process was carried out to select an external organisation to conduct the survey.

The process for surveying senators was varied slightly from previous years in order to obtain a better balance of qualitative and quantitative data. The survey questions were based on the department's outputs, rather than an office-by-office approach. The final survey report was tabled in the Senate on 14 June 2005.

The survey provided valuable feedback to the department both on detailed issues and on the broad achievement of the department's performance targets. In a result similar to that in 2003, 94 per cent of senators surveyed indicated that they were satisfied overall with the services provided to them by the department. The survey results are discussed in more detail in the reports on performance of individual output groups.

Other mechanisms for evaluating educational and information programs continued to provide overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Scrutiny of activities

The Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing scrutinises the department's annual appropriation and considers proposals for changes to the structure and responsibilities of the parliamentary departments. The committee's forty-first report included significant recommendations subsequently endorsed by the Senate, in relation to security funding and oversight.

The Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee examined the department's activities through its questioning of departmental officers at the 2004–05 additional estimates hearings in February 2005 and the 2005–06 budget estimates hearings on 23 May 2005. Major issues considered were the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines, senators' printing, parliamentary privilege, funding of select committees, and the Citizenship Visits Program.

A number of departmental activities were scrutinised through audits (both internal and external) in 2004–05. These audit activities were monitored by the department's Audit and Evaluation Committee. The department's planned internal audit program focused on activities which, it was considered, could benefit from an independent examination. Where the recommendations of these reviews were judged to be appropriate, the committee implemented modifications to departmental practices.

The department's Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2003–2006 focuses on areas of highest risk and areas where management feels the greatest value can be added. The audit program includes a combination of compliance reviews and comprehensive reviews.

Through individual analysis and cross-portfolio audits, the Australian National Audit Office also provided the department with evaluation services.

Developments that may affect future operations

In its forty-first report, the Appropriations and Staffing Committee recommended that the Senate:

- (a) notes the transfer of \$1 million from the Department of the Senate to the Department of Parliamentary Services as a special contribution to security costs in the parliamentary precincts over and above the transferred funds previously provided for security, and
- (b) agrees with the view of the committee that, if any further funds are necessary to provide additional security costs, they be made by additional appropriation to, or savings within, the Department of Parliamentary Services.

The Senate subsequently endorsed these recommendations. There was no attempt by government to reduce the appropriation from the Department of the Senate to pay for security enhancements in the 2005–06 Budget. At the end of 2004–05, it remained to be seen how the government party majority in the chamber, resulting from the 2004 general election and to take effect on 1 July 2005, would affect the work of the Senate and therefore of the Senate Department.

While the size of the department's appropriations has been greatly reduced by the transfer of security funding, this should not affect the department's ability to flexibly deliver a range of services to senators, the Senate and Senate committees, while retaining and attracting qualified staff. The credit for this belongs to the Senate and its Appropriations and Staffing Committee.