Output Group 5—**Black Rod's Office**

Outputs

Senators' services

Provision of office, chamber and committee room support; information technology and ceremonial services; and security advice for senators and Senate office-holders in Parliament House.

Provision of support services, in conjunction with the Department of the House of Representatives, to the Former Members' Association.

Administered items

Payment of parliamentary salaries and allowances to senators and office-holders of the Senate.

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks. Advice, documentation and publications are accurate and of a high standard.	Salaries and allowances were delivered to senators with 99 per cent accuracy. No complaints were received from senators. Positive feedback was received from senators following accommodation moves undertaken as a result of the change of government. Satisfaction with the quality of advice, documentation and publications provided by the office remained high. All documentation required for the opening of the Forty-second Parliament was accurate and of a high standard.
Timeliness	All support services delivered in a timely manner.	Salaries and allowances were delivered to senators and office-holders on time. The office successfully completed accommodation moves for 33 senators as a result of the change of government following the federal election and other, minor, moves during the year. While some projects were delayed because of the department's dependence on the Department of Parliamentary Services to provide support in delivering those projects, there was a noticeable improvement over the previous year.
Quantity	All support services and supplies delivered in accordance with entitlements on request.	All support services were delivered in accordance with relevant legislation. The number of accommodation moves for senators was again significantly higher than average.

Analysis

To provide effective senators' services and corporate and other services for the department, the Black Rod's Office is divided into five functional areas, as shown in Figure 17. The office is headed by the Usher of the Black Rod, who, along with the Deputy Usher of the Black Rod, performs duties in the Senate chamber.

The primary function of the office is to provide support services to the Senate chamber and committees, and to senators while they are using their Parliament House offices. The Senators' Services Section provides messengerial support to the chamber, assists the President and Clerk on ceremonial occasions, and delivers support services, including mail, committee room servicing, transport, printing, accommodation, assets management and desktop publishing services.

The Information Technology Section provides senators with information technology support services in their Parliament House offices and limited support services and equipment when they are away from Parliament House.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Black Rod's Office for 2007–08 was 46, the same as in 2006–07.

The cost of providing support services to the Senate chamber, committees and senators in Parliament House offices was $3.7 million ($4.0 million in 2006–07).

Figure 17   **Elements and responsibilities of the Black Rod's Office**

Executive			
Andrea Griffiths, Usher of the Black Rod Procedural, ceremonial, security and administrative advice Membership of the Security Management Board Advice to the Presiding Officers' Information Technology Advisory Group, and to the House and Broadcasting Committees			
Senators' Services Section	**Information Technology Section**	**Human Resource Management Section**	**Financial Management Section**
Nick Tate, Deputy Usher of the Black Rod	*Joe d'Angelo, Director*	*Amanda Wilson, Acting Director*	*Joe d'Angelo, Chief Finance Officer*
Accommodation Assets management, purchasing and disposals Chamber support Committee room support Desktop publishing Fire and emergency warden administration Mail and freight Office equipment (not including information technology) Printing and photocopying Protective security— advice, keys, access approvals, containers and security clearances Transport and fleet management	Information technology equipment, including personal computers Internet publishing Support for departmental information technology applications Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on information technology matters	Recruitment and staffing Pay and conditions Workforce planning Training and development Occupational health and safety Rehabilitation management Industrial relations Corporate planning Records management Fortnightly information bulletin	Budget management and advice Financial reporting and systems management Accounting policy development and advice Accounts processing, general ledger maintenance and advice Strategic procurement advice Support for management decision making

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 5

Ceremonial support services

The major ceremonial function during the year was the opening of the Forty-second Parliament on 12 February 2008. For the first time, a 'Welcome to Country' ceremony in the Members' Hall preceded the traditional opening held in the Senate chamber. All activities went according to plan and feedback from the participants was positive.

At the end of the financial year, planning was underway for the ceremonies associated with the swearing in of the new Senate on 26 August 2008, which will include 14 senators taking the oath or affirmation of allegiance for the first time, and the election of a President and Deputy President. The office will also provide assistance to the Ceremonial and Hospitality Section of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, in connection with the swearing in of the new Governor-General on 5 September 2008.

Senators' services

The day after the opening of parliament, the Black Rod's office participated in the department's orientation program for senators-elect to provide them information on entitlements and other administrative matters, prior to the commencement of their terms of service on 1 July 2008.

Work commenced on updating the *Senators' Handbook—A guide to services, entitlements and facilities for senators*, in readiness for the second orientation program for new senators scheduled for mid-July 2008.

The office provided various services to assist those senators who retired on 30 June 2008. Feedback from them was very positive.

Office services

During 2007–08, the Black Rod's Office:

- completed accommodation moves for 33 senators, in addition to five refurbishments of senators' offices and departmental areas
- replaced refrigerators in senators' offices, and televisions in senators' offices and departmental areas
- replaced photocopiers in the Senate wing corridors
- continued the development of the online Senate stationery shopping cart
- managed the refurbishment of four sets of senators' furniture (this program is ongoing, with the aim of completing the refurbishment of all senators' furniture over the next five years)
- replaced office chairs for senators' staff and departmental staff
- managed the refurbishment of committee room side tables
- provided support services for Senate estimates hearings in November 2007 and in February and May 2008
- negotiated and managed Senate aspects of projects administered by the Department of Parliamentary Services.

The Black Rod's Office continued to provide general office support, committee room support, equipment and furniture maintenance, classified waste removal and stationery supplies.

Printing and delivery services

During the year, the printing and delivery services subsection continued to produce high-quality reprographic services to very tight deadlines, and to provide mail and freight services as required. The work of Senate committees and the department in general, and work contracted from the other parliamentary departments, generated a high level of activity. Turnaround times were met consistently, ensuring that printed information was available when required by senators and others, even at short notice, and that committee reports were available to meet the tight inquiry timeframes.

The trial of a colour photocopier was completed, and a mid-sized colour photocopier was purchased to meet the department's need for full colour printing. The new photocopier has proved to be a useful addition to existing equipment and a more than adequate replacement for the two-colour press, in terms of both quality and cost-effectiveness.

During 2007–08, the section completed a total of 1,047 jobs. Of these, 279 were for committees, 730 were for the rest of the department and 38 were for other parliamentary departments. The total value of work produced was $481,992, of which $190,692 was allocated to committee work. This was a decrease of $296,211 on last year's total, reflecting the reduced number of printing requests during the election period.

Information technology services

The Information Technology Section commenced a major replacement of the department's printers, bringing the fleet up to contemporary standards, achieving efficiency savings through a reduction in total fleet numbers, and achieving better 'fit' for purpose.

Work continued on the development of the Senate Centralised Information Database (SCID) and support of web-based applications to make the management of committee inquiries more efficient and effective. A pilot phase for the SCID project is due to start in early July 2008.

A new design for the department's intranet site, to improve its useability and functionality, was formulated and finalised. Work on implementing the new design is to take place in July–August 2008. The section continued its efforts to maintain a high level of metadata and W3C compliance on the Senate website.

Other high-priority activities for the section included:

- supporting Senate estimates hearings
- streamlining the department's travel approval processes through the introduction of an online form featuring electronic approvals and acquittals
- working with the office services section to create an online shopping cart for managing stationery
- updating the department's information and communications technology policies and procedures
- providing assistance to the Black Rod for the opening of parliament
- providing assistance to senators and staff affected by office relocations after the change in government.

The section provided input for two major parliamentary tenders, both managed by the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS). The first tender, which was for the supply and maintenance of desktop computers, was completed in late 2007. The second tender, for the provision of a wireless networking solution, is due to be finalised by late July 2008. The tender process for the replacement of the department's ageing fleet of printers, mentioned in last year's annual report, was finalised during the year.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

Both the change of government, which resulted in a number of accommodation moves for senators, and the department's commitment to ensuring that senators, their staff and departmental staff have timely access to new technology and innovative processes, contributed to increased workload across the Black Rod's Office. However, the provision of multifunction devices and the development of new systems, including the online Senate stationery shopping cart and SCID, will result in significant efficiency gains and improved performance and productivity in the coming years.

The Black Rod's Office is working with DPS to implement new processes for project support. While the new process requires more consultative meetings, this has improved interaction with DPS, which is a positive step.

Evaluation

Much of the work of the office involves frequent direct contact with senators, their staff and other clients, presenting an ongoing opportunity to receive feedback on the office's services. This informal feedback continued to be very positive. The more formal biennial survey of senators' satisfaction is scheduled for early 2009.

Section heads met weekly with the Usher of the Black Rod to discuss operational matters relating to the whole office, and met regularly with their teams to discuss performance and work-related issues.

Performance outlook

In early 2008–09 the Black Rod's Office will undertake a large number of accommodation moves for senators as a result of the Senate changeover on 1 July 2008. To finalise the moves within the required timeframe will demand the efficient use of resources and the coordination of service providers, including DPS and contractors. To ensure that senators' accommodation is maintained to a high standard, some offices will be fully refurbished.

During the year, the Black Rod's Office will also:

- implement the department's business continuity plan and an intellectual property plan
- implement the SCID, a new client request logging system and the online Senate stationery shopping cart
- coordinate the 2009 survey of senators' satisfaction with departmental services
- consolidate mail and freight functions into one facility
- publish the Senate Protective Security Manual
- replace executive chairs in senators' offices, and roll out new office furniture to departmental staff and senators' staff
- roll out multifunction devices to party leaders, party whips and shadow ministers
- replace obsolete print room equipment.