Report on Performance

Outcome 1—
Effective provision of services

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, the department ensures that the Senate, Senate committees, the President of the Senate, other senators, and 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 them.

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

- effective support for the Senate and all senators
- public awareness of the Senate and its work
- effective support for the Senate committees and certain joint committees
- 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 below. The report on performance for each output group begins with a similar table.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTCOME 1

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.	Feedback from the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators about the quality and timeliness of advice and the achievement of key tasks indicated ongoing high levels of satisfaction, consistent with the results of the 2007 senators' survey. All advices, documents, publications and draft reports remained of a high standard and none was shown to be inaccurate.
Timeliness	Advice or material given on request of 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, and advice was given, 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 2007–08 the department would expect to support the Senate on approximately 60 sitting days and committees in accordance with their requirements.	The department supported the Senate on 36 sitting days, the low figure a result of an extended election period. The department supported estimates committees on 13 days and other committees in accordance with their requirements.
Price	The total price of the department's outputs in 2007–08 is estimated to be $40.0 million ($25.6 million departmental).	The actual cost of the department's outputs in 2007–08 was $35.2 million ($22.0 million departmental).

Factors influencing performance

A constant theme of the department's annual reports is that the activities of the department are determined by the requirements of senators, the Senate and its committees—requirements that are sometimes unpredictable and essentially external.

In assessing those activities, the year can be considered in three distinct phases: the end of the Forty-first Parliament, the election period, and the beginning of the Forty-second Parliament. The electoral cycle gives a general rhythm to the activities of the Senate and the department, so that a lull in some work is expected approximately every three years. As a counterpoint,

however, the election of a new government brings with it an increase in demand for the department's services.

The last weeks of the Forty-first Parliament were characterised by short, urgent committee inquiries; the government's desire to introduce and pass legislation quickly was matched by the numbers to achieve that end. In the four weeks of sitting in August and September 2007, Senate committees reported on their inquiries into 41 bills, and 61 bills passed the Senate, at an average of four bills per sitting day.

Legislative activity in the chamber was concentrated, but uncomplicated; while Senate committee recommendations on legislation which found favour with the government still found their way into bills, both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. There were few controversial matters before committees—a mere five references other than bills were agreed to by the Senate—although a few longer term references also progressed.

This year an extended 'election break' ran from September 2007 to early February 2008. Each office reports in this annual report on the mix of ongoing tasks and project work undertaken during this period. By contrast, the change in government brought with it a range of additional tasks, including, for instance, increased demand for training and support for senators and staff in new roles and a large number of accommodation moves. Again, specific tasks are outlined in the report on performance for each office.

With the changed party numbers in the Senate, the Forty-second Parliament began with a new dynamic. Chamber and committee work continued to involve a high level of legislative activity. The number of bills passed by the Senate remained high, at 84 bills in 21 sitting days: again, an average of four per sitting day. At the same time, however, the complexity of legislative work increased, with the resumption of negotiations between the chambers on legislative disagreements. Forty-six bills were referred to committees, consistent with the high numbers seen in recent years, while the increase in general, longer term committee references and the establishment of a number of select committees also added to the workload of senators and staff during the latter part of the financial year.

Operational performance

The department provided comprehensive, timely, high-quality and cost-effective support for the operations of the Senate and its committees during 2007–08.

Many of the performance indicators for quantity are based on the expected number of sitting days. Previous reports have commented on the reduction in the number of sitting days to 60 or fewer in recent years. This year, an election year, the Senate sat on only 36 sitting days—a low figure not seen in the past 50 years and four days fewer than in 2004–05, the previous election year. The reduction was largely due to the election period, but a relatively light sitting program in the first part of 2008 also contributed.

The number of days set aside for estimates hearings and the requirements of individual committees relating to their other inquiries determine much of the demand for departmental services. Procedural and advisory support services provided by the department are highly concentrated on estimates hearing days. The number of estimates days was 13, with four committees meeting each day. 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.

Many areas of the department share in common tasks, such as providing advice to senators and their staff, and publishing information on the work and role of the Senate and its committees.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTCOME 1

The number of advices provided by the Clerk's office was lower than in previous years, because of the election period, but the range of topics covered and the level of complexity was broad and varied. A new edition of the *Senators' Guide to Procedures* was published. Further details are provided in the report on Output Group 1.

The Table Office maintained a high workload, even with the reduction in the number of sitting days, because of an increased level of legislative activity during sitting periods and ongoing major projects. The report on Output Group 2 provides further details.

The Procedure Office experienced a major change during the year in relation to the drafting and procedural advisory service, with members of the new opposition, as well as the minor parties, requesting this service from December 2007. The promotion of public awareness programs offered by the Parliamentary Education Office, the Research Section and other areas continued, as demand for such programs increased and positive feedback levels remained high. Further details can be found in the report on Output Group 3.

The support provided by the Committee Office to the Senate and certain joint committees was unevenly distributed throughout the year, because of the federal election and the light sitting pattern. The reporting timeframes for bills inquiries were tighter than ever before the election, but lengthened in the new parliament. The Senate established six new select committees during the year, a very significant increase when compared to the previous year, when no new select committees were established. These committees were staffed from resources within existing secretariats, supplemented by some external resources. The report on Output Group 4 provides further details.

The Black Rod's Office continued to provide the administrative support services required to enable senators to perform their representative and legislative duties, and departmental staff to perform their duties. These services ranged from assisting senators to move their office accommodation and delivering support services to the Chamber and committee rooms, to providing new information technology and other communication equipment to achieve a more efficient use of resources. Further details are provided in the report on Output Group 5.

The department has responded to the unpredictable nature of demands in recent years in a number of positive ways:

- by developing a more agile staffing profile—particularly in its committee secretariats, whose workloads can vary markedly in a short period of time
- by improving its reporting and planning processes to better monitor and highlight implementation of productivity measures, workforce planning requirements, risk management and compliance with financial management
- by streamlining its recruitment processes to reduce the time taken to engage new staff
- by providing in-house training and coaching to new supervisors to enable them to provide leadership, manage performance and motivate staff. Further details are provided in the Management and Accountability chapter.

Financial performance

The income statement discloses total income of $23.6 million and a net operating surplus of $1.6 million. This compares to a surplus of $1.9 million reported in the previous year. In last year's report the department predicted a much tighter financial outcome for 2007–08, but because of the election year the department was still able to manage a sizeable surplus. With the resumption of the normal parliamentary cycle, including a busy sitting pattern scheduled for the second half of 2008 and several select committees in operation, the financial outcome should be much tighter in 2008–09.

Table 1 summarises the financial resources used by the department in 2007–08, in the context of the amounts budgeted for that financial year and for 2008–09.

Table 1   **Total resources for Outcome 1, 2007–08**

	(1) Budget 2007–08[a] $'000	(2) Actual expenses 2007–08 $'000	Variation (column 2 minus column 1) $'000	Budget 2008–09[b] $'000
Administered expenses				
Parliamentary Entitlements Act 1990	736	200	(536)	736
Parliamentary Superannuation Act 2004	520	450	(70)	640
Remuneration and Allowances Act 1990	12,591	12,529	(62)	13,083
Total administered expenses	**13,847**	**13,179**	**(668)**	**14,459**
Price of departmental outputs				
Output Group 1—Clerk's Office	1,391	1,196	(195)	1,117
Output Group 2—Table Office	3,335	2,868	(467)	2,681
Output Group 3—Procedure Office	7,301	6,279	(1,022)	5,868
Output Group 4—Committee Office	9,255	7,961	(1,294)	7,439
Output Group 5—Black Rod's Office	4,268	3,722	(546)	3,430
Total price of outputs	**25,550**	**22,026**	**(3,524)**	**20,535**
TOTAL FOR OUTCOME 1 (Total price of outputs and administered expenses)	**39,397**	**35,205**	**(4,192)**	**34,994**
			2007–08	**2008–09**
Average staffing level			152	157

a   *Full-year budget, including additional estimates.*

b   *Budget before additional estimates.*

Satisfaction with services

The principal medium for formal evaluation of the services provided by the department is the survey of senators' satisfaction, last conducted in 2007 and due to be conducted again in early 2009.

Given the small size of the department and the close contact we have with them, many senators take the opportunity to provide formal and informal feedback to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, program managers, committee secretariats and departmental staff at all levels. Feedback continued to indicate high levels of satisfaction.

The reports on performance for each office provide further detail of formal and informal evaluation of their services.

The performance of individual staff members was evaluated through the performance communication scheme, in accordance with the employee collective agreement. All departmental staff were assessed overall as 'effective or better'.

Scrutiny of activities

The department's annual appropriations and proposals for changes to the structure and responsibilities of the parliamentary departments continued to be scrutinised by the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing.

Another important mechanism for evaluation of the services provided by the department is the appearance of senior departmental officers at estimates hearings. Officers were questioned on the department's activities by members of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration at the additional estimates 2007–08 hearings on 18 February 2008 and the budget estimates 2008–09 hearings on 26 May 2008. Major issues considered included resourcing of Senate select committees, appropriations allocated to the department, answers provided by ministers to questions on notice, the registration of members' and senators' interests, and parliamentary privilege.

The department's activities also continued to be scrutinised by our internal auditors and the Australian National Audit Office. For further details, see 'Audit and Evaluation Committee' and 'External scrutiny' in the 'Management and Accountability' section.

Output Group 1—**Clerk's Office**

Outputs

Provision of sound and timely advice on proceedings of the Senate and its committees, and provision of leadership and strategic direction for the department.

Provision of secretariat and advisory support to the Procedure Committee, the Committee of Privileges and the Committee of Senators' Interests.

Provision of procedural information and related services to senators and the Senate Department.

	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.	Feedback from the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators about the quality and timeliness of advice and the achievement of key tasks indicated ongoing high levels of satisfaction. Retiring senators unanimously acclaimed the quality of services provided by the office.
	Advice, documentation, publications and draft reports are accurate and of a high standard.	All advices, documents, publications and draft reports remained of a high standard and none was shown to be inaccurate.
Timeliness	Meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committee, as relevant.	All of the indicators relating to timeliness were met to the satisfaction of senators.
	Odgers' Australian Senate Practice updated each six months; new printed edition produced regularly.	Supplements to the eleventh edition of *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice* were produced at six-monthly intervals and tabled in the Senate on 7 August 2007 and 12 February 2008.
	Procedural Information Bulletin produced two days after end of sitting fortnights.	The *Procedural Information Bulletin* was produced within the specified timeframe.
	Other procedural resources updated and augmented as required.	The *Senators' Guide to Procedures* was extensively updated.
Quantity	As required, on request, or proactively, to facilitate proceedings.	Consistent with previous election years, the demand for written advice was lower than in the previous two reporting periods.
		Sufficient copies of all publications for which the office was responsible were produced to enable access immediately after they were published or tabled, and relevant reports were published on the internet within minutes of being tabled in the Senate. Other documents were routinely published online.

Analysis

The Clerk's Office consists of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and their executive assistants.

The Clerk is the Secretary of the Department of the Senate and, in accordance with the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, is responsible, under the President of the Senate, for managing the department. The Clerk is also the principal adviser to the President and senators on proceedings in the Senate, parliamentary privilege, committee proceedings and their outcomes in the chamber, and other parliamentary matters. The Deputy Clerk supports the Clerk in these roles and chairs the department's Audit and Evaluation Committee.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Clerk's office in 2007–08 was 4.2, close to the long-term average of 4.0. The minor variation was due to the engagement of additional non-ongoing staff to identify and catalogue historical material of procedural significance.
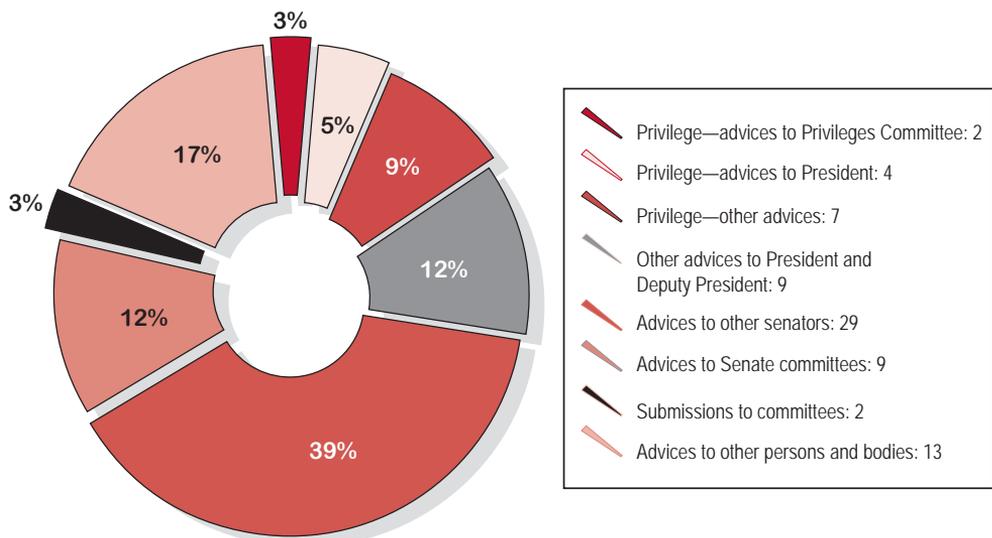
The cost of the office for 2007–08 was $1.2 million ($1.1 million in 2006–07).

Procedural advice

The primary function of the Clerk's Office is to provide procedural and constitutional advice. The office gives oral and written advice but records only written advice because of the difficulty of quantifying oral advice. The office may provide the advice proactively or on request.

Figure 3 shows the number and kinds of written advices provided during 2007–08 and each kind as a proportion of the total. The total number represents a decline in demand, reflecting the long election period.

Figure 3   **Written advices provided by the Clerk, 2007–08**

Legend:
- Privilege—advices to Privileges Committee: 2
- Privilege—advices to President: 4
- Privilege—other advices: 7
- Other advices to President and Deputy President: 9
- Advices to other senators: 29
- Advices to Senate committees: 9
- Submissions to committees: 2
- Advices to other persons and bodies: 13

The advice provided by the Clerk's Office covered subjects such as questions of order; the prorogation and opening of parliament; disclosure of advice to ministers, including legal advice; recent privilege cases; disallowance of regulations; and proceedings of committees examining estimates.

Although the number of advices was lower because of the election period, the breadth of topics covered continued to be wide, ranging from constitutional and governance issues to points of procedure.

Committees

The office is responsible for the administration of three Senate standing committees.

Procedure Committee

The Clerk of the Senate continued to serve as secretary to the Procedure Committee, which responds to references from the Senate or the President by evaluating, and recommending improvements to, Senate procedure.

The committee met once in 2007–08 in relation to several procedural matters. No report was presented to the Senate.

Committee of Privileges

The Deputy Clerk served as secretary to the Committee of Privileges. The committee protects the integrity of Senate and committee proceedings by considering matters possibly amounting to contempt of the Senate. Those matters, which are a result of concerns raised by other committees or individual senators, are referred to the committee by the Senate. The Committee of Privileges also administers the right-of-reply mechanism for people seeking to respond to adverse comment made about them in the Senate.

The committee met 10 times in 2007–08 (an increase from six meetings in 2006–07) and held no public hearings.

The committee presented five reports (an increase from two in 2006–07).

Committee of Senators' Interests

The Deputy Clerk served as secretary to the Committee of Senators' Interests and Registrar of Senators' Interests, and gave assistance to senators to fulfil the requirements of Senate resolutions relating to declarations of pecuniary interests and gifts.

In 2007–08, the committee met once (a decrease from five meetings in 2006–07), presented its annual report as required by its terms of reference, and tabled a revised version of the committee's handbook on the registration of senators' interests.

As required under the relevant resolution of the Senate, senators continued to register alterations to their statements of interests. Volumes of alterations and new statements were prepared by the secretariat and tabled on 7 December 2007 and 28 June 2008. Updates of departmental Senior Executive Service (SES) officers' interests were tabled on the same dates.

Procedural information

The main vehicle for procedural information is *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice*. In accordance with performance targets, the Clerk produced two six-monthly supplements during 2007–08. While issuing supplements ensures that this essential reference work is always up to date, a period of major or accelerated procedural change demands a new edition. At the end of the reporting period, work had begun on the twelfth edition. This edition, as well as consolidating material from the supplement, will include a significant revision of the committee chapter, to take account of changes made to the committee system in 2006.

Issues of the *Procedural Information Bulletin* continued to be produced after each sitting fortnight or period of estimates hearings. The bulletin continued the relatively new practice of including occasional notes on aspects of parliamentary law, procedure and practice.

In addition to these documents, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk continued to produce and update publications on procedures in various forms. A new edition of the *Senators' Guide to Procedures* was published to coincide with the new parliament and in anticipation of a large intake of new senators in July 2008. New titles in the series *Brief Guides to Senate Procedure* were drafted.

During the election break, considerable progress was made on the project to produce an annotated edition of the *Standing Orders and Other Orders of the Senate*. Most of the planned appendices were completed and about half of the entries were drafted. The Deputy Clerk is being assisted in this project by several members of staff from the Table Office.

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk contributed to training programs on parliamentary matters, including Parliament, Privilege and Accountability, the long-running program for SES officers of executive agencies.

Information about Senate officers' presentations and papers appears in Appendix 5.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

The federal election was held on 24 November 2007 and the Senate did not sit between October 2007 and February 2008. An election break influences the nature of work in the Clerk's Office, with less emphasis on day-to-day advice and more on longer term procedural work. The reduction in the number of advices provided reflects this.

The election resulted in a change of government, but the Liberal–National party coalition continued to hold an absolute majority of the Senate until 1 July 2008. Next year will see a return to the more commonly prevailing conditions, where no party enjoys a majority and the resulting need for all parties to negotiate creates a demand for innovative and flexible procedural advice from the Clerk's Office to support the effective functioning of the Senate.

Figure 4 shows the trend for the provision of written advice.

Figure 4   **Number of advices provided by the Clerk's Office, 2003–04 to 2007–08**
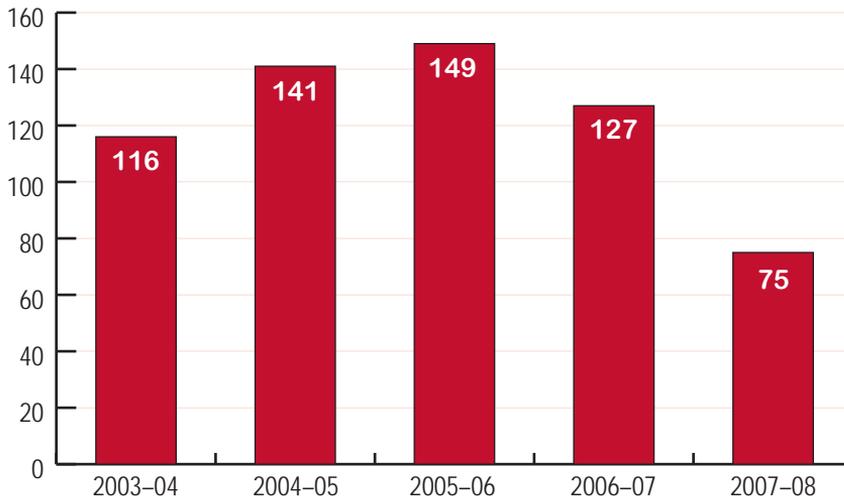
Evaluation

The principal medium for formal evaluation of services provided by the Clerk's Office is the biennial senators' survey, most recently conducted in early 2007. The next survey is due to be conducted in the first half of 2009.

In a non-survey year there is more reliance on informal feedback. In 2007–08, informal feedback continued to be positive. The large group of retiring senators was unanimous in expressing appreciation for the work of the office, either in valedictory remarks in the chamber or in correspondence.

Advice provided by the Clerk's Office may also attract scrutiny during the estimates process, either when the department appears before the Finance and Public Administration Committee or when advice provided by the Clerk's Office to senators or committees is immediately tested in public. On numerous occasions during the 2007–08 estimates hearings, committees and individual senators relied on the Clerk's advice. On some occasions, witnesses also sought the Clerk's advice.

Evaluation of specific activities, such as staff contributions to training programs, occurs through participant feedback, usually in the form of written comments. On this measure, recipients of these services were well satisfied.

Performance outlook

As the Senate returns to a more normal configuration, the Clerk's Office will continue to provide advice to support its operations. A particular focus will be the orientation program and follow-up support for new senators as they settle into their new roles.

The Senate is due to elect a new President and Deputy President in August 2008; the Clerk's Office will provide assistance during the transition and support for the new office-holders.

A new edition of *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice* will be produced and work will continue on other procedural publications and resources, including the annotated Standing Orders and the collection of historical procedural materials.

Output Group 2—**Table Office**

Outputs

Provision of procedural advice and programming services.

Processing of legislation.

Processing of tabled documents and maintenance of safe custody of Senate records, and provision of a document distribution and inquiries service.

Preparation of records of Senate business and proceedings.

Dissemination of information on the work of the Senate.

Provision of secretariat support to the Appropriations and Staffing, Selection of Bills and Publications committees.

	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.	Informal feedback and direct contact between senators and staff indicated continued high levels of satisfaction, consistent with the findings of the 2007 survey of senators.
	Key business documents are accurate and of a high standard.	Business documents remained of a high standard, with none shown to contain significant inaccuracies.
Timeliness	The *Order of Business* finalised and distributed prior to sittings and advice prepared proactively or as required.	The *Order of Business* was distributed in advance of all sittings. Advice was given proactively or as required.
	The *Journals of the Senate* for the previous day and *Notice Paper* for the current day available prior to sittings; statistical and other documentation available as required or in accordance with predetermined requirements.	The *Journals of the Senate* and the *Notice Paper* were available as required. The *Dynamic Red* was updated in a timely manner during each sitting day and the *Senate Daily Summary* was published promptly after each sitting day. Statistical summaries were produced after each sitting week and comprehensive statistics were published on the website after each sitting fortnight. *Business of the Senate* was tabled twice, in accordance with agreed timeframes. Requests for statistics were responded to promptly.
	Running sheets available as soon as practicable; proposed amendments distributed in accordance with requirements; schedules of amendments and prints of bills available in accordance with predetermined requirements.	Running sheets were available for use in the chamber as required. Government amendments were distributed as required. Schedules of amendments, prints of Senate bills and legislative support documents were available as required.
	All inquiries answered and documents stored or distributed on a timely basis.	All documents were distributed in a timely manner. All inquiries were responded to and 94 per cent were completed within five minutes.
	Meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committee, as relevant.	Committee meetings were held, and documents and reports were provided, within agreed timeframes.
Quantity	As required to facilitate proceedings; quantities meet predetermined distribution requirements or are accessible electronically or both.	Feedback indicated continued high levels of satisfaction among senators with the provision of documents by the Table Office. All distribution and publishing targets were met.

Analysis

The Table Office comprises three sections, as outlined in Figure 5. It is led by the Clerk Assistant (Table), who performs duties as a clerk at the table in the Senate chamber. The two directors in the Table Office also perform chamber duties.

Figure 5   **Elements and responsibilities of the Table Office**

Executive and Programming
Richard Pye, Clerk Assistant
Procedural advice
Business programming
Production of the Senate *Order of Business*
Secretariat services to the Selection of Bills Committee

Legislation and Documents	**Journals and Notice Paper**
Sue Blunden, Acting Director	*Neil Bessell, Director*
Processing of legislation and preparation of supporting documentation	Production of the *Notice Paper*, the *Journals of the Senate* the *Dynamic Red* and the *Senate Daily Summary*
Processing and custody of Senate records	Collection and dissemination of statistical information
Inquiries and document distribution services	Processing of questions on notice and petitions
Secretariat services to the Publications and Joint Publications committees	Secretariat services to the Appropriations and Staffing Committee

The activities of the office during 2007–08 were largely determined by the requirements of the Senate and its committees, with the sitting of the Senate determining the level of priority of the different tasks.

In response to the sittings of the Senate, the office provided effective support for the Senate chamber, and increased awareness of the role and work of the Senate, by:

- providing procedural and programming advice and documentation to facilitate and expedite chamber proceedings
- preparing and publishing formal and informal records of Senate business, including the *Journals of the Senate*, the *Dynamic Red*, the *Senate Daily Summary* and a range of statistical records
- processing legislation and producing documents to assist in the legislative process
- processing and archiving tabled papers and other Senate records
- responding to inquiries and undertaking document distribution services.

The Table Office also supported Senate committees, by providing secretariats to four domestic committees and by liaising with Senate and joint committee chairs and secretariats to facilitate interaction between the chamber and those committees.

During non-sitting periods, and in particular during the election break and longer adjournments, staff undertook the following tasks:

- finalising the records of the sittings of the Forty-first Parliament and preparing for the opening of the Forty-second Parliament

- undertaking ongoing 'non-sitting' activities connected to the procedural work of the Senate, including arranging the presentation of documents to the President, processing questions on notice, and receiving and arranging publication of answers to questions
- progressing the work of the digital imaging project, including loading the pilot repository (the 2002–04 tabled papers) onto the web. The project aims to provide online access to all documents tabled in the Senate since 1901
- undertaking project work to redevelop information technology (IT) applications to publish and provide access to legislation, records of the parliament and support documentation
- providing research assistance for a project overseen by the Deputy Clerk to produce an annotated set of standing orders of the Senate
- contributing to the seminar program administered by the Procedure Office (see Output Group 3) and other training and development programs
- hosting a series of 'field trips' to the Table Office, designed to familiarise other departmental staff with the services of the Table Office and the operations of the Senate chamber.

The cost of the Table Office in providing procedural and administrative support for the conduct of Senate business was $2.9 million ($3.0 million in 2006–07). The decrease reflects the fact that it was an election year.

Workload and staffing

Requirements for advice, statistics and documentary support for the Senate are determined largely by the sittings of the Senate. Specific factors include:

- the days and hours of the sittings of the Senate, the nature of the proceedings undertaken in the Senate, and the scheduling of those proceedings
- the legislative workload, including the number of bills passed, the number and complexity of amendments to bills and the complexity of negotiations between the Houses on disputed legislation
- the number of documents tabled
- the number and complexity of questions and notices from senators
- the number and complexity of inquiries and requests for information from clients.

This year the Table Office supported the Senate on only 36 sitting days. The marked reduction in the number of sitting days, compared to 62 in 2006–07, was due to the extended election period from October 2007 (the prorogation, or adjournment, of the parliament) to February 2008 (the opening of the new parliament).

Workloads for staff in the office remained high, however, due to increased levels of legislative activity during the sitting periods, activities associated with the close of the Forty-first Parliament and the opening of the Forty-second Parliament, and the ongoing tasks and project work noted in this chapter. The full-time equivalent staffing level for the office remained steady at 17.

The Director, Journals and Notice Paper, continued to perform duties as Secretary to the Australian Inter-Parliamentary Union Delegation, funded under Output Group 3.

Programming and procedural support

The Table Office provided programming and procedural support for the operation of the chamber, and met the needs of senators and others for accurate and timely assistance by:

- providing procedural advice and documentation to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Manager of Government Business in the Senate and other ministers, government senators, party whips and committee chairs
- preparing nearly 680 procedural scripts for use in the chamber, an average of 19 each sitting day (16 in 2006–07)
- preparing draft and final editions of the *Order of Business* (or daily program) to assist whips and other senators before and during the sittings of the Senate
- providing a broadcasting captioning service for Senate proceedings
- liaising with committee chairs and secretariats to facilitate interaction between the Senate and its committees
- maintaining the roster of temporary chairs of committees.

Staff also arranged for the presentation of documents by ministers, the Auditor-General and committees, when the Senate was not sitting. This once exceptional procedure has developed into an increasingly useful avenue for the timely publication of material of interest to the parliament. A total of 313 documents were presented this way during 2007–08—a 50 per cent increase on the previous year, chiefly because the 31 October deadline for the presentation of the annual reports of most departments and agencies fell within the 2007 election period.

The office also provided advice to the Manager of Government Business and other senators to assist in the efficient conduct of the business of the Senate. In particular, the office advised on:

- matters associated with the change of government and the opening of parliament
- the Senate committee structure, the appointment of parliamentary secretaries to committees and the appointment of new senators to committees from 1 July 2008
- the reference of bills to committees and the operations of the Selection of Bills Committee
- the hours of meeting and routine of business and procedural options for handling bills and motions.

With the change in government, there was also a strong focus on assisting new office-holders settle into their roles as whips and chamber managers, and on providing procedural training to them and their staff.

Staff provided advice both in response to requests and proactively, and in all cases produced accurate, high-quality documents on or ahead of time.

Legislation

The office responded to the legislative requirements of the Senate and the needs of senators and others for related information by:

- processing all bills considered in the chamber and recording the progress of legislation
- preparing legislative documents, including procedural scripts, running sheets, schedules of amendments, third reading prints and messages
- preparing assent and Act prints, and processing the assent messages and proclamations.

In undertaking this work, staff met accuracy and timeliness standards in all cases. Staff also maintained the information systems used to process legislation and provide online access to legislative documents.

The charts in figures 6 to 8 indicate the level of legislative activity in recent years and the effect this has had on the work of the office. Despite the historically low number of sitting days, the figures for this year were comparable to the averages in recent election years, suggesting a higher level of legislative activity concentrated into fewer sitting days.

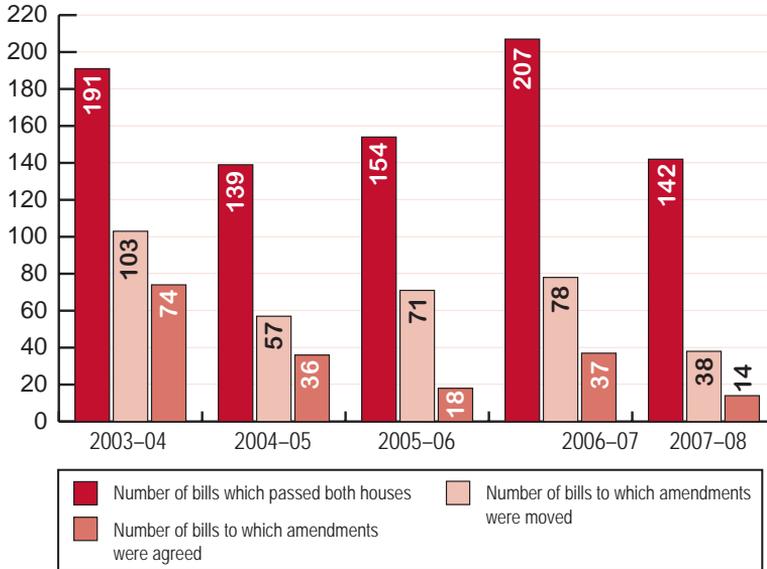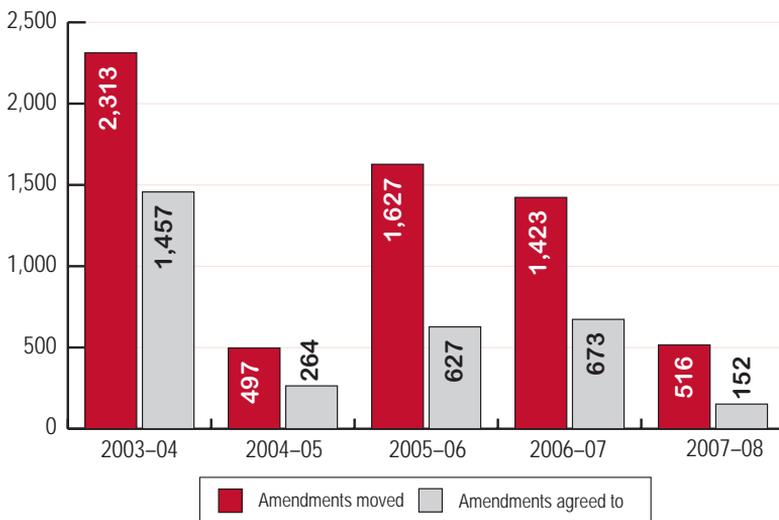Figure 6   **Senate legislative activity, 2003–04 to 2007–08**

Legend:
- Number of bills which passed both houses
- Number of bills to which amendments were agreed
- Number of bills to which amendments were moved

Figure 7   **Amendments moved and agreed to by the Senate, 2003–04 to 2007–08**

Legend:
- Amendments moved
- Amendments agreed to

Note: The figures for amendments also include requests for amendments and proposals to omit clauses or items from bills.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 2

Figure 8   **Running sheets, 2003–04 to 2007–08**
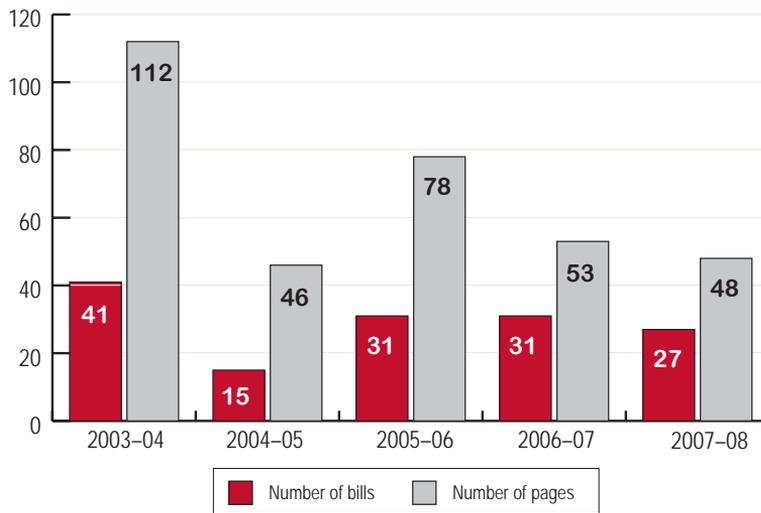
In the early part of 2007–08, the existence of a government majority continued to have an impact on the legislative activity of the Senate. In particular, both the number of bills amended by the Senate and the total number of amendments agreed to by the Senate remained low. Of the total number of amendments agreed to, 25 per cent (38) were moved by non-government parties and 7 per cent (11) were finally agreed to by both chambers.

The level of legislative activity resulted in a reduced requirement for third reading prints and schedules of amendments prepared by the section. However, other business requirements remained constant. This was highlighted by the section preparing 163 messages (222 in 2006–07): 150 (211 in 2006–07) were related to the passage of bills, and 13 (11 in 2006–07) were administrative in nature (for example, relating to joint committee membership).

Running sheets facilitate the orderly and efficient consideration of all circulated amendments in committee of the whole. They are prepared when more than one set of amendments from more than one political party are circulated for consideration. Similar numbers of running sheets were prepared in 2007–08 and 2006–07. This reflects the fact that the number of amendments circulated in 2007–08 was comparable to the level for the previous year. However, when compared with the previous election year, the number of running sheets is almost double, indicating an increase in legislative activity and consequent demands on staff resources.

*Bills List*s and *Daily Bills Update*s continued to provide detailed information about the progress of legislation. The *Bills List* is updated and published online after each sitting day to reflect legislative activity in both chambers.

Section staff spent considerable time participating in the process to redevelop the internal bills system, which manages bills and associated documents and their online publishing. Staff were involved in the tender evaluation process, system design, and testing of the system prior to its final acceptance and implementation. The new system is expected to roll out in the 2008 spring sittings. The investment of staff time will contribute to an intuitive database which improves legislative document management, increases functionality and enables efficient online publication, thus increasing the section's productivity.

Formal and informal records of business

The office met the needs of senators and others for accurate and timely documentation and information by:

- producing and publishing the *Notice Paper* and the *Journals of the Senate*
- maintaining the *Dynamic Red* and publishing the *Senate Daily Summary*
- compiling and publishing statistical information relating to the Senate
- responding to requests for statistics on the work of the Senate
- maintaining information systems to help produce Table Office documents.

Formal records

To meet the requirements of senators and others, the Table Office publishes the Senate's principal parliamentary documents online—both on the Senate website and through the parliamentary information database—and in hard copy.

The *Notice Paper*—the formal agenda of Senate proceedings—provides essential information on current and future business of the Senate and on committee matters. Two versions of the *Notice Paper* were published before each sitting day: an abridged printed version, averaging 43 pages, and a 'full' online version. The *Notice Paper* expands during the course of each parliament as unfinished business accumulates and the number of unanswered questions on notice increases. At the close of the Forty-first Parliament, the full online version was around 200 pages.

The *Journals of the Senate* are the 'minutes of the meeting' and the official record of decisions made by the Senate. During 2007–08, proof *Journals* were made available online shortly after the end of each sitting day, and printed versions were distributed the next morning. Staff produced and published 36 proof *Journals*, each averaging 31 pages. This is comparable to the result in the previous election year (40 *Journals*, averaging 26 pages). After a prompt but thorough check of the proof *Journals* and relevant source documents, final *Journals* were published and later compiled into bound volumes.

Informal records and statistics

The office has produced the *Dynamic Red* as an in-house publication for four years and on the Senate website for external users for two years. Conceived as an online version of the Senate's *Order of Business* (the 'Red'), the *Dynamic Red* provides real-time information on the progress and outcomes of business on each sitting day. This assists senators, parliamentary staff, government departments and agencies, and the general public, to monitor Senate proceedings. The publication continues to be used by a wide audience, and the addition of an email address has enabled users to contact the author directly with inquiries and comments.

Information transferred from the *Dynamic Red* continues to assist with the timely production of the *Senate Daily Summary*, a more considered summary of the previous day's proceedings in the Senate. The summary contains links to primary sources such as the *Journals*, Hansard and committee reports. It continues to be an indispensable tool for those who work in, or observe, the Senate. The *Senate Daily Summary* was also produced during estimates hearings, providing links to committee programs and other relevant information.

Statistical summaries of business conducted by the Senate were produced after each sitting week. A more comprehensive set of statistics was also maintained online, providing timely access to the most commonly sought statistics on the work of the Senate. Staff also produced

two volumes of *Business of the Senate*, a publication which has recorded statistics on the work of the Senate for more than 30 years.

The office promptly met requests for statistics from senators, parliamentary staff and other clients. The change in government, predictably, led to an upsurge in requests for comparative statistics. In 2007–08, the Table Office produced statistics on matters such as:

- numbers of bills and other matters referred to committees, the length and timing of committee references and the establishment of select committees
- numbers of bills passed by the Senate
- allocation of time for government business.

The statistics that the Table Office compiled on these and other matters were comprehensive, accurate and timely.

Questions on notice

Senators continued to use questions on notice—written questions to ministers concerning the administration of public policy matters—as an important accountability mechanism.

During 2007–08, in keeping with the lighter program of sittings, staff processed 595 questions on notice—barely a third of the record 1,728 asked by senators and processed in the previous year. Figure 9 shows the trend in the number of questions on notice in recent years.

Figure 9   **Questions on notice, 2003–04 to 2007–08**
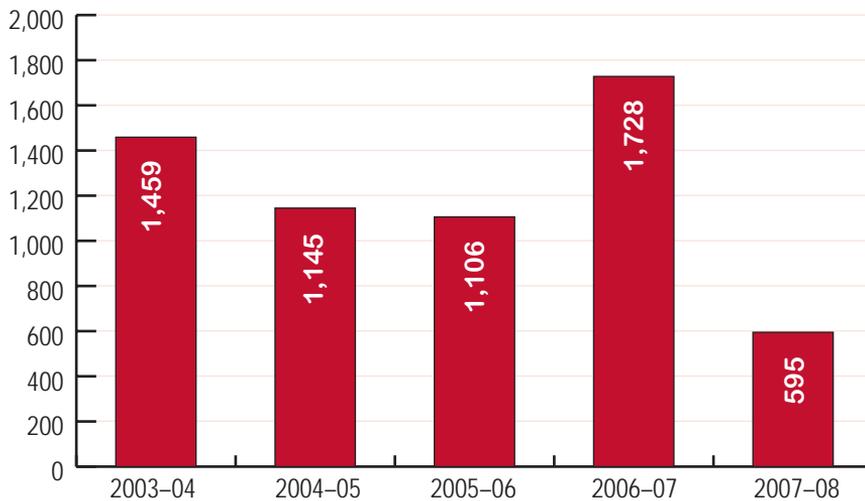
The Table Office ensured that questions on notice lodged by senators conformed to the rules contained in the Senate Standing Orders and were consistent in format and style. Questions were published in both the printed and online versions of the *Notice Paper*. When the Senate was not sitting, questions were forwarded to relevant ministers and departments. The online *Notice Paper* was updated each week to ensure timely publication of information.

Ministers provided answers to 603 questions on notice. Staff processed the answers, circulated them to senators and arranged for their publication in Hansard.

Questions and answers were processed accurately and within agreed timeframes. Statistics on questions on notice were collated and published in the *Questions on Notice Summary* in August 2007 and February 2008.

Petitions

During 2007–08, senators presented 59 petitions from 98,466 signatories (less than half the total of 136 petitions presented in 2006–07). The office continued to provide advice to senators and the public on whether proposed petitions conformed to the rules for petitions contained in the Senate Standing Orders. All conforming petitions were processed promptly and presented in the Senate.

Documents and inquiries

The Table Office processed all documents presented to the Senate during 2007–08 and recorded them in the *Journals of the Senate* and the *Index of Papers Presented to the Parliament*. Copies of all documents were made available through the inquiries and distribution services.

The original documents presented to the Senate since its first meeting in 1901 are stored in Parliament House under archival conditions. In 2007–08, work began to establish the former Senate Stationery Store as a supplementary storage area. The new storage area and the amalgamation of collections have removed the need for off-site storage of documents, at a small cost saving to the department.

As noted in last year's report, the number of legislative instruments continues to grow at a significant rate, as a consequence of the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003*. On the first sitting day of the Forty-second Parliament, 2,259 Clerk's documents were tabled, of which 66 per cent were legislative instruments. The marked increase in the workload of the section in 2007–08 is illustrated by the fact that the number of documents tabled on the first sitting day of the new parliament was equivalent to more than 27 per cent of the total number of documents tabled in 2006–07 (8,200).

During the year, staff contributed to a review by the Attorney-General's Department of the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003*, drawing attention to the impact the increasing number of legislative instruments has had on the workload of the office, and on the capacity of senators and staff to monitor and access these documents.

Digital imaging project

A major initiative in the office is a project using digital imaging to copy, preserve and ensure access to the collection of all documents presented to the Senate. The project consists of two streams of work: to make digital images of the documents presented to the Senate since 2002, and to create digital images from the microfilm record of the documents presented during the Senate's first century.

During 2007–08, staff scanned more than 11,400 documents and undertook associated preservation and indexing work.

Work began on converting the microfilm to digital images. This is progressing at a healthy rate, with an average of 300,000 images digitised each month. In early June 2008, a web repository containing images of documents tabled in the Fortieth Parliament (from 2002 to 2004) was made available online. Publication of the initial repository is being treated as a pilot program, and feedback is being actively sought from researchers and other users to test the utility of the system.

Secretariat support for various committees

During the year, the Table Office provided secretariat support for all meetings and reports of the Selection of Bills Committee, the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing, the Senate Publications Committee and the Joint Committee on Publications.

All meetings were held, and documents provided, within agreed timeframes.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

Factors influencing workload and staffing levels are set out above.

As in other areas of the department, the effectiveness of the Table Office in supporting the work of senators, the Senate and its committees is heavily dependent on the expertise of its staff. During 2007–08, a number of staff in the office undertook challenging new roles. Their success in undertaking these roles while maintaining the usual high performance standards of the office is a testament to their abilities and to the training efforts and support of their colleagues.

Evaluation

The principal medium for evaluating our services is the biennial survey of senators' satisfaction with the services provided by the department, due to be conducted next in early 2009. As reported previously, the 2007 survey revealed high levels of satisfaction among senators with the advice, documents and services of the Table Office, consistent with the high levels reported in previous surveys, and did not suggest any areas of major concern.

The office also monitors its own performance—for example, by keeping track of response times for inquiries. This monitoring indicates that the high level of service noted in recent surveys continued during 2007–08.

Much of our work involves frequent direct contact with senators, their staff and other clients. This presents an ongoing opportunity to receive feedback about our services. Informal feedback continued to be very positive.

Performance outlook

In 2008–09, the Table Office will continue its core work relating to the sittings of the Senate. In particular, staff will provide advice and produce documents to facilitate chamber proceedings and the legislative process; prepare formal and informal records of Senate business; process and archive tabled documents; provide inquiries and document distribution services; and support the work of committees.

The busy start to the new parliament, and the new 'balance of power' in the Senate from 1 July 2008, suggest that the next 12 months will be characterised by high levels of legislative and committee activity. This is likely to be reflected in increased demand for the documents, advice and services provided by the office.

The office will contribute to the training of senators whose terms start on 1 July 2008 and their staff, and provide procedural support for the swearing in of senators on the first sitting day after 1 July.

The first part of the new financial year will see staff involved in the final stages of the redevelopment of key information systems—ParlInfo and the Bills System. The advent of these replacement systems will improve productivity in the office, and is intended to improve

access to parliamentary and legislative documents produced and managed by the office. Staff will continue to be involved in work to redevelop local IT systems, beginning with a project to upgrade the word processing application which underpins the Table Office document production system.

The digital imaging project will continue, with an early review of the pilot program and an examination of the options for streamlining further work on the project.

Output Group 3—**Procedure Office**

Outputs

Provision of advisory and drafting services to non-government senators.

Provision of procedural advice and training to senators, staff, public servants and officials from other parliaments both within Australia and overseas.

Provision of secretariat support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and Scrutiny of Bills Committee.

Provision of parliamentary information services to the community.

Provision of parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students.

Provision of policy advice and secretariat support for the maintenance and development of inter-parliamentary relations, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union, overseas conferences and delegations program for senators.

	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.	The 2007 survey of senators revealed high levels of satisfaction with the group's outputs. In 2007–08, a non-survey year, the Procedure Office received consistently favourable feedback across all outputs.
	Procedural advice is accurate and covers all foreseeable eventualities.	Senators consistently acknowledged the accuracy and value of procedural advice.
	Amendments and bills are accurate and legally sound.	Amendments were prepared to the satisfaction of senators.
	Public information and parliamentary research is accurate, comprehensive and targeted for particular needs.	Public information was updated to reflect changes for the new parliament.
	Education Centre teaching and other PEO projects accurately reflect the parliament and its work.	The Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) conducted a major revision and upgrade to present information in web-based formats, which provide a greater range of more accessible and interactive resources to the public.
Timeliness	Procedural advice is timely.	Procedural advice met all chamber deadlines.
	Scrutiny committee meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committees, as relevant.	All meetings of the scrutiny committees were held as scheduled and documentation was provided within the timeframes set by the committees.
	During sitting periods, amendments drafted as soon as possible after receipt of instructions.	Amendments were drafted in accordance with timetables set by senators.
	Seminars and lectures held on time and in accordance with advertised schedule; public information projects delivered according to programmed schedule.	All seminars and lectures were held on time and in accordance with advertised schedules. Additional seminars were held in response to increasing demand.
	PEO teaching programs held on time and in accordance with booking schedule.	All programs were held in accordance with schedules and 59 additional classes were held in response to increasing demand.
	PEO projects delivered according to programmed schedule.	Projects, programs and outreach activities were delivered as scheduled.
	Information available on the internet and in publications is up to date and available as soon as practicable.	Internet timetables for the provision of information were met. The new website launched by the PEO, as reported last year, was extensively upgraded.

Analysis

As shown in Figure 10, the Procedure Office is divided into six functional areas to assist with the efficient management of the services it provides to senators. The office is headed by the Clerk Assistant (Procedure), who manages the office, provides procedural, advisory and drafting services, makes a large number of presentations on Senate procedure, and performs duties as a clerk at the table in the Senate chamber.

Figure 10   **Elements and responsibilities of the Procedure Office**

Executive and Legislative Drafting				
Cleaver Elliott, Clerk Assistant Procedural advice and training Legislative drafting of amendments and private senators' bills				
Biographical Dictionary Unit	**Parliamentary Education Office**	**Regulations and Ordinances Committee**	**Research Section**	**Scrutiny of Bills Committee**
Ann Millar, Director	*Chris Reid, Director*	*James Warmenhoven, Secretary*	*David Sullivan, Director*	*Cheryl Wilson, Secretary*
Production, editing and publication of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*	Provision of parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students	Secretariat, advisory and administrative support to the committee	Provision of seminars, exhibitions, and research on matters of parliamentary significance	Secretariat, advisory and administrative support to the committee

The cost of the Procedure Office in providing its various legislative drafting, procedural advice, research and education services was $6.3 million ($6.2 million in 2006–07).

The full-time equivalent staffing level for 2007–08 was 32, up slightly from the 2006–07 figure.

Legislative drafting and procedural advice

The Procedure Office met the requirements of senators for procedural advice and legislative drafting services by:

- providing procedural advice to non-government senators, in response to requests and proactively
- providing procedural training and briefing to senators and senators' staff, in response to requests and proactively
- providing accurate advice, both in the chamber and for use in the chamber
- drafting amendments to bills, primarily for non-government senators but also for backbench government senators, in response to instructions received from senators and senators' staff
- drafting private senators' bills for non-government senators, in response to instructions received from senators and senators' staff.

The office also prepared an average of eight procedural scripts per sitting day, two more than last year's average. These scripts included notices of motion, terms of reference for committee inquiries and related documents for senators' use in the chamber and in committees. The tendency of senators and their staff to seek this advice at very short notice continued during the year.

A significant change for the drafting and procedural advisory service followed the 2007 federal election, with a change in the main client group for the service. A new opposition made requests for procedural advice and drafting support from December 2007. The number of requests increased significantly after February 2008.

The most notable example of a change in procedural advice resulted in the establishment of six select committees during the reporting period.

A further significant change for the drafting and procedural advisory service, also arising from the 2007 federal election, was the departure of all senators from the Australian Democrats party. Although four senators from that party continued to sit in the Senate to the end of the financial year, there was a significant reduction in their legislative drafting requests. This considerably reduced the legislative drafting workload, as this group had been major users of the drafting service in previous years.

The Procedure Office drafted and processed all non-government amendments and private senators' bills required by senators for use in the Senate, to assist with Senate committee work, or for the purpose of discussions with interested constituents. In 2007–08, government senators continued to request drafting assistance, both before and after the federal election.

During the year, senators continued to make many requests for the drafting of private senators' bills, with 28 bills prepared and 19 introduced. In 2006–07, 41 private senators' bills were produced and 20 were introduced.

The numbers of amendments were as follows: 83 sets of amendments and 423 individual amendments were circulated and 56 second reading amendments were prepared and circulated. The reduced number of sitting days and the significantly reduced legislative program caused a corresponding reduction in the number of amendments required to be drafted for the Senate.

Table 2 summarises non-government senators' use of legislative drafting and procedural services over the past three reporting periods.

Table 2   Legislative drafting and procedural advice services provided to non-government senators, 2005–06 to 2007–08

Service	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Committee of the whole amendments	736	1,524	423
Second reading amendments	56	111	56
Private senators' bills prepared	34	41	28
Private senators' bills introduced	6	20	19
Procedural scripts prepared	274	353	304

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 3

Legislative scrutiny committees

During the year, the office provided secretariat, research and administrative support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and the Scrutiny of Bills Committee.

The secretariats of the two scrutiny committees assisted the committees to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with their standing orders. This included:

- publication each Senate sitting week of the required reports and digests
- publication of the *Delegated Legislation Monitor* (every Senate sitting week) and the *Disallowance Alert* and *Scrutiny of Disallowable Instruments Alert* (updated online as required)
- preparation of disallowance notices.

In addition to its regular alert digests and reports, the Scrutiny of Bills Committee published *The Work of the Committee during the 40th Parliament February 2002–August 2004*, which provides an overview of the legislative scrutiny work undertaken by the committee during that period, along with statistical data. The Regulations and Ordinances Committee published its 113th Report—*Interim Report on Consultation under the Legislative Instruments Act 2003*.

It is the responsibility of the two committees to examine all bills and disallowable instruments within their jurisdiction. The secretariats, assisted by their legal advisers, completed all of the necessary administrative work to assist the committees to undertake these tasks. The Regulations and Ordinances Committee staff processed 2,982 instruments during 2007–08 (2,349 in 2006–07). The Scrutiny of Bills Committee secretariat processed 207 bills during 2007–08 (241 in 2006–07) and the committee commented on 108 bills (112 in 2006–07).

Staff from both secretariats briefed several international delegations about the role and operations of the Senate legislative scrutiny committees, and conducted a training seminar for public servants as part of the seminar series offered by the Procedure Office.

Secretariat staff also accompanied members of the two scrutiny committees to the Australia–New Zealand Scrutiny of Legislation Conference, held in Wellington, New Zealand.

Public information and parliamentary research

The Research Section of the Procedure Office continued to coordinate and deliver parliamentary information and education services through lectures, exhibitions, seminars, publications, programs for other parliaments in Australia and overseas, and internships and fellowships.

Biographical dictionary

The Biographical Dictionary Unit continued its work on the third volume of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, covering senators whose terms ended between 1962 and 1983. Following the verification of entries, work on the manuscript concentrated on supplementary research and editing and thorough checking of endnotes in preparation for submission to the publisher.

Genealogical research about senators and clerks and their families neared completion, with the acquisition of a further 41 birth, marriage and death certificates and the compilation of evidence from cemetery records and other sources for certificates that are unobtainable from registrars. Work began on tracking down records for senators who had married or divorced overseas or in obscure circumstances in Australia.

Progress was made on the acquisition of photographs and caricatures to illustrate the volume, and an indexer and readers were engaged to work on the volume.

Work continued on the 109 entries for Volume 4, which will cover 1983 to 2002. A total of 69 entries have been allocated to authors.

Lectures

During 2007–08, the department continued to host lunchtime lectures as part of the popular Occasional Lecture series. Topics ranged from the selection of judges for Commonwealth courts, presented by former chief justice Sir Gerard Brennan, to the United Kingdom's *Scotland Act 1998* and the Scottish devolution movement, presented by eminent political theorist Sir Bernard Crick.

The department publishes lecture transcripts in its free *Papers on Parliament* series and makes audio recordings available on the departmental website. Since May 2008, lectures have been filmed and broadcast on television and the internet by the ABC, increasing the audience for, and accessibility of, the lectures.

Exhibitions

In March 2008, the department launched a major revision of the Women in Federal Parliament exhibition in the Presiding Officers' exhibition area. This exhibition, which displays an image and brief details of every woman who has sat in the parliament, had outgrown its space and needed to be redesigned, upgraded and updated. The Research Section also updated the exhibitions in the public areas outside the Senate chamber and in the Members' Hall to reflect changes brought about by the 2007 federal election.

The Peace, Order and Good Government exhibition, which was erected in 2001 to commemorate the first federal parliament, was dismantled in preparation for a new exhibition featuring the work of the current parliament.

The department participated in the Parliament House Open Day on 10 May 2008, providing information, publications and other material to visitors, and arranging for senators to address the public about their experiences from the floor of the Senate chamber.

Seminars

The department's seminar series continued to provide members of the Australian Public Service with comprehensive training in the operations of the Senate and the accountability to parliament of Australian Government departments and agencies. During 2007–08, a total of 1,323 people attended 44 seminars.

The seminar series remained an integral part of most graduate training programs in the Australian Public Service. Some of the larger departments enrolled all of their graduates in the full-day Introduction to the Senate seminar, and a range of half-day seminars were also well received. The seminars were conducted by senior officers of the department.

The Research Section also continued to provide seminars to other interested groups, such as a seminar for a group of Indigenous graduates and tailored programs for the Journalist Fellowship Program and the Defence and Industry Study Course.

Tailored seminars and training programs were provided for officers visiting from overseas parliaments, including from the Cook Islands, Indonesia, Jordan and Sri Lanka. A fortnight-long training program, sponsored by the United Nations Development Program, was conducted for 18 officials from the National Assembly of Vietnam.

The Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, conducted jointly with the House of Representatives, provided training for 14 officers from overseas parliaments. A pilot training program for

members of the Canberra diplomatic community was also conducted jointly with the Department of the House of Representatives.

A series of training seminars was offered to the staff of senators, and was well attended. The seminars, delivered by senior officers, explained in detail the operations and procedures of the Senate and its committees.

The Research Section organised the first of two orientation seminars for senators-elect in February 2008, focusing on administrative arrangements. A further seminar scheduled for July 2008 will examine in detail the operations and procedures of the Senate and its committees.

Publications and information services

The Research Section edited and published two editions of the department's journal *Papers on Parliament* during 2007–08. Entitled *National Parliament, National Symbols* (July 2007) and *The Senate and Accountability* (January 2008), these editions largely comprised papers in the Senate Occasional Lecture series. The *Senate Briefs* series was revised and reissued to account for changes brought about by the 2007 federal election.

The section issues a range of free publications raising awareness of the Senate and parliamentary processes. Details of the publications available in 2007–08 are provided in Appendix 4.

During the year, the Research Section responded to requests for information and research support from a range of sources, including senators, the Clerk and Clerks Assistant, and members of the academic community and the general public.

Internships and the Richard Baker Senate Prize

As in previous years, the department successfully ran the Australian National Internships Program in partnership with the Australian National University. During 2007–08, 19 students were placed in parliamentary departments and 22 students were placed in other departments and agencies. Interns continued to see Parliament House as an outstanding venue in which to be placed. The Research Section coordinated an induction seminar for each group of interns and organised some of the functions associated with the program.

The Research Section continued to provide secretariat support to the judging panel for the Richard Baker Senate Prize. The 2007 competition attracted 11 entries, ranging widely in subject matter and format. The prize was awarded to a major study edited by Professor John Halligan, Mr Robin Miller and Professor John Power, entitled *Parliament in the Twenty-first Century: Institutional Reform and Emerging Roles*.

Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions program

Early in 2007, the department entered into a formal research partnership with the Australian National University's Parliamentary Studies Centre, which is conducting a three-year program, entitled Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions, funded by the Australian Research Council. The primary outcome will be a series of edited books containing a selection of research papers prepared by officers of the departments of the Senate and the House of Representatives and by the Parliamentary Library, and by parliamentary scholars from Australia and overseas.

During 2007–08, officers of the department drafted papers on topics ranging from accountability and measuring committee effectiveness to community participation in committee inquiries. Details are provided in Appendix 5.

A series of workshops starting in June 2008 will enable authors to receive input from colleagues across parliament, playing an important role in building a research community among the officers taking part in the project. Following the workshops, revised papers will be published on the Parliamentary Studies Centre website, and will be eligible for subsequent inclusion in the edited books.

Parliamentary education services

During 2007–08, the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) continued to deliver a high level of educational services to schools, teachers and students. The PEO has two main functions:

- Through the Education Centre (which includes a dedicated committee room modified to represent a parliamentary chamber), the PEO delivers a role-play that involves simulations of chamber and committee proceedings of the House of Representatives and the Senate, for students visiting Parliament House.
- Through a sophisticated outreach strategy, developed over many years, the PEO delivers education opportunities for students and teachers who might not visit Parliament House. To support this strategy, the PEO produces materials and resources in print, on CD and on its website.

In addition, the PEO undertakes joint ventures, and builds professional networks, to extend the reach of parliamentary education.

Education Centre activities

The Education Centre delivered its one-hour role-play program to more than 89,000 students in approximately 2,500 groups during 2007–08. The extended availability of the program discussed in last year's report is now a permanent service. Trends in Education Centre attendance are shown in figures 11 and 12.

Following the installation of replica chamber benches with reversible red and green cushions, in June 2007, the PEO conducted a review of the role-play program. The review, which was completed in December 2007, recommended the introduction of concept-based role-plays that focus more on the functions of the parliament; the introduction of multimedia; and the use of student-initiated bills and topics for debate.

The office also conducted market research surveys of classroom teachers visiting the Education Centre. The results of the survey will be used to assist with providing improved educational services.

Figure 11   **Students who visited the PEO Education Centre, 2003–04 to 2007–08**

Figure showing a bar chart of students who visited the PEO Education Centre. Values: 2003–04: 80,440; 2004–05: 82,034; 2005–06: 81,072; 2006–07: 87,113; 2007–08: 89,061. Y-axis from 0 to 90,000.
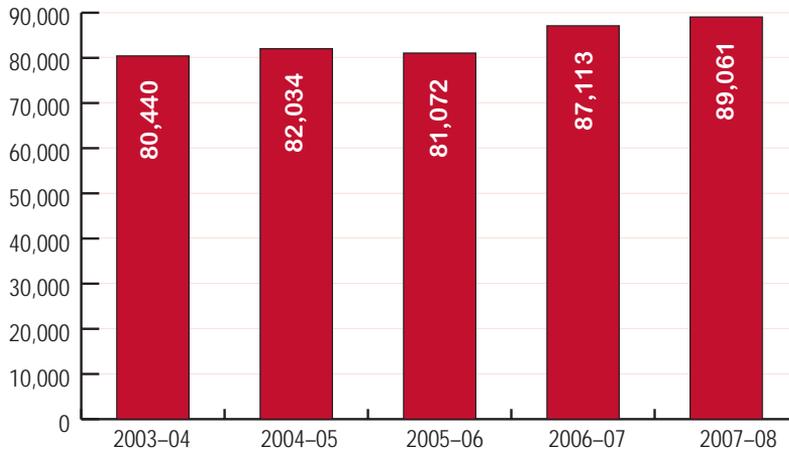
Figure 12   **Groups that visited the PEO Education Centre, 2003–04 to 2007–08**

Figure showing a bar chart of groups that visited the PEO Education Centre. Values: 2003–04: 2,324; 2004–05: 2,418; 2005–06: 2,406; 2006–07: 2,494; 2007–08: 2,453. Y-axis from 0 to 2,500.
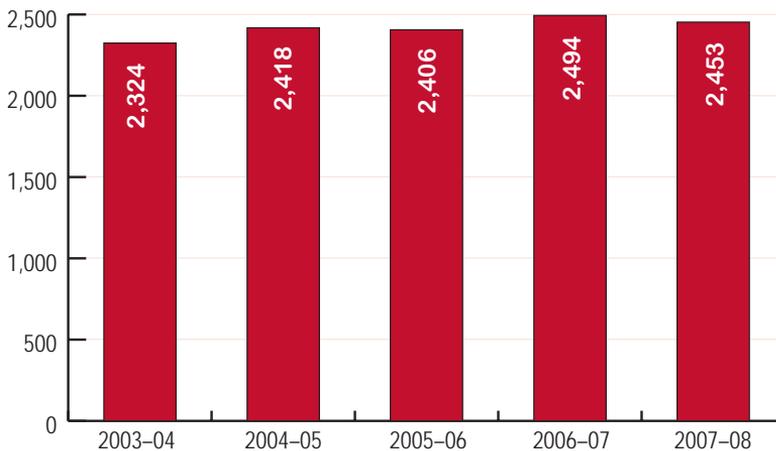
Outreach activities

Officers of the PEO travelled widely and delivered many resources for school, TAFE and English as a second language course teachers and students in 2007–08.

The PEO participated in activities in Adelaide; Alice Springs; Brisbane; Canberra and surrounding regions; Hobart; Melbourne; and Sydney and surrounding regions. An important feature of these outreach activities was the involvement of local senators and members.

No activities were undertaken in Western Australia during the reporting period, because a range of services had been delivered there during recent previous reporting periods. The PEO is planning to return to Western Australia in 2008–09.

Website and other resources

The PEO continued to develop its website, emphasising interactivity, video learning and accessibility. The promotion of the website was a focus for the publishing team during 2007–08. Web patronage increased substantially, reaching a record 2.8 million page views.

The website also introduced a service to raise the profile of the PEO in the parliament and to assist all members of parliament in their work with schools, teachers and students. The service includes a range of resources and products, such as a calendar of upcoming PEO joint-venture events.

The PEO continued to produce new and updated resources. These included the completion of a trial version of a new teaching resource, *Parliament of Wizards*, which introduces primary school students to the work of parliament through the world of magic. A series of 10 posters, titled *Parliament in Pictures*, was released; at the request of the Presiding Officers, the posters will feature as a public display in the schools hospitality area of Parliament House.

In 2007–08, the PEO reprinted the pocket-sized *Australian Constitution*, *Peeling back Parliament* and *Unravelling the parliamentary role-play* publications. Resources such as these are posted to all parts of Australia every year.

Joint ventures and networks

An ambitious program that brings together the PEO, senators and members and their staff, and schools, in order to deliver parliamentary education programs to a school audience in groups, was developed during the year. Planning has been completed for programs in regional Victoria and outer Brisbane.

The PEO continued to work with the National Museum of Australia to produce Talk Back Classroom, a program in which senior secondary school students interview distinguished guests in front of a live audience in a recording studio. The museum ended this program on 30 June 2008.

The Rotary-sponsored Adventure in Citizenship program, which brings Year 11 students from across Australia to Canberra to take part in a week-long program run by the PEO and other partners, continued to attract excellent feedback. The PEO has developed the capacity to customise responses to a range of special programs that bring visitors to parliament, such as *Heywire*, an ABC program for rural youth; the National Youth Science Forum; and the National Schools Constitutional Convention.

As in previous years, Little Lunch Sittings were delivered during sitting periods at Parliament House, this year to four groups of older Australians—several more sittings were booked but were subsequently cancelled due to the announcement of the federal election.

The PEO continued to forge strong and useful networks during the year, including by:

- working closely with senators and members
- meeting with the PEO Advisory Committee
- attending
  - the Australasian Study of Parliament Group annual conference in August 2007
  - the joint conference of the Australian Primary Principals Association and the Australian Secondary Principals Association in October 2007
  - the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table professional development seminar in January 2008
- interacting with a range of visiting delegations from parliaments overseas.

Staff training and development

In 2007–08, the PEO further developed a training module for casual staff, to increase teaching capacity and flexibility during busy periods and staff absences. The training is based on observation, team teaching and mentoring. The module will be repeated and further refined in 2008–09.

All PEO staff are encouraged to undertake training and development activities, such as parliamentary training sessions, seminars and conferences, university and TAFE courses, online training courses and face-to-face workshops.

International activities

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) brings together representatives of the parliaments of sovereign states to foster contact, coordination and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians.

During 2007–08, the department supported the work of the IPU by funding the attendance of:

- a delegation from the Australian Group of the IPU at the 118th IPU Assembly, held in South Africa in April 2008 (an Australian Group delegation was not sent to the 117th Assembly, because the date conflicted with the 2007 federal election)
- a delegate from the Australian Group at a parliamentary briefing by the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS, held in the United States in June 2008.

The Director, Journals and Notice Paper, Table Office, continued to serve as secretary to the Australian IPU delegation, providing administrative support and advice.

The department also provided experienced officers to serve as secretaries:

- on two parliamentary delegations participating in bilateral visits, to Brazil and Uruguay and to the European Institutions
- to the Thirty-eighth Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference, held in the Cook Islands in July 2007
- to the Standing Committee on Community Affairs participating in a committee exchange visit to the New Zealand Parliament.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

The core business of the Procedure Office—its legislative drafting and procedural advice services—continued to be used extensively by senators and their staff. During 2007–08, an additional full-time legislative drafter was engaged on a one-year trial basis to assist with the office's legislative drafting work. The addition of this resource meant that private senators' bills, which are usually drafted during non-sitting periods only, could also be drafted during sitting periods.

Evaluation

The Procedure Office continually monitors all of its activities through formal and informal appraisal, including through letters, emails, phone calls, seminar evaluation forms and direct advice from senators, their staff and members of the public. Each of these evaluation methods assists the office to make timely and responsive adjustments to the way it delivers its services. High levels of satisfaction were indicated for the office's services; Figure 13 provides a few examples of the positive feedback received in 2007–08.

Figure 13   **Comments on Output Group 3 services**

On the legislative drafting service

From senators and senators' staff

'Thank you very much for being proactive on these. It helps enormously.'

'This [explanatory memorandum] wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for all your hard work in the drafting stages! We really appreciate it.'

'I appreciate that the time for pulling this together was absolutely crazy and am grateful you were able to do so much so quickly.'

'Thanks so much for your supa-efficient help on this.'

On the seminar series

Parliament, Privilege and Accountability

'I found it to be very informative and will greatly assist my future development—all speakers were very knowledgeable regarding their areas.'

Introduction to the Senate

'I found the seminar was extremely well run and organised and very interesting. It was helpful to me in my area of work. Thank you.'

'This was an excellent seminar. The presenters were engaging and knowledgeable. I really enjoyed myself and it was time well spent.'

Getting Bills through the Senate

'Excellent course and presenter; a real insight gained into procedures and experiences of the Senate.'

'Overall a fantastic course, delivered in a professional yet entertaining manner—10 out of 10.'

The Budget and the Senate Estimates Process

'Highly informative seminar, well-directed session, used relevant examples.'

'Great course, easy to understand, good reading material to take away.'

Legislative Scrutiny of Bills and Regulations

'Absolutely met my expectation of gaining a more detailed comprehension of parliamentary processes in this area—it was an excellent presentation.'

On the Parliamentary Education Office

From senators and members

'I have found the work of the PEO over the five years of my time in the Senate to have been of a high standard and of great support in my role.'

'I congratulate ... the PEO team for the ongoing work that you commit to parliamentary education and the youth of today. With over 82,000 students visiting Canberra to learn more about parliament, it is a real testament to your hard work.'

From teachers and students

'The students especially enjoyed the opportunity to debate a new bill, and found this experience contributed greatly to their understanding of how parliament works.'

'I ... have taken so much from the day and your fantastic resources which I will be using in my classroom.'

'You have extraordinary people on your team. The program is so effective; I hope many other young people get the same experience and benefits that I did.'

Performance outlook

In 2008–09 the Procedure Office will again give priority to providing drafting support for legislative amendments and private senators' bills for non-government senators and to providing procedural advice and training. With an influx of new senators, and a return to 'balance of power' politics, there will be an increased requirement for briefing on Senate practices and procedures.

The committees' secretariats will continue to provide full and effective support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and the Scrutiny of Bills Committee.

The Biographical Dictionary Unit will publish Volume 3 of the dictionary and continue its work on Volume 4.

The Research Section will update its seminar programs to take account of changes to the dynamics of the Senate, and will otherwise continue to provide research and training support. A major new public exhibition on the legislative work of the parliament will be unveiled, and both the Research Section and the PEO will be involved in an interdepartmental review of the public display spaces at Parliament House.

The PEO will extend its established 'teaching and reaching' strategy, working towards implementing a national agenda to educate all students of school age in Australia about the parliament. Use of technology will continue to expand, adding interactive features to the PEO website and increasing the production of DVDs and web-based visual learning products. A strategic plan to engage the secondary school student audience will be completed.

In 2008–09, the PEO will educate a near-capacity number of students in the Education Centre, as it did in 2007–08. Implementing the recommendations of the role-play review will support continuous improvement and ensure the PEO maintains its position as a leading exponent of parliamentary education.

The PEO will also work closely with the Australian Primary Principals Association and the Australian Secondary Principals Association, offering a standing invitation for their respective executive meetings to be held at Parliament House where possible. Outreach programs in schools, universities and the TAFE sector will also continue.

Output Group 4—**Committee Office**

Outputs

Provision of secretariat support to the Senate legislative and general purpose standing committees, select committees and certain joint committees.

	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, publications and draft reports are accurate and of a high standard.	Formal and informal feedback mechanisms continue to show that senators consider the support provided by the Committee Office to be effective. When debating committee reports, committee chairs and senators recognised the high quality of services provided by secretariats in: • drafting reports • dealing effectively with witnesses and clients • organising committee meetings and hearings • producing quality committee briefings • providing sound procedural advice • liaising closely with senators' offices.
Timeliness	Meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committee, as relevant. Tabling deadlines met in all but extraordinary circumstances.	Committee secretariats organised meetings, hearings, briefings and inspections in accordance with committee requirements, within constraints arising from the availability of members. Reports were drafted and presented to the Senate in accordance with the timelines set by committees and deadlines set by the Senate.
Quantity	Documentation is sufficient for committee purposes and material available to the public is available promptly, electronically or in hard copy.	Committee staff provided committee members, witnesses and others with documents in accordance with secretariat procedures, orders of the Senate and committee requirements. Upon tabling, reports were promptly made available to senators and others in both printed and electronic forms.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 4

Analysis

During 2007–08, the Committee Office provided secretariat support to Senate and certain joint committees by:

- giving accurate and timely procedural advice and administrative support to facilitate and expedite the work of committees
- arranging responsive and timely meetings and hearings in accordance with committee decisions
- providing comprehensive and timely briefings and research papers
- drafting quality reports which accurately canvassed and analysed the evidence from submissions and hearings and reflected the requirements of committees (and assisting, as necessary, in the drafting of minority reports)
- communicating effectively with witnesses and members of the general public
- being proactive in anticipating requirements of committees and chairs.

The workload for committee secretariats during 2007–08 was unevenly distributed, as a result of the election period in the second half of 2007 and a light sitting pattern in the first half of 2008.

The reporting timeframes for bills inquiries were tighter than ever before in the period prior to the 2007 election, with an average reporting deadline of 14.7 days. Since the beginning of the new parliament, bills referred to committees have had a 49-day average reporting deadline, which is a longer timeframe than at any time since 2003–04. The combination of the pre-election and post-election timelines resulted in a 38-day average reporting deadline for 2007–08, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3   **Referrals and deadlines for bills inquiries, 2005–06 to 2007–08**

	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Number of bills introduced into parliament	165	243	197
Number of individual bills referred	78	107	65
Proportion of total individual bills referred	47%	44%	33%
Packages of bills referred	59	79	50
Proportion of total packages of bills referred	36%	33%	25%
Reporting deadline (total number of days)	1,619	2,360	1,924
Average reporting deadline (days)	27	30	38

The full-time equivalent staff figure for 2007–08 was 53, a figure similar to that for the previous year. The quieter period experienced by committees during the election period was balanced by a need for staff to service the newly appointed select committees in the second half of the year. Staffing numbers fell below 49 in the middle of the year but were above 55 at the end of the year, in response to the increasing pace of committee activity.

The variability of work patterns, a feature highlighted in recent annual reports, persisted in 2007–08. The Committee Office continued the system under which the busiest secretariats borrowed additional staff from those with lighter schedules.

Six select committees were established in the second half of the year, four of which required secretariat support between February–March and June 2008.

During the year, the Committee Office continued to support three ongoing statutory committees—the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity, and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services.

The cost of the Committee Office in 2007–08 was $8.0 million ($8.3 million in 2006–07). The costs included expenses for staff travel, accommodation and venue hire and, in accordance with the relevant committee's decision, the costs of travel and accommodation for some non-government witnesses. Committees administered by the Committee Office did not use the services of any consultants during the year. The costs of senators attending hearings were paid by the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

Figure 14 shows the structure of the Committee Office.

Figure 14   **Elements and responsibilities of the Committee Office**

Executive		
Maureen Weeks, Clerk Assistant *Roxane Le Guen, Senior Clerk* Procedural advice Planning and coordination Secretariat staffing and resources Statistics and records		
Legislative and general purpose standing committee secretariats	**Joint statutory committee secretariats**	**Select committee secretariats**
Community Affairs *Elton Humphery* Economics *John Hawkins* Education, Employment and Workplace Relations *John Carter* Environment, Communications, and the Arts *Ian Holland* Finance and Public Administration *Stephen Palethorpe* Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Kathleen Dermody* Legal and Constitutional *Peter Hallahan* Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport *Jeanette Radcliffe*	Australian Crime Commission *Jacqui Dewar* Corporations and Financial Services *David Sullivan* Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity *Jacqui Dewar*	Agricultural and Related Industries *Jeanette Radcliffe* Housing Affordability in Australia *(ceased to exist 16 June 2008)* State Government Financial Management *Stephen Palethorpe* Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities *John Carter* Fuel and Energy *Roxane Le Guen* National Broadband Network *Maureen Weeks*

Procedural changes and advice

Secretaries continued to provide procedural and strategic advice to committee chairs and members. Higher level advice was provided by the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Clerk Assistant (Committees) and Senior Clerk of Committees. The advice, both oral and written, covered a wide variety of parliamentary privilege issues, such as the unauthorised disclosure of committee proceedings, the power of committees to call witnesses, the protection of those witnesses, and adverse reflections on persons made in evidence to committees. Advice was also provided on a number of matters arising out of estimates hearings, including claims of confidentiality relating to advice provided by departments to ministers and the bases on which information can be refused to committees. The Senate did not make changes to standing orders relating to committees during the year.

Legislative and general purpose standing committees

Eight legislative and general purpose standing committees are established pursuant to standing order 25 as permanent committees and continue for the life of each parliament. They are re-established at the commencement of each new parliament, with their membership determined by the Senate.

During 2007–08, the Senate referred 74 matters to standing committees, 50 of which were bills or packages of bills. As shown in Table 4, those committees tabled 101 reports, excluding reports on estimates.

Table 4   **Activities of standing committees**

	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Meetings (number)			
Public	148	150	90
Private	252	267	207
Inspections/other	16	11	3
Meetings (hours)			
Public	638	660	445
Private	83	130	70
Matters referred			
Bills/provisions of bills	93	79	50
Other[a]	12	27	**39**
Reports presented[b]	99	109	101
Submissions received	9,436	3,028	3,905
Witnesses	1,895	1,860	1,165
Extensions of time granted	55	33	25

a   *Includes 15 annual reports.*
b   *Excludes estimates; includes reports on annual reports.*

As shown in Table 5, the cycle for 2007–08 commenced with estimates hearings in May–June 2007; no supplementary hearings were held in October–November 2007 (because of the federal election). Additional estimates proceeded as usual in February 2008, in the week following the start of the Forty-second Parliament. The 2008–09 budget estimates hearings took place in May–June 2008.

Table 5   **Activities of committees considering estimates, 2006–07 to 2008–09 budget cycles**

Budget cycle	Hours of budget estimates hearings		Hours of additional estimates hearings	Total hours	Witnesses	Pages of evidence
	May–June[a]	*October– November*[b]	*February*			
2008–09	322	–	–	–	2,901	5,701
2007–08	333	*Not held*	183	516	1,832	4,004
2006–07	334	187	194	715	4,329	9,335

a   *Main hearings.*

b   *Supplementary hearings.*

Overall, the 2007–08 budget cycle estimates involved 333 hours of hearings and about 33,700 questions. At the May–June 2008 estimates hearings for the 2008-09 budget cycle, committees sat for a total of 322 hours and senators asked about 34,800 questions.

Sixteen reports on estimates were prepared by committees and tabled, eight after the budget estimates and eight following the additional estimates.

Select committees

A select committee is an ad hoc committee created to inquire into and report on a specific matter. In most cases, a select committee ceases to exist when it presents its final report.

The Senate established six select committees in 2007–08. One of those committees, the Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia, presented its report to the Senate on 16 June 2008 and no longer exists.

The Committee Office continues to provide secretariat support for:

- two select committees established by the Senate on 14 February 2008
  - the Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries
  - the Select Committee on State Government Financial Management
- one select committee established on 19 March 2008, the Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities
- two select committees established on 25 June 2008
  - the Select Committee on Fuel and Energy
  - the Select Committee on the National Broadband Network.

Select committees are taking on new features, some of which were previously the domain of standing committees. For example, the Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries, which was initially charged with considering issues relating to farm fertilisers, was given a new reference on 25 June 2008 to consider food production in Australia. The reporting date of 27 November 2009 for the second reference substantially extends the term of the select committee. The Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities was established to operate for the life of the parliament, reporting at stipulated times during that period.

In addition, the resolutions of appointment for each select committee provide for both 'full' members and 'participating' members on committees.

The Senate has placed a number of requirements on how the select committees, particularly the Select Committee on the National Broadband Network, conduct their inquiries. The

resolution of appointment for the Select Committee on the National Broadband Network includes in the committee's terms of reference a number of organisations from whom formal submissions are to be requested, and the categories of expertise of organisations and individuals from whom contributions will be invited. It also places a formal requirement on the committee to take evidence in a 'manner that is open and transparent to the public'.

These changes add to the workload and responsibilities of Committee Office staff and make it more difficult to staff the select committees with officers with the necessary skills.

During 2007–08, select committees held 43 meetings (public and private), for a total of 142 hours. They received 211 submissions and heard 207 witnesses. No select committee existed during the previous year.

Joint committees

Joint committees comprise senators and members of the House of Representatives. They are established by resolution of each House and, in the case of statutory committees, in accordance with the provisions of an Act.

During 2007–08, the Committee Office supported three statutory joint committees: Corporations and Financial Services, the Australian Crime Commission, and the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity.

The committees held 56 meetings (public and private and inspections) for a total of 61 hours. They received 72 submissions and heard 105 witnesses. The corresponding figures for 2006–07 were 52 meetings, 93 hours, 160 submissions and 178 witnesses.

Meetings

Senate committee secretariats supported 451 meetings, hearings and site inspections during the year, compared with 550 in 2006–07. Those figures include statistics relating to estimates hearings held by the committees.

Committee members place considerable value on engaging a broad range of people as they conduct each committee inquiry. This is achieved by travelling interstate, including to regional centres, and by conducting telephone and video conferences. A breakdown of meetings by location appears in Figure 15.

Figure 15   **Committee meetings by location, 2007–08**

ACT: 314
ACT (Estimates): 52
NSW: 21
Victoria: 22
Queensland: 11
WA: 9
SA: 9
Tasmania: 5
NT: 8
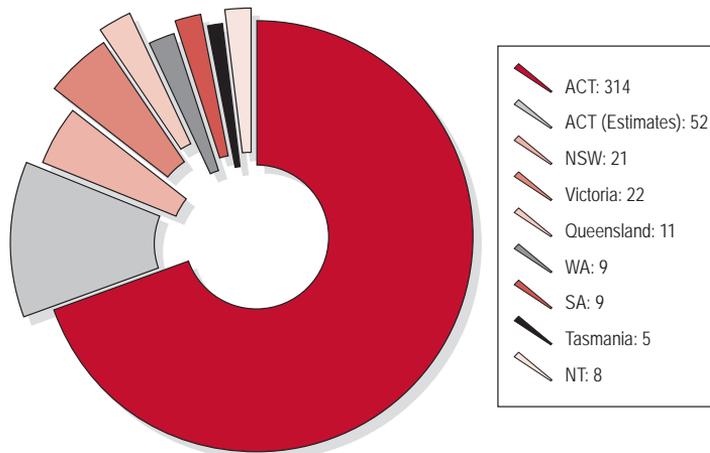
Database development

Work continued on the development of the Senate Centralised Information Database (SCID). A few problems in the initial stages delayed the proposed first trial of accepting and processing submissions through a web-based system. A working prototype was available for demonstration in the final weeks of 2007–08. The first trial will be conducted early in 2008–09.

During the election period, committee secretariat staff members gathered historical information to populate the database so that it can be operational as soon as testing is completed. The system is designed to reduce the workloads facing secretariats when they deal with short inquiries that necessitate rapid processing of submissions.

The SCID system will also assist secretariats in managing the privacy of those making submissions, by automatically generating lists that keep witnesses' personal details separate from their submissions.

Australian Research Council project

Given that not all committees had ongoing inquiries over the election period, this period presented an ideal opportunity for the researchers who staff the Committee Office to undertake work as part of the Australian Research Council project Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions (see Output Group 3).

Three papers relating to the work of Senate committees were researched and written by staff of the Committee Office. All three papers focus on aspects of committee work and are intended to assist in informing staff about the work of committees.

Dr Richard Grant and Mr Glenn Ryall took a new look at the much discussed question of how to measure the effectiveness of committees. They surveyed the views of committee secretaries from the Senate and the House of Representatives on the merit and applicability of 40 possible indicators of the effectiveness of committee inquiries. The work highlighted the difficulties in using the same criteria to assess the effectiveness of committees regardless of the type of committee and the nature of the inquiry.

The second paper was prepared by two staff members of the secretariat for the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Ms Jackie Morris and Ms Sophie Power. They considered participation in inquiries by examining the impact of set factors on the number of submissions received by the committee during the Fortieth Parliament and the Forty-first Parliament. In doing so, they were able to draw some conclusions about the extent to which their committee is able to access community views during its inquiries on policy issues and proposed legislation.

The final paper was prepared by Dr Ian Holland, with research assistance from Ms Julie Dennett, Ms Jacquie Hawkins, Ms Jackie Morris, Mr Peter Short, Ms Di Warhurst and Ms Jo Woodbury. It considered the role of Senate committees in the course of the Senate's deliberations on legislation. The paper looks at six issues, drawing conclusions as to the impact of committee recommendations on the legislative process, among other things.

All the papers included primary research, which took considerable time. The research not only contributes to the aims of the project and the literature on parliaments but also gives the staff a unique view of their work on behalf of Senate committees. It is perhaps this perspective that is most valuable to the work of the Committee Office, as it empowers staff to approach their work with a renewed vigour. (See Appendix 5 for publication details.)

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

Overall workload declined in 2007–08, partly due to the limited committee inquiry activity in the several months of the election period. However, this averaging masks high levels of activity that occurred at the end of the previous parliament and, in particular, in the new parliament.

The period before the November 2007 election was marked by continuing severely constricted timeframes for legislation inquiries, and by a dearth of reference inquiries. By contrast, 2008 has seen increased timeframes for legislation inquiries and a burgeoning of general reference work.

Both before and after the election period, a number of committees received a disproportionate share of references. At one time, for example, the Standing Committee on Economics was conducting 14 inquiries simultaneously. The Committee Office continued to respond to the uneven distribution of inquiries by reallocating staff from the underutilised secretariats to those with heavier workloads. Staff recognise the benefit to themselves and to the department of becoming a guest worker on another committee, and respond positively to their temporary transfers.

Senate committees continue to exist after an election is called, and some committees continued to work actively on inquiries during the election period. Among them were:

- the Standing Committee on Community Affairs, which continued its inquiry into the cost-of-living pressures on older Australians and held a public hearing, attended by eight senators, in Brisbane on 8 February 2008
- the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, which continued to draft its final report into Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations.

Staff took the opportunity provided by the election period to complete the usual end-of-parliament tasks, such as archiving, and to undertake training and development not always possible during busier periods. Some staff members also took extended leave during that period.

Evaluation

The principal means of evaluating the performance of the Committee Office in supporting Senate and certain joint committees is the biennial senators' survey. The latest survey, conducted in early 2007, showed high levels of satisfaction with the work of secretariats, as was reported in the previous annual report.

Comments made in the chamber when a committee's report is tabled or debated are another source of evaluation. As was the case in 2006–07, senators were highly positive in their comments, some of which are listed in Figure 16.

Informal feedback from witnesses also indicated satisfaction with their dealings with secretariat staff.

Figure 16   **Senators' comments on Output Group 4 secretariats**

'I want to thank the secretariat in particular ... for their wonderful work and the professionalism with which they pulled together this report. We thank them very much for their assistance.'

'I want to ... put on record my thanks ... most particularly to the secretariat of our committee because of the ridiculous time frame that was presented to our committee to present this report.'

'I also want to thank the committee secretariat ... which, at the same time as doing its other committee work, has carried the work of this select committee absolutely excellently, and I am very grateful for its professional support.'

'I also thank the secretariat for their efforts over the many months of deliberations and hearings and for their responses to the submissions that were made.'

'I also want to thank the secretariat of the committee, who worked so well to ensure that all of the people who wanted to be part of this process could be part of it and were effectively engaged and able to have their voices heard ... In a quite difficult time they were able to work with the committee to present a reasonable and balanced report which puts forward the issues ...'

Performance outlook

The level of Senate committee activity is likely to remain elevated during the next 12 months, with high levels of legislative work, a renewed interest in general references, and the requirement to support newly established select committees.

The Committee Office responded to the increased pace of committee activity toward the end of 2007–08 by increasing its staff numbers, and will continue to monitor its resource levels in the next year. The key resource which the office provides to committees is its people. The office will continue to recruit and seek to retain staff with strong research, administrative, writing and procedural skills.

The uneven spread of work among committees continues to be a challenge. The office will continue to respond with its flexible approach of allocating staff where the greatest need exists, to ensure that draft reports are prepared to the highest quality possible within the timeframes set by the committees and the Senate.

The office is adopting innovative ways to meet the needs of Senate committees by using information technology to reduce routine processing and improve productivity. One highlight of the new year will be the pilot program and eventual rollout of the SCID system to assist secretariats to efficiently manage their inquiry processes.

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.