

Black Rod's Office

Outputs

Senators' services

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

Provision of financial management, human resource management, records management and information technology services to the department.

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	<p>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.</p> <p>Advice, documentation and publications are accurate and of a high standard.</p>	<p>Favourable feedback received during this year about the provision of support services confirmed the high levels of satisfaction shown by the 2009 survey of senators.</p> <p>No complaints were received from senators in relation to payment of salaries and allowances and queries were addressed as they arose.</p> <p>Positive feedback was received from senators following accommodation moves undertaken as a result of office-holder changes.</p> <p>Satisfaction with the quality of advice, documentation and publications provided by the office remained high.</p>
Timeliness	<p>All support services delivered in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Salaries and allowances were delivered to senators and office-holders on time.</p> <p>The office successfully completed ten accommodation moves for senators (as a result of office-holder changes) and other minor moves during the year.</p> <p>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 compared to the previous year.</p>
Quantity	<p>All support services and supplies delivered in accordance with entitlements on request.</p>	<p>All support services were delivered on request, in accordance with relevant legislation and the Standing Orders.</p>

Overview

The primary function of the Black Rod's Office is to provide support services to the Senate chamber and committees and to senators when they are using their Parliament House offices.

The Senators' Services Section:

- assists the President and Clerk on ceremonial and other occasions
- supplies services including messengerial support to the chamber, deliveries, committee room servicing, transport, accommodation, assets management, printing and desktop publishing.

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 section also supports the department and its staff.

The Human Resource Management Section delivers human resource management services for the department, including payroll services for senators and departmental staff. The section also administers the department's human resource management information system and records management.

The Financial Management Section delivers the department's financial management, accounting and budgeting services. The section also administers the department's financial management information system, provides secretariat support to the Audit and Evaluation Committee, manages the internal audit contract and develops and maintains the risk management framework.

The Black Rod's Office is led by the Usher of the Black Rod and has five functional areas, as shown in figure 21.

Figure 21 Elements and responsibilities of the Black Rod's Office

Executive			
<p><i>Brien Hallett, Usher of the Black Rod</i></p> <p>Procedural, ceremonial, security and administrative advice</p> <p>Membership of the Security Management Board</p> <p>Advice to the Presiding Officers' Information Technology Advisory Group and to the House and Broadcasting committees</p>			
Senators' Services	Information Technology	Human Resource Management	Financial Management
<p><i>Glenn Krause, A/g Deputy Usher of the Black Rod</i></p>	<p><i>Joe d'Angelo, Chief Information Technology Officer</i></p>	<p><i>Anthony Szell, Director Human Resource Management</i></p>	<p><i>Joe d'Angelo, Chief Finance Officer</i></p>
<p>Accommodation</p> <p>Assets management, purchasing and disposals</p> <p>Chamber support</p> <p>Committee room support</p> <p>Desktop publishing</p> <p>Fire and emergency warden administration</p> <p>Mail and freight</p> <p>Office equipment</p> <p>Printing and photocopying</p> <p>Protective security</p> <p>Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on facilities, security, projects and maintenance matters</p> <p>Travel and fleet management</p> <p>Comcar shuttle</p>	<p>Information technology equipment</p> <p>Internet publishing</p> <p>Support for departmental information technology applications</p> <p>Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on information technology matters</p>	<p>Recruitment and staffing</p> <p>Pay and conditions</p> <p>Workforce planning</p> <p>Learning and development</p> <p>Occupational health and safety</p> <p>Rehabilitation coordination</p> <p>Industrial relations</p> <p>Performance management</p> <p>Corporate planning</p> <p>Records management</p>	<p>Budget management and advice</p> <p>Financial reporting and systems management</p> <p>Accounting policy development and advice</p> <p>Accounts processing, general ledger maintenance and advice</p> <p>Strategic procurement advice</p> <p>Support for senior management decision making</p>

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Black Rod's Office for 2009–10 was 46, the same as in 2008–09.

The cost of providing support services to the Senate chamber, committees and senators in their Parliament House offices in 2009–10 was \$3.4 million (\$3.1 million in 2008–09).

Senators' services

During the year, the Senators' Services Section continued to provide a wide range of services to senators and the department. This included assisting the President to respond to requests to conduct activities within the parliamentary precinct.

Ceremonial support services

No major ceremonial events were supported during 2009–10. However, planning is underway for the expected opening of a new parliament prior to the end of 2010.

Office services

During 2009–10, the section:

- reconfigured the Senate wing car park to address occupational health and safety concerns of media tenants and to install additional bike racks
- managed the refurbishment of nine sets of senators' furniture
- completed:
 - eight refurbishments of senators' offices and departmental areas
 - ten accommodation moves for senators and departmental staff
- completed the replacement of inefficient instant boiling water units with more energy efficient equipment
- installed:
 - three compactus units, two for records management storage and one for Table Office storage
 - new meeting tables for various meeting spaces, including shadow ministers' suites (the first purchase under the department's furniture replacement project)
 - eight photocopier multifunction devices (for party leaders in March 2010, a shadow minister in May 2010 and general circulation areas in June 2010)
- provided support services to committee room users, including:
 - the Australia–New Zealand Scrutiny of Legislation Conference in July 2009
 - Senate estimates hearings in October 2009, February 2010 and May–June 2010

- media 'lock-ups' before the release of the Budget and the final report of the Australia's Future Tax System review, in May 2010
- delivered general office support, equipment and furniture maintenance, classified waste removal and stationery services.

Printing and delivery services

The section provided high-quality reprographic and delivery services for the department and, under contract, other parliamentary departments. Turnaround times were met consistently, ensuring that printed information was available when required, even at short notice, and assisting committees to meet their tight deadlines for delivery of reports.

During 2009–10, the section completed 1,267 printing jobs. Of these, 327 were for committees, 688 were in direct support of Senate chamber activities and senators, and nine were for other parliamentary departments. The total value of work produced was \$514,719, of which \$219,741 was attributed to committee work. This was a decrease of \$87,616 on the previous year's total, reflecting a reduction in work for the other parliamentary departments and some improvement in the accuracy of job costings.

In 2009–10, the office purchased additional finishing equipment, including a punch binding machine, a scoring machine and a laminating machine. This has enhanced in-house capability to produce certain items that were previously outsourced, such as business cards, manuals and pamphlets, thereby improving the cost-effectiveness of the printing unit. A broken guillotine was also replaced, improving workplace safety.

The planned review of the methodology and software tool used for the management and costing of printing and desktop publishing work was deferred because other priorities intervened during the reporting period. However, it is expected that the review will be undertaken in 2010–11.

The section continued to provide a high standard of delivery services to senators, their staff and departmental staff. Scheduled run times were met for all deliveries, including internal stationery deliveries. The efficiency of the mail run schedule was improved by replacing a regular run at 8.00 pm on sitting days with on-demand mail pick-ups.

The new mailroom, which was completed in August 2009, has achieved the aims of co-locating staff and improving efficiency. It integrates well with the building design and its visual impact on the general circulation area is minimal.

Whole-of-parliament activities

In 2009–10, the office continued to work cooperatively with the other parliamentary departments. In particular, it:

- coordinated departmental aspects of infrastructure projects administered by the Department of Parliamentary Services, including the refurbishment of Senate chamber gallery seating completed in February 2010
- developed and implemented departmental security management and business continuity plans, and continued to provide significant support to the development of whole-of-parliament strategic, security and continuity plans.

Information technology

Publishing and testing activities dominated the activities of the Information Technology Section in 2009–10.

Many departmental documents and exhibitions were published online. Notable examples are:

- the online version of the *Annotated Standing Orders of the Australian Senate*
- the ‘For Peace, Order and Good Government’ online exhibition
- the ‘Making Laws’ online exhibition.

Two updated interfaces were released for the Committee Office’s Senate Centralised Information Database, for internal and external users of the system. Both changes delivered significant usability and efficiency improvements.

Updating desktop software and commencing the rollout of a new standard operating system to departmental users generated a significant amount of testing and planning work for the section.

The section also replaced 120 desktop computers located in senators’ Parliament House offices and departmental offices.

Other information technology activities in 2009–10 included:

- commencing virtualisation of test and production servers
- commencing a project to update the Table Office document production system

- reviewing and updating departmental information technology security and risk management policies and procedures
- continuing to monitor metadata and World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines compliance on the Senate website
- implementing 3G technology to enable Committee Office staff to maintain mobile phone network access while travelling to remote locations
- implementing an online solution to keep users up to date with the status of their network access requests.

The section also continued to provide input to parliament-wide information technology projects managed by the Department of Parliamentary Services, such as the new parliamentary website, network faxing and wireless projects.

Human resource management

During the year, the Human Resource Management Section was responsible for monthly pays for senators and fortnightly pays for departmental staff. The section participated in an internal audit of its payroll services that reported favourably on the controls in place and the services delivered.

The section revised or created human resource policies and procedures for:

- salary packaging
- outside employment/voluntary work
- gifts and benefits
- use of departmental resources
- attendance and leave
- travelling to, and working in, regional, remote and overseas locations
- recruitment and selection
- dealing with suspected breaches of the Parliamentary Service Code of Conduct
- dealing with whistleblowers' reports
- health and safety management arrangements
- house sitting allowance, committee allowance and special additional leave
- rehabilitation.

Updated human resource authorisations and delegations were also issued and a quick reference guide for users was developed.

The section also provided administrative support to 31 externally-advertised recruitment activities for the department and continued to support managers and staff in relation to matters requiring human resource management technical support and guidance.

Work continued on an e-recruitment solution for the department's employment vacancies. The e-recruitment solution offered as part of the department's current human resource management information system could not be fully implemented in 2009–10, because of software and hardware issues. Implementation and testing is expected to be completed in 2010–11. This will enable prospective applicants to apply for departmental positions online.

Significant section resources have been used during the development and negotiation of a new enterprise agreement for non-Senior Executive Service staff of the department. Eight negotiation meetings were held with bargaining representatives.

The section also prepared a report on the feasibility of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Service Commissioner's 2008 *Review of Implementation of the Amalgamation of the Former Joint Departments*.

Records management

The records management subsection is responsible for:

- creating, sentencing and disposing of departmental files
- managing and maintaining the department's record-keeping system
- providing advice and assistance on recordkeeping to departmental staff.

The department continued to revise its record-keeping policy and procedures in 2009–10. The revised policy and procedures will be completed in 2010–11.

During 2009–10, 1,162 files were created, 1,418 files were requested or returned, 1,142 files were sentenced and disposal action was completed on 763 files. The annual registry file census was conducted in July 2009. The census confirmed that files are easily located and registry procedures are well controlled.

In April 2010, new retention schedules for administrative records were issued by the National Archives of Australia through the revised Administrative Functions Disposal Authority. The office modified the Total Records and Information Management (TRIM) system to implement the new schedules.

An upgrade to the TRIM system to accommodate the department's new standard operating system was also implemented in 2009–10 and will be rolled out in 2010–11. The upgrade will also provide the department with the functionality to file documents electronically.

Financial management

The Financial Management Section ensures that the department meets its external reporting responsibilities; manages the department's budget; develops and applies financial management policies; and maintains appropriate governance structures. The section also delivers accounting services. During 2009–10, the section:

- reviewed:
 - the department's financial delegations and authorisations and risk management framework
 - the Clerk's Instructions and Financial Management Guidelines
 - third-party drawing rights in relation to special appropriations administered by other Commonwealth departments
- coordinated the internal budget process
- developed new monthly financial reports
- prepared the 2008–09 annual financial statements (which received an unqualified audit report from the Australian National Audit Office) and the department's portfolio budget statements for 2010–11
- met all monthly reporting requirements via the Commonwealth Budget Management System
- upgraded the department's financial management information system.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

The key management, assets management and stationery systems implemented in 2008–09 continued to assist with effective administration of these areas.

The Black Rod's Office continued to work with the Department of Parliamentary Services to ensure that the interests of the Department of

the Senate are represented in the development and implementation of parliamentary projects and that effective support is received from the Department of Parliamentary Services.

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 2011.

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

Outputs are evaluated through reports from the various management information systems.

Performance outlook

The Black Rod's Office will coordinate the planning for the opening of the 43rd Parliament, expected in 2010–11. Although the election period enables the department to undertake new project work, the Black Rod's Office will continue ongoing activities and projects to support the department. Projects of particular note for 2010–11 include the replacement of furniture for departmental and senators' staff and the improvement and rationalisation of departmental storage facilities.

Each area within the office will also implement changes arising from the department's structural review.