



## Performance

- Chamber and Main Committee
- Community awareness
- Committee services
- Interparliamentary relations
- Members' services

*Photo: The Clerk of the House (left) with the department's recipients of Australia Day Medallions, 31 January 2011.*

# Chamber and Main Committee

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The work of the Chamber and Main Committee program component is delivered primarily through the Clerk's Office, the Chamber Research Office and the Table Office. Other departmental areas also contribute as required.

During the year, we provided effective secretariat and advisory support for the Chamber and Main Committee of the House of Representatives. Our main functions were to:

- ▶ advise the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives
- ▶ advise on programming of House business, and provide procedural support
- ▶ process and draft bills
- ▶ prepare and publish the record of proceedings of the House
- ▶ process and provide access to, and custody and archival storage of, the documents and records of the House
- ▶ undertake procedural and parliamentary research and publish statistical information on the business of the House
- ▶ provide secretariat support to certain domestic committees.

In 2010–11, the budget allocation for the component was \$3.9 million and expenditure was \$3.2 million. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 11.

## Performance summary

The results of the department's annual survey of members (see Appendix 12) indicated high levels of satisfaction with our performance, consistent with the findings of earlier surveys. All respondents were satisfied with our advice and support, with 'extreme' or 'high' satisfaction reported as follows:

- ▶ advice and services received from the Clerks-at-the-Table in the Chamber and Main Committee—96 per cent (89 per cent in 2009–10)

### **An election year**

The House was dissolved on 19 July 2010 and the Forty-second Parliament came to an end. During the election period, we addressed a number of administrative tasks associated with the end of one parliament and preparation for the next. This included compiling the records and documents of the Forty-second Parliament—the bills volumes, the *Votes and Proceedings* (and *Votes Index*), the *Notice Papers* and the *Index to Papers Presented to Parliament*.

For the opening of the Forty-third Parliament, we organised the procedural aspects of the opening day including the swearing-in of members, and drafted amendments to the standing orders. We then focused on establishing the new parliament and supporting procedural developments (see page 17).

This period was unusual in a number of ways. We had a very short lead time between the general election and the opening of the Forty-third Parliament. The high levels of uncertainty surrounding the formation of government and the late appointment of various key parliamentary office holders led to significant challenges for staff supporting the House.

- ▶ advice and services received from other staff in relation to Chamber and Main Committee duties—92 per cent (83 per cent in 2009–10)
- ▶ quality and availability of procedural and statistical publications and support in obtaining such information—87 per cent (67 per cent in 2009–10).

We continued to achieve high levels of performance as measured against performance indicators and service standards. We met targets set in the business plan and performed well against budget. Appendix 1 provides a summary of performance information.

The focus of the component's work is supporting the sittings of the House of Representatives Chamber and meetings of the Main Committee. Quantitative information on the sittings of the House and meetings of the Main Committee in 2010–11 and the previous year is shown in Table 1.

In 2010–11, an election year, sitting days totalled 52. This represented a reduction of 15 days from the previous year (22 per cent) and an increase of four days (8 per cent) by comparison with the most recent election year (2007–08). Not surprisingly, there was a reduction (9 per cent) in meeting hours of the Chamber and Main Committee by comparison with 2009–10, although an increase (27 per cent) by comparison with 2007–08. Legislative activity continued at a medium to high level during the period, requiring corresponding support from the department.

Further information on the business of the House and the Main Committee is in Appendix 3 and in the department's publication *Work of the Session* (available on the Parliament of Australia website).

### Advice on practice and procedure

The Clerk, Deputy Clerk and other staff members provided advice to the Speaker, members and others on the practice and procedure of the House.

Our advice ranged from immediate support for the Speaker, ministers, shadow ministers and

others during proceedings to detailed written advice. Subjects included the application of the standing orders and practice of the House, procedural options for the conduct of business, the admissibility of amendments to legislation, the requirements of the Constitution and standing orders in respect of financial legislation, legal obligations of members, privilege matters and requirements of the House in respect of the registration of members' interests.

### Programming and coordination of business

Throughout 2010–11, we provided advice and services to facilitate sittings of the House, including:

- ▶ programming and procedural advice to ministers, shadow ministers, party whips, other members, their staff and others
- ▶ the preparation and publication each sitting day of:
  - the *Notice Paper*—a document listing all unresolved business before the House in proposed order of consideration
  - the *Daily Program* (also known as 'the Blue')—an informal agenda for the day
  - procedural scripts for all items of business for use in the Chamber and the Main Committee
- ▶ the provision of Serjeants and attendants for sittings of the House and meetings of the Main Committee to oversee ceremonial and security arrangements and ensure that sittings could be conducted in an

Table 1 Performance summary, Chamber and Main Committee, 2009–10 and 2010–11

Aspect of performance	Result	
	2009–10	2010–11
Number of sittings of the House	67	52
Number of meetings of the Main Committee	55	46
Hours of sittings of the House <sup>a</sup>	614	511
Hours of meeting of the Main Committee <sup>a</sup>	222	248
Number of bills introduced	236	186
Number of bills passed both Houses and assented to <sup>b</sup>	178	116

a Excludes suspensions.

b Includes bills that passed both Houses in the financial year but were assented to in the following financial year.

appropriate environment and that chamber papers were made available

- ▶ processing members' questions in writing to ministers, including editing for compliance with the standing orders, publication in the *Notice Paper* for the next day of sitting, and managing answers to questions
- ▶ providing a broadcasting captioning service for the televised and webcast proceedings of the House and Main Committee
- ▶ preparation of *This Week in the House*, a weekly online forecast of expected business for the House, and its counterpart document, *Last Week in the House*.

Table 2 provides details of the number of questions in writing to ministers dealt with by the House of Representatives for the period 2006–07 to 2010–11.

All sittings required the coordination of people, documents and actions, and programming of the following categories of business:

- ▶ government business (for example, legislation)
- ▶ private members' business (for example, a motion proposed by an individual member)
- ▶ House business (matters potentially involving all members—for example, question time, debate on committee reports or privilege matters).

A longitudinal view of the amount of time the House (Chamber and Main Committee inclusive) has devoted to each of these types of business is shown in Figure 5. In 2011, there was a reduction in the proportion of time allocated to government business and business of the House, reflecting the significant increase in private members' business time.

**Table 2** Questions in writing to ministers and answers to questions in writing, 2006–07 to 2010–11

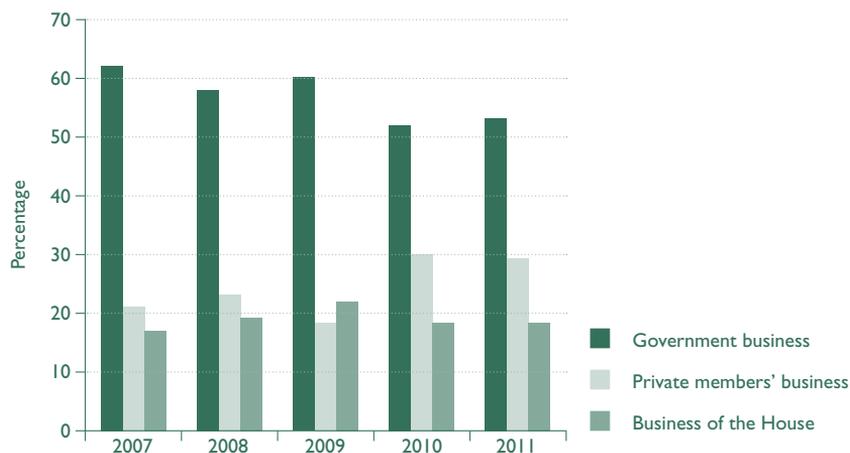
	2006–07	2007–08 <sup>c</sup>	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11 <sup>c</sup>
Questions in writing <sup>a</sup>	2,304	437	642	571	441
Questions answered <sup>b</sup>	1,386	177	497	444	335

a Net of questions withdrawn.

b The responsibility for responding to questions in writing rests with the individual ministers to whom the questions are put.

c Election year.

**Figure 5** Government and private members' business and business of the House (Chamber and Main Committee), 2007 to 2011



### **Minority government and agreements on the reform of parliament**

The 2010 election resulted in the formation of a minority Labor government, which had made agreements on parliamentary reform with the Australian Greens and some of the non-aligned members of the House of Representatives. Minority government and aspects of the reform of parliament agreements have significantly affected the operation of the department.

There has been an increase in demand from members for procedural advice and guidance, particularly on issues that do not arise when the government has a comfortable majority in the House. The period has at times been less predictable. Several issues—such as House practice in relation to sections 53 and 56 of the Constitution, the possibility of a second reading amendment being agreed to, and aspects of the financial initiative of the Executive—have, on occasion, been the subject of lengthy written advice provided to all members of the House in response to matters arising, or considered likely to arise, in the House.

Procedural scripts, which are provided for all items of business in the Chamber and Main Committee, have had to be created to support innovations—such as voting taking place on items of private members' business—or modified to provide for the possibility of procedural outcomes that are unlikely when the government has a comfortable majority in the House.

A Selection Committee (see pages 22–3) was re-established in the Forty-third Parliament with a broader role than its predecessors in the Forty-first and earlier parliaments. Its role now encompasses the referral of bills to committees and the recommendation of items of private members' business to be voted on, as well as the programming of private members' business and committee and delegation business (undertaken in the Forty-second Parliament by a meeting of party whips). These new functions, and the significant increase in time available for private members' business for which it has to make programming decisions, mean the Selection Committee requires significantly more resources for its administrative support than

either the whips' meetings in the Forty-second Parliament or its predecessor committees in earlier parliaments. As an aid to members and others, determinations and recommendations of the Selection Committee relating to items of business before the House are reflected on the *Notice Paper*.

The time formally available for private members' business has increased from 50 minutes in the House and 1 hour 35 minutes in the Main Committee per sitting week in the Forty-second Parliament, to 3 hours 20 minutes in the House and 5 hours in the Main Committee per sitting week in the Forty-third Parliament. In addition to the considerable administrative support the Selection Committee requires, more private members' business time requires additional procedural support (scripts and advice to members) and more detailed preparation for the *Notice Paper* and *Votes and Proceedings* because of the greater number of items of private members' business in the House and Main Committee. These documents are usually finalised after the House has risen for the evening.

Meeting hours of the Main Committee have increased by 3 hours 30 minutes on Mondays. The Main Committee now meets much more often during the 'if required' periods on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and when it does meet on Tuesdays, meeting hours have increased by 30 minutes, to 10 pm. Sitting hours of the Chamber have increased by 30 minutes on Mondays (to 10.30 pm) and by 1 hour 30 minutes on Tuesdays (to 10.30 pm). The later sitting hours on Tuesdays are particularly affecting Chamber support staff and the department's salaries and allowances expenditure, as it has become more difficult to ensure some employees have an appropriate break from work before attending the office to support sittings that begin at 9 am on Wednesday mornings. Table Office and Serjeant-at-Arms' Office management are considering measures to mitigate the impact of the additional demands being placed on Chamber support staff.

## Processing and drafting of bills

### Legislation

As in previous years, our support for the legislative process in 2010–11 included the following:

- ▶ receipt from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, and custody under embargo, of bills before their introduction
- ▶ provision to ministers of bills for introduction and, after introduction, to all members in the Chamber
- ▶ uploading of bills, explanatory memoranda and proposed amendments to the Parliament of Australia website, and provision of an inquiry counter service for access to hard copies of bills and associated material
- ▶ processing all bills and amendments to bills—from introduction to assent for bills initiated in the House, and from introduction in the House until passage by the House for bills initiated in the Senate
- ▶ provision of a legislative drafting service for private members
- ▶ preparation and delivery of messages to the Senate—171 messages relating to the passage of bills in 2010–11 (259 in 2009–10) and 39 other messages (15 in 2009–10)
- ▶ preparation and issue each sitting day of a *Daily Bills List*, providing cumulative information on the status of all bills before the parliament or assented to in the current calendar year.

The year saw considerable effort given to ensuring a smooth transition for bills information from the existing information

technology system for storage, management and publication of bills to the proposed new parliamentary website. A number of issues have yet to be resolved.

Chamber staff of both Houses continued to work with the developer of the bills system to maintain optimum levels of technical support. The Bills System Advisory Group continued its role in advising the Bills System Advisory Board in relation to solutions for system enhancements and in satisfaction of business requirements.

Queries on the bills and legislation collection available on the internet during the year totalled 13,869,390, an increase of more than 100 per cent on the previous year (6,423,042 in 2009–10). This was not unexpected in the context of a minority government, given the changed complexion of the membership of the House and the reforms being implemented. The total number of legislation queries represented 25 per cent (21 per cent in 2009–10) of the queries made through ParlInfo Search. Work to include bills from earlier parliaments in the electronic storage system is ongoing.

### Legislative workload

During the year, 186 bills were introduced (236 in 2009–10), of which 171 were initiated in the House of Representatives and 15 were received from the Senate; 116 bills passed both Houses (178 in 2009–10), of which 101 were initiated in the House of Representatives (173 in 2009–10) and 15 in the Senate (5 in 2009–10). Table 3 summarises bills introduced and assented to from 2006–07 to 2010–11.

In 2010–11, the House passed 139 bills (215 in 2009–10). This represented 2.7 bills on average each sitting day, compared with 3.2 bills on average passed in the previous year. The House amended 10.8 per cent of the bills it passed (12.6 per cent in 2009–10).

**Table 3 Number of bills introduced in the House, and number of bills assented to, 2006–07 to 2010–11**

	2006–07	2007–08 <sup>b</sup>	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11 <sup>b</sup>
Bills introduced	218	167	210	236	186
Bills assented to <sup>a</sup>	207	142	148	178	116

a Includes bills that passed both Houses in the financial year but were assented to in the following financial year.  
 b Election year.

The House amended 15 bills that were initiated in the House (27 in 2009–10). The Table Office incorporated the amendments into the text of the bills and arranged for their reprinting (as third reading prints) before transmittal to the Senate. In addition, the House agreed to Senate amendments, and/or made amendments requested by the Senate, to 20 House bills (37 in 2009–10), with further processing by the office before the bills were presented to the Governor-General for assent.

The House did not amend any bills initiated in the Senate (1 in 2009–10).

The Table Office prepared 15 third reading prints (24 in 2009–10) and 101 assent prints (173 in 2009–10). All documents accurately reflected the decisions of the Houses and were processed in a timely fashion.

### Legislative drafting

The department drafts bills, amendments and second reading (in principle) amendments for private members. It also ensures that these documents comply with the Constitution and the standing orders. Further, the department prepares bills and amendments in correct form and arranges copies for circulation.

The Forty-third Parliament has seen an increase in the number of private members' bills requested and being introduced, with two being passed by the House and forwarded to the Senate for consideration and one of those passed into law. Table 4 provides chamber statistics for private members' legislation. This does not reflect all the department's work in this area, as some drafted material is not introduced. The table shows an increase in the level of activity of the Forty-third Parliament (2010 onwards) compared with that of the

Forty-second Parliament (2008 to 2010). Such has been the increase in demand for bills and amendments to be drafted that the department had to employ a consultant drafter.

## Record of proceedings and House documents

### Votes and Proceedings

The *Votes and Proceedings* continued to provide an accurate, comprehensive and concise record of proceedings. The draft document for each sitting day is published on the Parliament of Australia website, usually within an hour of the adjournment of the House. Following the dissolution of the House in July 2010 the *Votes and Proceedings* for the Forty-second Parliament, the associated index and the *Index to Papers Presented to Parliament* were finalised and prepared for permanent binding.

The *Votes and Proceedings* is prepared from the *Votes Officer's Minutes*, an electronic record of the proceedings of the House and the Main Committee compiled progressively throughout a sitting day, which enables anyone with access to the internet to follow events in the House and Main Committee as they occur. Internal and external clients continued to provide positive feedback on this service.

As with bills, considerable time has been spent working with those developing the new parliamentary website to ensure that access to the *Votes and Proceedings* and the *Votes Officer's Minutes*, and the display quality of the documents, are maintained on the new website.

### Documents

During the year, we processed all documents presented to the House and recorded their details in the *Votes and Proceedings* and the

Table 4 Private members' bills introduced and amendments moved, 2006–07 to 2010–11

	2006–07	2007–08 <sup>b</sup>	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11 <sup>b</sup>
Bills introduced	11	4	6	15	17
Second reading amendments moved <sup>a</sup>	63	42	10	12	14
Consideration in detail amendments moved <sup>a</sup>	188	36	85	134	292

a Includes Main Committee.  
b Election year.

*Index to Papers Presented to Parliament.* We made copies available to members and their staff and others, principally in Parliament House, in response to requests, including through an online daily document-ordering system. The original documents were added to the records of the House, which we continued to maintain. We continue to review our requirements for tabling stock in the light of ever-improving online availability of documents and declining demand for hard copies.

In 2010–11, documents presented to the House numbered 4,686, a decrease of 17.5 per cent (5,681 in 2009–10).

As reported last year, a Tabled Papers Register was developed in conjunction with the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services and made publicly available on the Parliament of Australia website. The register does not yet contain, or link to, electronic copies of documents, but as a first step, work began during 2010–11 on the development of an electronic repository for the Parliamentary Papers Series, which will enable access to the documents themselves as well as the data accessible through the Tabled Papers Register.



*The Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Rt Hon John Key, addresses members and senators in the House of Representatives Chamber, 20 June 2011.*

To meet the needs of clients, each sitting day the Table Office prepares and issues in electronic and hard-copy form a Disallowable Instruments List. The list provides details of all instruments presented to the House that are subject to disallowance, by number of sitting days remaining for a notice of disallowance to be lodged.

### ***Parliamentary Papers Series***

The Parliamentary Papers Series consists of documents of a substantial nature presented to the parliament. As reported last year, in May 2010, the Joint Committee on Publications undertook an inquiry into the electronic distribution of the series and recommended that an electronic Parliamentary Papers Series be developed, with a repository based in the parliament and managed by the chamber departments. The Presiding Officers responded in November 2010 and agreed that an electronic Parliamentary Papers Series should be developed and that a digital repository should be managed by the parliamentary departments, subject to a business case being developed. Work on these matters has begun and a preliminary repository is expected to be available during calendar year 2011.

### ***House records***

The department is responsible for the custody and preservation of, and access to, the official records of the House, including Acts, bills, *Votes and Proceedings*, and all documents presented to the House dating from 1901. The records are stored in an archive in the basement at Parliament House. The conditions for the preservation of documents in this area have been significantly improved by the completion of a range of works, as reported last year, and we continue to monitor the suitability of the archive environment.

### ***Pictorial collection***

The Chamber Research Office, in cooperation with the department's Information Systems and Publishing Office, began a project last year to upgrade the storage and cataloguing of the department's extensive pictorial collection. The project continues to examine

images dating back to the 1950s, and provides a detailed description of events and people depicted. Some images have been digitised in response to requests from members, museums and the media. The project will improve the collection's compliance with the Australian and international standard for records management and enable greater access to the collection for use in House and departmental activities.

### Petitions

Table 5 provides details of petitions presented to the House, and the number of signatories, for the past five years. The reduction in the number of petitions presented in recent years can be partly attributed to a change in the way petitions are counted. From its establishment in February 2008, the Committee on Petitions has combined petitions in the same terms received at the same time for purposes of presentation. In addition, the election in 2010–11 may have resulted in fewer petitions being received in the reporting period. It is worth noting, however, that despite the lower number of petitions, the total number of associated signatures has increased by 65 per cent on the previous year. In part, this can be attributed to one petition being signed by more than 220,000 petitioners (for more on this petition, see page 23).

### Research

The Chamber Research Office continued to fulfil its role of collecting, analysing and publishing procedural and statistical information on the work of the House and its committees. In 2010–11, the office provided:

- ▶ advice, or assistance with advice, for the Speaker and members on the application of the standing orders, as well as precedents in the application of the standing orders and other House practices

- ▶ secretariat support to the Committee on Procedure and the Committee on Petitions
- ▶ advice and publications in relation to House statistics, practices and procedure
- ▶ information to the media, the public and other parliaments on the operations of the House.

The level of demand for the services of the office increased considerably during the year as a further consequence of the changed circumstances of the parliament during this period of minority government.

### Publications

The Chamber Research Office is responsible for the maintenance, publication and distribution of the standing orders of the House. An insert to the *Standing and Sessional Orders* as at 1 December 2008 was produced on 29 September 2010 to reflect the considerable number of amendments made by the House earlier that day. An additional insert was produced in October 2010 to reflect amendments made on 19 and 20 October. In early November 2010, a consolidated version of the *Standing and Sessional Orders* as at 20 October 2010 was published, at the same time as updated versions of the *Guide to Procedures* and the series of 21 *Infosheets*. As might be expected, following the focus on procedural reforms in the Forty-third Parliament, these publications have been widely sought after by members, staff and other people who are interested in the procedural framework of the House. The authoritative text *House of Representatives Practice* is being revised and a sixth edition will be published during 2011–12. The office continued to produce publications detailing procedural events of note, generally following each sitting fortnight. The *Procedural*

Table 5 Petitions and signatories to petitions, 2006–07 to 2010–11

	2006–07	2007–08 <sup>a</sup>	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11 <sup>a</sup>
Number of petitions presented	305	150	141	163	129
Number of signatories	204,509	104,903	234,622	270,964	445,921

a Election year.

*Digest* is a subject-based record of proceedings and is published online, and another publication, the *Procedural Extracts*, is more technical in nature and directed towards internal users. The office also published the *Statistical Digest* after each sitting fortnight and the more comprehensive six-monthly statistical publication, *Work of the Session*, in July 2010 and in January 2011.

The department continued its association with the Parliamentary Studies Centre at the Australian National University, in cooperation with colleagues from the Department of the Senate and the Parliamentary Library. Departmental staff drafted additional research papers for publication by the centre.

### Parliamentary committees

The department continued to provide effective secretariat and advisory support to a number of House committees, and to a joint committee, dealing with the powers and procedures of the House (see Table 6).

During the year, these committees held a total of 82 meetings (56 in 2009–10) for 34 hours and 48 minutes (44 hours in 2009–10) and produced 37 reports (17 in 2009–10). The increase in the number of meetings and reports presented is primarily attributable to the re-establishment of the Selection Committee in the Forty-third Parliament. Details of meetings and reports are set out in Appendixes 4 and 5.

### Selection Committee

A Selection Committee, with responsibility for selecting and programming private members' business and committee and delegation business, was re-established in the Forty-third Parliament. This role had been undertaken by a meeting of party whips in the previous parliament, although there had been such a committee in earlier parliaments. The Selection Committee has retained the traditional role of not only selecting this business but also allocating times for individual business items, as well as times for individual speeches. Two significant roles have been added. One is that the committee looks at all bills introduced and has the power to refer bills directly to House or joint committees for inquiry; this power can be exercised by an individual member of the committee (28 bills were referred to committees under this new procedure in 2010–11). A second significant new role is that the committee can recommend items of private members' business for a vote of the House (44 items of private members' business were voted on in 2010–11).

The committee consists of 11 members: the Speaker (as chair), the chief whips of the three parties, three government members, two opposition members and two non-aligned members. The committee met 35 times during the reporting period, typically twice each sitting week. On occasion a third meeting was conducted to enable a bill just introduced to

**Table 6 Committees supported by Chamber and Main Committee component, 2010–11**

<b>House committees</b>
Selection Committee
Committee on Appropriations and Administration
Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests
Standing Committee on Petitions
Standing Committee on Procedure
Standing Committee on Publications
<b>Joint committee</b>
Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings

be referred to a committee for inquiry. The Selection Committee is supported by Table Office staff.

### **Committee on Appropriations and Administration**

The House has established an Appropriations and Administration Committee to consider, among other things, estimates of the funding required for the operation of the department each year. Unlike its counterpart in the Senate, it is not called an 'appropriations and staffing' committee, to reflect the fact that, under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, the Clerk has responsibility for staffing matters.

The committee has nine members (four government and four non-government) and is chaired by the Speaker. It is supported by the Clerk, the Serjeant-at-Arms and officers of the department. During the year the committee met four times and presented its first report (see page 54).

### **Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests**

The Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests met seven times during the reporting period. The committee had an inquiry referred by the House in November 2010 into the development of a code of conduct for members of the Australian Parliament. The stimulus for the inquiry was the various agreements for parliamentary reform that were made during the formation of the minority government in September 2010. These agreements referred to the adoption of a code of conduct for federal parliamentarians and the appointment of a Parliamentary Integrity Commissioner to uphold the code. In addition to the development of a draft code, the committee has also been asked to look at how complaints under the code would be raised and dealt with. The committee is required to report to the House by the end of 2011.

As discussed in the committee's November 2009 report on the publication of a register of members' interests, an online register has been published on the Parliament of Australia website since the beginning of the Forty-third Parliament.

### **Standing Committee on Petitions**

The chair's first announcement of petitions on behalf of the committee in the Forty-third Parliament was on 15 November 2010, almost five months after the last announcement in the Forty-second Parliament. As such, the November sittings announcements contained the bulk of petitions received during the election period and, commensurate with the end of the caretaker period, a considerable number of ministerial responses were also tabled.

In the autumn and winter sittings the committee received a steady flow of petitions whose compliance with standing orders had to be considered. The committee also received and considered the third-largest petition since signatures were first recorded in 1988. The petition, with 225,328 signatures, was tabled in March 2011 and related to child trafficking in the commercial sex industry in the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition to petitions presented by the chair during the committee's Monday announcements, petitions assessed by the committee as meeting House standing orders are also tabled by members. In the second half of the year, member presentations as a proportion of total presentations increased to 31 per cent (from 18 per cent in the same period in 2009–10). This possibly reflected expanded private members' opportunities in which to table petitions and speak about them under the new procedural arrangements of the Forty-third Parliament.

The committee has the discretion to hold public hearings with principal petitioners or relevant government departments and agencies on tabled petitions. These hearings are not to investigate or resolve matters but to provide a further opportunity for issues to be aired and to allow for explanation of relevant federal government legislation, policy, processes or administration regarding a petition's subject matter. In May 2011 the committee held a public hearing into two petitions—one on the use of child labour in the cocoa industry

and the other on a request for an increase in Australia's foreign aid budget—both of which had received ministerial responses in 2011.

### **Standing Committee on Procedure**

Following the 2010 general election, significant procedural reforms were proposed by a group of non-aligned members and agreed to by the major parties. On the second day of the new parliament the House agreed to a number of amendments to standing orders, a sessional order and a resolution. In speaking to the motion to amend standing orders in line with the agreement, the Leader of the House, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, identified the Standing Committee on Procedure as the appropriate body to review the implementation and operation of the reforms.

At its first meeting, the committee agreed to monitor and report on procedural changes implemented in the House of Representatives in the Forty-third Parliament. The committee presented its first report under this ongoing reference—*Interim report: monitoring and review of procedural changes implemented in the 43rd Parliament*—in May 2011.

The committee also adopted as an ongoing reference the *Maintenance of the Standing and Sessional Orders*, to allow it to deal with other issues arising from the *Standing and Sessional Orders*.

### **Standing Committee on Publications**

The committee met three times in 2010–11, and met with the Senate Publications Committee on another six occasions. The committee presented eight reports recommending which documents presented to parliament should be included in the Parliamentary Papers Series. All reports were agreed to.

In the previous year, the committee, together with the Senate Publications Committee, conducted an inquiry into the electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series and presented its report on 24 June 2010. The Presiding Officers tabled their response to the

report in the House of Representatives on 25 November 2010.

## **Procedural training**

The department continued to support extensive development of knowledge and skills in the application of parliamentary law, practice and procedure through a range of measures for staff, including:

- ▶ on-the-job training and experience
- ▶ parliamentary and departmental briefing sessions
- ▶ specialist training programs developed in-house. Workshops on parliamentary privilege have enabled staff, especially senior staff, who are required to have a working knowledge of parliamentary privilege matters, to develop that knowledge through practical exercises and guidance in the use of sources to develop advice on privilege matters. These workshops are facilitated by the Deputy Clerk. Other programs are being developed
- ▶ pre-sitting briefings for rostered Clerks-at-the-Table each sitting day
- ▶ regular sitting debriefs following each sitting week or fortnight, focusing on matters of procedural interest. The sessions are facilitated by the Director, Programming and a record is published on the intranet
- ▶ 'shadowing' opportunities, enabling staff outside the Table and Serjeant-at-Arms' offices to learn chamber support duties on sitting nights. 'Shadows' provide important back-up capability in the event of staffing absences or turnover and some are performing the duties by themselves, enabling the person they shadow to go home earlier
- ▶ opportunities to draft papers, including for the Parliamentary Studies Centre and the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table, and to deliver presentations at departmental or external events
- ▶ for a small number of staff each year, participation in the annual university course

in parliamentary law, practice and procedure under the auspices of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table. These students are assigned a mentor from the department's senior executive, and participate in parliamentary seminars and conferences.

## Information technology

The project to redevelop the chamber document production system and associated databases for the department and for the Senate progressed. A project manager was appointed and the tender documentation is in the final stage of development with the assistance of a consultant adviser. It is expected that the tender will be advertised early in 2011–12.

As mentioned above, work progressed on the implementation of an electronic Parliamentary Papers Series.

Further work was done with the House of Assembly, South Australia, to redevelop the department's Procedural Records System with a view to sharing the solution with the House of Assembly.

As noted above, the department also provided considerable support for the project to redevelop the Parliament of Australia website, with emphasis on key documents and other material relating to the Chamber and Main Committee. Staff have undertaken extensive testing of the site and considerable further development is required before the website will be ready to go live.

## Improving performance

Chamber staff have been attentive in liaising with Department of Parliamentary Services' staff who are responsible for implementing the new Hansard production system, which was introduced shortly before budget week. We will continue to work with our parliamentary colleagues to identify changes and develop solutions for the system to satisfy business requirements.

As noted above, training and development continued to be a priority during the

year. Senior staff in the Chamber Research and Table offices are developing a new intensive training program, which they will deliver in 2011–12, to enable participating staff to develop a detailed understanding of legislation and the legislative process. This program will train staff who are less experienced in providing procedural support to the House as well as staff who are now engaged in bills inquiries by parliamentary committees. The increase in sitting hours of the Chamber and the Main Committee has increased demand for procedural support staff. Also, bills inquiries are much more common in the Forty-third Parliament because of the reforms introduced during the formation of the minority government.

## Outlook

Relationships with colleagues in the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services will remain strongly in focus as several significant information technology-dependent support measures proceed through joint projects. We look forward to the benefits of additional efficiencies in work practices when these new systems are fully implemented, including from the proposed new Parliament of Australia website.

We note also that the electronic Parliamentary Papers Series will not appear until the new website is functioning.

Redevelopment of the document production system and associated databases for the Table offices of the department and the Department of the Senate is a significant project and will be a priority for the next few years.

Given these significant projects under way and the stage of the parliamentary cycle, the year ahead promises to be a full one. Staff are poised to continue to respond to the challenges of the first minority federal government in 70 years. In addition to building on initiatives to take care of chamber support staff and mitigate the impact of the additional demands on them, we will maintain our focus on achieving suitably high service standards.

# Community awareness

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The department supports a comprehensive outreach program that seeks to engage the community with the work of the House of Representatives. Through a range of products and services the International and Community Relations Office works with other departmental areas to inform the community about the House of Representatives and encourage community participation in the House's work.

## Performance summary

Community outreach products and services remained in high demand throughout the year and positive feedback was received on the quality and usefulness of the information made available to the community. Social media was used to broaden the reach of information on the House's work. The break in the parliamentary calendar for the August 2010 federal election meant that some products and services were not available for several months.

## Community liaison

### **Print and electronic media**

The magazine *About the House* remained a key vehicle for informing the community about the work of the House and its committees, although the 2010 federal election meant that only one issue of the magazine was produced during the financial year. The results from a readers' survey, conducted over a six-month period from May 2010, showed a high level of satisfaction with the magazine (see Figure 6). Readers were asked to rate the magazine according to the content and readability of articles, layout and design and the range of topics covered. More than 2,000 survey responses were received and 88 per cent of respondents indicated that they preferred to read the magazine in a printed copy rather than online.

A new television program went into production after a successful pilot episode in

June 2010. *MPI (Matters of Public Importance)* provides highlights from each parliamentary sitting period and is broadcast on Australia's Public Affairs Channel, A-PAC, with replays also available on the About the House page on the Parliament of Australia website. The new program complements the television program *About the House*, which is televised on Sky News and provides highlights of parliamentary committee work. That program, in its seventh year, continued to receive positive feedback from the programmers at Sky News and A-PAC.

From February 2011 an About the House Twitter news feed was introduced to highlight parliamentary committee work and proceedings in the House of Representatives Chamber. It has also served as an educational tool, providing links to information on parliamentary procedures and practices. By the end of June 2011, the About the House Twitter news feed had attracted more than 2,500 followers.

The email alert service providing news updates on parliamentary committee work remained popular, with more than 3,200 subscribers. Subject-specific alerts allowed subscribers to focus on issues of particular interest to them.

### **Seminars and presentations**

Eight seminars were conducted during the year on the work and procedures of the House of Representatives, seven of which were seminars for individual government departments and organisations. There were 329 participants in these seminars (an increase of 33 from the previous year). Evaluations by participants gave an average satisfaction rating of 8 out of 10 for the seminars.

Two university lectures were presented under the House Calls program. The Speaker and Clerk delivered a lecture at the University of Queensland and the Clerk and a senior staff member delivered a lecture at the University of

Tasmania. Each presentation was well received, with university staff and students indicating that the lecture content fitted in well with course objectives.

### Projects and events

The department contributed to the organisation of Parliament House Open Day on 18 September 2010, which attracted a large crowd of visitors to the building. Our display for the 2010 Open Day focused on parliamentary committee work.

To help engage young Australians with the House of Representatives, a competition was conducted for students in years 10 to 12 inviting them to write and record a speech as if it were their first as a member of the House of Representatives. The 'My First Speech' competition, coordinated by the International and Community Relations Office in association with the Parliamentary Education Office, attracted 176 entries from 68 schools throughout Australia. The three winners—from the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Queensland—presented their speeches at the launch of an exhibition at Parliament House showcasing the competition entries.

The department assisted with two other exhibitions held at Parliament House: one on the architectural drawings of Romaldo Giurgola AO, principal design architect of Parliament House, to celebrate his ninetieth birthday, and the other to commemorate the centenary of the surveying of Canberra.

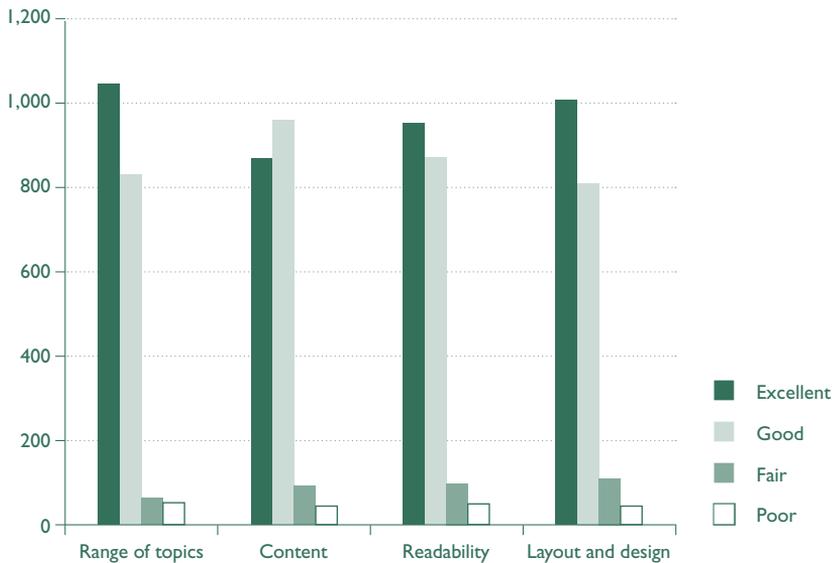
### Parliamentary assistants program

The parliamentary assistants program, successfully run by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, entered its eleventh year. University students competed for places on the program, which promotes understanding and engagement with the work of the parliament through part-time employment in the House of Representatives. (For further details see page 46.)

### Parliamentary internship program

The Australian National Internship Program has operated under an agreement between the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University and the Presiding Officers since 1993. Australian and foreign students enrolled at the university under the program have an

Figure 6 Readership satisfaction for *About the House*



internship placement of about 10 weeks each semester as part of their formal course of study. In 2010–11, students were placed with senators and members. The departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate conducted an orientation seminar for the parliamentary and other interns. The program has continued to provide students with a valuable opportunity to perform applied policy work and to complement their academic studies through first-hand experience of the complexities of parliamentary government in Australia.

## Parliamentary exchange program for Australian Defence Force

Each year, a small number of Australian Defence Force representatives may spend a week at Parliament House, being hosted by a member or senator. This arrangement began in 2003 and expanded on a program started in 2001, under which members and senators take up a short placement with Defence personnel and participate in their working life. The arrangements for participation by members and senators are made through the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence in conjunction with the Department of Defence. In 2010–11, 15 Australian Defence Force representatives were placed with a member or senator. The departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate supported the exchange program with an orientation seminar for participants.

## Public visits to the House

### **Public visits to observe proceedings**

Public interest in the proceedings of the new parliament resulted in high demand for tickets to view question time in the House of Representatives, and public galleries were full on many occasions. Peak periods were during the Floriade flower festival—with a record 2,780 people visiting the galleries on 29 September 2010—and during the budget sittings in May 2011. In total 68,038 visitors observed proceedings this year, down on last

year's number due to fewer sittings of the House in an election year.

On 20 June 2011, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Right Honourable John Key, addressed members and senators in the House of Representatives Chamber. Community and school groups and members of the public viewed the address from the galleries, along with invited guests.

Gallery bookings for question time and special events were organised by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office.

### **School visits to Parliament House**

School visits to Parliament House are coordinated by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, working in partnership with the Parliamentary Education Office and Visitor Services.

The total number of students visiting Parliament House and participating in school programs was 114,598, down on numbers for the previous year but consistent with the drop in numbers during the last election year. However, there was an increase in students from the Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria (see Table 7).

Most students participated in a guided tour that includes a visit to both chambers, 84 per cent (96,454) of the students received hospitality and 77 per cent (88,423) participated in the Parliamentary Education Office program.

### **Parliamentary Education Office**

The department and the Department of the Senate jointly fund the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO), which is administered by the Department of the Senate. The mission of the PEO is to provide parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students. The PEO also provides parliamentary education support services to members and senators.

The two departments liaise closely on the strategic direction of the PEO and the content of its teaching, educational material and online resources. The PEO Advisory Committee, chaired by the Deputy Speaker, was reappointed for the Forty-third Parliament by the Presiding Officers. In addition to providing strategic guidance to the PEO, the Advisory

Committee is available to give the Presiding Officers advice on the parliamentary education support needs of members and senators. The Advisory Committee met in June 2011. The Clerk Assistant (Table) attended as an observer.

A healthy total of 88,423 students from every state and territory participated in the PEO's role-play program at Parliament House during the year (compared with the record participation of 91,648 in 2009–10). This brought the cumulative total of students who have participated in role-play programs since the Parliament House building opened on 9 May 1988 to 1,550,698. A number of members took the opportunity to interact with student groups that attended Parliament House and participated in the PEO's programs.

The PEO continued to invest in a range of strategies to ensure it provides parliamentary education services to a broad student population, not just those that are able to travel to Canberra. An extensive review of the PEO website structure and content has been undertaken and is substantially complete. PEO website patronage has continued to increase, with more than 542,738 visitors accessing over 4.718 million page views in 2010–11, compared with 525,738 visitors and 4.323 million page views in 2009–10. This represents an increase of 3 per cent in visitors and a 9 per cent increase in page views.

The PEO continued its work with members and senators in a targeted school visits program called Parliament Alive. Visits were successfully conducted this year to schools in outer south and outer north Brisbane and throughout Tasmania. Again, a number of members participated in these activities, which provided students an invaluable opportunity

to learn at firsthand about the role and work of their federal member. In addition, the PEO conducted a number of other parliamentary education programs, both at Parliament House and around Australia, involving students, trainee and qualified teachers, Indigenous groups and senior citizens.

The PEO has continued to produce a wide range of educational resources in different media—print, DVD and video—including a new edition of the pocket Constitution, which was launched by the Attorney-General in early 2011. The demand for PEO publications and resources continued to increase during the year.

## Improving performance

During 2010–11 the Liaison and Projects Office was amalgamated with the Parliamentary Relations Office to form the International and Community Relations Office, effective from 1 October 2010, resulting in administrative efficiencies and greater flexibility in staffing arrangements within the new work group. The staffing profile of the community outreach team was also changed to sharpen the office's focus on multimedia work.

More information on the parliament's international program was included in the magazine *About the House* and in the television programs *About the House* and *MPI*.

Use of social media such as Twitter helped expand the reach of information produced by the department on the work of the House and also increased public interaction with that work.

A functional review of the schools booking system began, as part of a wider review of bookings systems and services provided by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. The review has focused on identifying systems and services,

Table 7 Students visiting Parliament House, by location and year, 2006–07 to 2010–11

Year	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Other	Total
2006–07	3,270	73,891	336	14,663	3,400	877	16,879	2,759	8	116,083
2007–08	3,733	67,148	532	15,077	4,523	1,050	17,002	3,100	295	112,460
2008–09	4,031	69,673	341	14,333	4,024	1,113	16,913	3,591	171	114,190
2009–10	3,703	70,294	623	15,845	4,618	1,394	17,041	4,378	59	117,955
2010–11	2,730	67,715	707	16,411	4,205	1,262	17,458	4,048	62	114,598

examined business processes and relationships between departments, and confirmed current and future system requirements.

Serjeant-at-Arms' Office staff continued to provide induction training to colleagues from other parliamentary departments, including Security, Visitor Services and Hansard. Training covers the functions and responsibilities of the House of Representatives, and operational requirements for the Chamber, Main Committee and chamber galleries.

A project board has been initiated to consider the introduction of a content management system for the PEO website, which will facilitate greater visitor interaction. Increasing PEO website patronage underscores the importance of this project. The department is represented on the project board by the Clerk Assistant (Table).

## Outlook

The redevelopment of the Parliament of Australia website will provide an opportunity to further develop the online information services the department provides for the community.

Feedback from the community on the department's outreach products and services

will be used to further develop the outreach program.

Planning will be undertaken for the department's involvement with the 25th anniversary of Parliament House, which coincides with Canberra's centenary in 2013. This will present an opportunity to contribute to the improvement of public displays at Parliament House.

We will move into the next phase of the review of bookings systems and services provided by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. Possible enhancements to the schools booking system include enabling schools and tour operators to view the schools booking diary, search availability of activities, and submit booking requests electronically.

School bookings for the 2012 calendar year have already opened, with a high level of interest from students wanting to visit Parliament House. In the first week, 1,418 requests were received from agents and schools for 51,872 students to visit next calendar year.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office will continue to work in partnership with colleagues in other departments toward meeting the needs of the variety of people who visit Parliament House.



*The My First Speech contest winners (left to right: Jeeven Nadanakumar, Penelope Meeves and Tim Lo Surdo) meeting with Mr Ken Wyatt AM, MP, 6 July 2011.*

# Committee services

The work in this program component is primarily performed by the Committee Office. The office supports parliamentary committees in discharging their responsibilities of parliamentary consideration of policy and legislation and scrutiny of government.

The expenditure on these services in 2010–11 was \$8.0 million, which was \$1.5 million below the budget allocation of \$9.5 million. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 11.

## Performance summary

The 2010–11 financial year included an election. The parliament was prorogued and the House of Representatives dissolved on 19 July 2010. A general election was held on 21 August 2010 and members of the Forty-third Parliament were sworn in on 28 September 2010.

At the beginning of the financial year (the last weeks of the Forty-second Parliament) eight Committee Office secretariats were supporting 12 House committees and nine joint committees. Four committee reports were presented to the Speaker out of session in 2010–11 before the dissolution of the House.

Agreements made during the formation of the minority government at the beginning of the Forty-third Parliament resulted in significant changes to the House committee system. The number of House investigatory committees was reduced from 12 to 9, and membership of each of these committees was reduced from 10 to 7. One of these committees (the newly established Standing Committee on Regional Australia) was exempted from the standing order requiring chairs to be government members, enabling a non-aligned member to be elected as the committee's chair.

The number of joint investigative committees supported by the department remained at eight (the same as the previous financial year) until April 2011, when the Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network was

established. A ninth secretariat was formed by the department (using additional funding obtained for this purpose) to support this joint committee. As an exception to the usual composition of joint committees, this committee and another; the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, are chaired by a non-aligned member.

The office supported two joint select committees during 2010–11. The Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety was re-established in September 2010 (having existed in the Forty-second Parliament, but not having reported by the time the parliament concluded) and is due to present its final report by 30 April 2012. The Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office was established in November 2010 and reported on 23 March 2011. After presenting its final report, the committee was dissolved.

Committees supported by the Committee Office in 2010–11 are shown in Table 8.

The department also supports the Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs. While this committee has formal processes, and is chaired by the Deputy Speaker, it is not a formal committee of the parliament but a means by which chairs and deputy chairs of committees administered by the House can discuss aspects of committee administration and support. In previous years the committee generally met every six months, but it met more frequently in 2010–11: in November 2010, twice in February 2011, and in March and June 2011. The committee discussed topics such as the powers and responsibilities of committees and chairs, videoconferencing and teleconferencing facilities, and government responses to committee reports. The committee also met with the consultant who undertook the external review of committee office staffing (discussed in more detail on pages 36–7), to provide input into the review.

**Table 8 Committees supported by the Committee Office, 2010–11**

Forty-second Parliament House committees	Forty-third Parliament House committees
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts	Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry
Standing Committee on Communications	Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and the Arts
Standing Committee on Economics	Standing Committee on Economics
Standing Committee on Education and Training	Standing Committee on Education and Employment
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations	Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth	Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications
Standing Committee on Health and Ageing	Standing Committee on Regional Australia
Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation	Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government	
Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs	
Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources	
Joint committees	Joint committees
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit	Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety	Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office
Joint Standing Committee on Migration	Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties	Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security	Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works	Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
	Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
	Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

**Note:** Six other House committees mainly concerned with the domestic operations of the House, in addition to the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings, are supported by other program components of the department and are discussed on pages 22–4.

## Committee activity

On 1 July 2010, the investigatory committees supported by the department had 25 ongoing inquiries. During 2010–11, these committees commenced 74 inquiries and tabled 42 reports relating to 41 inquiries. As at 30 June 2011, the committees had 36 ongoing inquiries.

Most inquiries typically relate to policy or administrative issues within government. The inquiry-related activities of committees are summarised in Appendixes 4 and 5.

Committees that the department administers have in the past occasionally (once in 2009–10, for example) conducted inquiries into bills and pre-legislation proposals—these generally have a significant influence on the legislation in question. Changes to the standing orders at the beginning of the Forty-third Parliament enabled the re-established Selection Committee to refer bills to House and joint committees, with one member of that committee being sufficient to select a bill for referral. From the introduction of these changes in October 2010 until 30 June 2011, 28 bills had been referred by the Selection Committee to committees supported by the department, representing a significant increase in workload over previous years. With some bills inquired into as a package, these referrals resulted in 17 inquiries, which were conducted alongside any other inquiries that each committee was conducting. The House Standing Committee on Procedure, which is monitoring the procedural changes implemented in the Forty-third Parliament, recommended in its interim report (dated 23 June 2011) that the standing orders be amended to remove the provision that one member of the Selection Committee is sufficient to refer a bill to a committee. Such an amendment would require the support of a majority of the House.

Another change to the standing orders at the beginning of the Forty-third Parliament enabled committee chairs and deputy chairs to make statements in the House concerning their committees' inquiries without presenting a report. This opportunity has been well utilised, with 19 such statements being made in 2010–11.

During the year, the Committee Office supported some high-profile inquiries. For example, the newly appointed Standing Committee on Regional Australia conducted an inquiry into the impact of the proposed Murray–Darling Basin Plan in regional Australia following a public outcry over a guide to the plan released in late 2010. The committee undertook a wide-ranging tour throughout the Murray–Darling Basin, including a committee first—a nine-day tour in mid-January, travelling from South Australia through Victoria and into New South Wales. The resulting report, *Of drought and flooding rains*, was well received by stakeholders and the committee has been widely commended for the consultative manner in which it conducted the inquiry.

In the first third of 2011, the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety, administered by the department, conducted an online survey of young Australians about their online activities and views on cyber-safety and cyber-bullying and their strategies to reduce online risks. The survey was in two parts: one for young people up to the age of 12 and the other for those aged 13 to 18. The committee promoted the survey on social media sites, including Google and Facebook, and went directly to some 7,000 primary and secondary schools. The committee received a total of 33,751 responses to the surveys, which included 60,000 free text comments. These responses and associated comments were used to inform the committee's recommendations in its report *High-wire act: cyber-safety and the young*, which was tabled in June 2011.

During the year, the secretariat of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade continued to support the committee's inquiry into Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa. This included providing a delegation secretary when members of the committee travelled to Africa as an additional parliamentary delegation. The delegation visited South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Ethiopia over a two-week period in April 2011.

Highlights of the trip included:

- ▶ briefings on investment opportunities in South Africa from the Western Cape Business Group and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange
- ▶ meetings with Movement for Democratic Change politicians and women's groups in Zimbabwe
- ▶ a visit to the Adamus Resources gold mine in western Ghana
- ▶ visits to the Hamlin Fistula Hospital and Hamlin College of Midwives in Ethiopia.

The report of the trip was incorporated into the committee's inquiry report, which was presented in June 2011. Committee members expressed their appreciation for the support for the trip provided by secretariat staff.

In 2010–11, the government responded to some important reports from the previous year. In November 2010, the government responded to the report by the Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts, *Managing our coastal zone in a changing climate: the time to act is now*. The report called for new governance arrangements for Australia's

coastal zone and made recommendations to improve management of climate change and environmental impacts on the coast. The government response acknowledges the work of the committee and details several government initiatives in line with the report's major theme and recommendations.

Also in November 2010, the government responded to *Hackers, fraudsters and botnets: tackling the problem of cyber crime*, a report by the Standing Committee on Communications. The report dealt with the growing problem of organised cyber crime, and recommendations included the establishment of an Office of Online Security headed by a cyber-security coordinator within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The government response welcomed the committee's report, noting that the government had recently established the function of Cyber Policy Coordinator within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and was committed to a coordinated national approach to combating cyber crime.

In both cases, the government accepted a large number of the committees' recommendations.



Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade meeting with students and staff of Ebenezer Rural Agricultural Training Centre, Zimbabwe.

## Analysis of performance

The most important indicator for the Committee Office is the level of satisfaction with committee services reported by members in the department's annual survey of members. In May and June 2011, a random selection of 30 current members of parliament was asked to participate in the survey, and 24 members responded (18 in 2009–10). Details of the survey findings are in Appendix 12. As in previous years, the department rated very highly on members' satisfaction with committee services. One hundred per cent of members who used the services stated that they were 'extremely satisfied', 'highly satisfied' or 'satisfied' with committee services. As Table 9 shows, satisfaction rates of at least 90 per cent have been reported for the past five years.

## Committee support

The 2010–11 financial year, an election year, saw a return to high levels of committee activity following the establishment of committees and commencement of inquiries in the Forty-third Parliament. Many committees have handled particularly high workloads at times when (sometimes multiple) bills have been referred for inquiry and an advisory report, usually with a very short reporting timeframe. Secretariats have focused on seeking input into inquiries, organising public hearings, drafting reports and assisting committees at meetings to consider reports.

## Records management and archiving

Committee Office staff were busy during the election period archiving the committee records of the Forty-second Parliament and some records from earlier parliaments. In conjunction with the department's Records Management Unit, more than 31 shelf metres of committee records were transferred into the custody of the National Archives during the year. A further eight shelf metres of committee records to be retained permanently at Parliament House were sorted, boxed and placed in appropriate on-site storage.

The Records Management Unit began a project to extend the use of electronic records management to the entire Committee Office, following the success of the pilot undertaken in 2009–10. To date, two committee secretariats and the office of the Clerk Assistant (Committees) have made the transition to electronic records management, with further secretariats to follow in 2011–12.

## Digitisation of committee reports

The department continued its project to post online digital copies of House committee reports tabled since 1901. This project has progressed and only 10 reports remain to be digitised out of the 417 reports that were identified.

Committee report web pages have been standardised so that both current and former committees contain information dating as far back as the Thirty-eighth Parliament.

Table 9 Committee Office performance indicators

Indicator	2006–07	2007–08 <sup>a</sup>	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11 <sup>a</sup>
Members' satisfaction rates (%) <sup>b</sup>	91	95	100	100	100
Reports, total	62	51	58	55	42
Staff numbers, Committee Office <sup>c</sup>	65	61	63	64	63

a 2007–08 and 2010–11 were election years. Committees cease to exist during election breaks (October 2007 to February 2008, and July to September 2010).

b Members' satisfaction rates represent the proportion of members who stated they were 'satisfied', 'highly satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied' with committee services.

c Staff numbers are based on historical data for 30 June each year.

## Improving performance

The Committee Office has been involved in several projects aimed at improving its operational efficiency and maintaining a high standard of service to its clients and stakeholders. In addition to the activities discussed in detail below, the Committee Office continued to provide advice and assistance to the Department of Parliamentary Services in relation to its project to redevelop the Parliament of Australia website.

### **Review of Committee Office staffing**

In its report on the inquiry into the effectiveness of the House committee system (presented in June 2010), the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure recommended that an external review be conducted of staffing levels within the department's Committee Office. The *Agreement for a better Parliament* document negotiated among members at the beginning of the Forty-third Parliament supported the Procedure Committee's recommendation.

The department engaged HBA Consulting to conduct the review, with a focus on determining the nature and level of secretariat support necessary to ensure that the committee system is supported by an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff. The consultant's report, presented to the department in March 2011, made four recommendations:

- ▶ that the model where one work group (the secretariat) supports two committees be the standard
- ▶ that an additional work group be established to allow this model to be implemented fully (an increase from eight to nine secretariat work groups)
- ▶ that in response to an increase in bill inquiries by House committees, additional resources be provided initially to support this work in 2011–12, and the level of resourcing then be reviewed
- ▶ that a specific budget allocation be established to allow committees to procure external expert advice to support the committee inquiry process, when required and requested.



Members and staff of the Parliament's Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety at a public hearing in Adelaide, 3 February 2011.

The department supported these recommendations. Additional funding allocated to the department for 2011–12 and the three following years to support the Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network has allowed the first two recommendations to be implemented. Implementation of the final two recommendations is dependent on supplementary funding for the department in the next financial year.

### **HTML generator**

Since the department began publishing the work of parliamentary committees on the Parliament of Australia website in the mid-1990s, committee reports have been uploaded only in portable document format (PDF). Documents in this format are not able to be read by some screen readers used by those with sight impairment.

Providing a committee's report (including graphics, tables and footnotes) as a web page, rather than as a downloadable document, provides the information in a way that screen readers can easily translate for sight-impaired people.

Before the start of 2011, reports were converted to HTML (hypertext mark-up language) manually. This work was labour intensive and resulted in delays in publishing the HTML version of a report, which prompted the department to seek alternative methods. A software program obtained from the Department of the Senate and modified to operate with our report template is now used to convert reports into HTML. This has greatly increased the efficiency of the process and the quality of the reports converted.

### **Extension of SCID and CommDocs**

The department and the Department of the Senate use separately developed systems to automate the processing and distribution of committee documents. The House of Representatives system, known as CommDocs,

provides a secure and access-controlled web-based interface for House committee secretariat staff to distribute committee documents to members of House committees and House-administered joint committees. The Senate Centralised Information Database (SCID) system assists with the electronic lodgment, management and publishing of Senate committee submissions and associated Senate committee web pages.

During the financial year the departments began a trial to extend CommDocs to Senate-supported committees and extend SCID to House-supported committees. As at 30 June 2011, two committees supported by the department were trialling SCID for their inquiries, and further committees may be included as circumstances permit.

If the trial is successful, the systems may in future be able to be integrated to avoid repetition of similar tasks involving submissions and other committee documents.

## **Outlook**

The first year of the Forty-third Parliament has seen some very significant changes for the Committee Office. In addition to the changes to committee structures and membership, trends towards the increased use of select committees and the higher rate of bill referrals to committees have affected the way committees operate and the degree and nature of support required of Committee Office staff.

If these trends continue, there will be some pressure on the department in maintaining the level of service required to adequately support the committee system. If the department is able to secure the funding required to fully implement the recommendations of the review of Committee Office staffing, this will go some way towards relieving the pressure on the Committee Office and providing greater flexibility for the department in providing support to committees.

# Interparliamentary relations

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Through its international program, the Australian Parliament engages with parliaments throughout the world and works to strengthen parliamentary democracy, particularly in our immediate region. Support for the parliament's international program is provided primarily through the International and Community Relations Office, previously known as the Parliamentary Relations Office. The office's interparliamentary activities are jointly funded by this department and the Department of the Senate, and administered by this department.

The department's international program is administered by the International and Community Relations Office. That office's expenditure in 2010–11 was \$2.1 million, against a budget allocation of \$2.2 million (noting that these figures also include the International and Community Relations Office's contribution to the community awareness component). Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 11.

## Performance summary

A range of delegation visits were coordinated during the year, although fewer visits were held as a result of the break in the parliamentary calendar for the August 2010 federal election. Projects that provided professional development opportunities for parliamentarians and strengthened links with Pacific island parliaments progressed. The International and Community Relations Office collaborated successfully with other organisations and sourced new funds in delivering an expanded international program during the year. Feedback on this work indicated a high level of satisfaction with the services provided by the office and its approach to broadening the parliament's international program.

## Delegations and visits

During 2010–11, the department coordinated 17 official overseas visits, which included bilateral visits to six countries, attendance at

five conferences, workshops and seminars, and 11 other visits (see Appendix 8). There were eight official visits to Australia by parliamentary delegations from other countries as guests of the Australian Parliament (see Appendix 6), along with 15 other visits (see Appendix 7).

An annual committee visit to the People's Republic of China was introduced into the official outgoing delegations program from 2011 to help implement a parliamentary memorandum of understanding with that country's National People's Congress. The department's Climate Change Committee was selected to undertake the visit, which is scheduled to take place in late August 2011.

At debrief meetings for outgoing visits, delegation members indicated a high level of satisfaction with the arrangements for and program content of outgoing delegations. For example, senators who participated in the annual New Zealand committee exchange program in June 2011 indicated that they used information gathered during the visit at community meetings held following the visit and in a report they presented to parliament.

The incoming visits program maintained an Asia–Pacific focus, with visits from Argentina, Bhutan, New Zealand and Tuvalu. The 30th anniversary of relations between the Australian and European parliaments was also recognised, with visits by a European parliamentary delegation and by the Secretary-General of the European Parliament.

## Support for other parliaments

A major parliamentary strengthening program for three Pacific island parliaments began in January 2011, after funding was secured from AusAID. The three-year Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program for the parliaments of Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu is being coordinated by the International and Community Relations Office, in its role as the Australian

Region secretariat for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. It is a joint program with the United Nations Development Programme and is also being supported by the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly and the state parliaments of South Australia and Victoria, which have in place twinning arrangements with the parliaments of these three countries.

The focus of the program is professional development of parliamentarians, capacity building of parliamentary secretariats and development of community outreach initiatives. A number of activities were supported in the first six months of the program, including study visits to Australia, development of a corporate plan for the Tongan Legislative Assembly and induction programs for new parliamentarians. An application was made to AusAID to extend the program to the Cook Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu and a decision on that application is pending.

Pacific island parliaments were also supported with training and equipment provided through an Education Trust Fund administered by the department on behalf of the Australian



*Members of the Tongan delegation.*

Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. This year's support included provision of information technology and broadcasting equipment as well as training in Hansard and other procedural training.

The annual Inter-Parliamentary Study Program was conducted in March 2011, attended by senior parliamentary staff from nine parliaments (three from Asia, two from Africa, one from Australia, two from Pacific islands and one from South America). The program allows for detailed study of Australian parliamentary processes and practices over a two-week period. Participants indicated a high level of satisfaction with the program content and arrangements, providing an average rating of 4.7 out of 5 in their evaluations.

## Participation in international parliamentary organisations

Australian parliamentary delegations attended meetings and conferences of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (for more details see Appendix 8). The department also supported a number of regional events for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

An Australian regional conference for Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians was held in Sydney from 30 June to 2 July 2010, coordinated jointly by the International and Community Relations Office and the New South Wales Parliament, and funded by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Australian Parliament. The program focused on domestic and workplace violence; bullying, including cyber-bullying; parliamentary behaviour; interacting with the media; using new media and social networks; access, equity and affirmative action strategies; and human rights. There were 42 participants and 29 (69 per cent) completed evaluation forms. In the evaluations, participants were overwhelmingly positive about the conference's length, content and organisational arrangements.

A Commonwealth Parliamentary Whips Workshop was held in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales from 13 to 17 July 2010, coordinated by the office and funded by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Australian Parliament. The workshop brought together parliamentary whips from eight out of the nine regions of the association, with 26 participants from Australia, Bermuda, Canada, Kenya, New Zealand, Samoa, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. It was the first time this sort of professional development activity had been held for parliamentary whips and included an evaluation session that formally endorsed the establishment of a Commonwealth Parliamentary Whips Network, with the Australian Parliament to take a leading role in its development.

A meeting of Pacific parliaments was held in Auckland, New Zealand on 9 and 10 August 2010, coordinated jointly by the office and interparliamentary relations staff from the New

Zealand Parliament. Funding was provided by AusAID, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the UN Development Programme and the Centre for Democratic Institutions. The meeting brought together Speakers and parliamentary representatives from 14 parliaments in the Pacific region (Australia, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu), as well as the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and representatives from the UN Development Programme and the Centre for Democratic Institutions. The meeting discussed Pacific parliamentary engagement with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and opportunities for enhanced coordination of parliamentary strengthening activities in the Pacific region. An outcomes statement was agreed and is being implemented. One of the outcomes was the development of a Pacific Parliaments Network linking parliaments in the Pacific region through a website that provides a calendar of events,



*The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Harry Jenkins MP, with participants in the 2011 Inter-Parliamentary Study Program.*

access to research papers, and a facility for Pacific island parliamentarians to seek research assistance from the New Zealand and Australian parliamentary libraries. The website was launched in February 2011. Another outcome was the decision to hold a regional climate change workshop for Pacific parliaments, which has been scheduled for August 2011 and is being coordinated by the office.

The 30th Australian and Pacific Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was held in Canberra from 2 to 6 November 2010, coordinated by the ACT Legislative Assembly with support from the office. The conference focused on parliamentary responses to regional challenges; parliamentary challenges and how they are being dealt with in regional branches of the association; and professional development of parliamentarians.

A planning day was supported for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Australian Region Steering Committee. One outcome from the planning day was agreement to conduct a Commonwealth Young Women's Forum, called w.comm, in August 2011 to connect young Australian women with politics, parliament and the democratic principles of the Commonwealth.

During the year both the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Inter-Parliamentary Union considered their future directions. The office provided support for Australian parliamentarians who attended meetings to discuss proposed reforms. These discussions are ongoing.

## Improving performance

The amalgamation of the Parliamentary Relations Office and the Liaison and Projects Office to form the International and Community Relations Office, effective from 1 October 2010, created administrative efficiencies and provided for staffing flexibility within the new work group.

Funding sourced from AusAID, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the UN Development Programme and the Centre for Democratic Institutions enabled the expansion of parliamentary strengthening programs.

More information on the parliament's international program was made available to the community through the department's community outreach program, including in the magazine *About the House* and two television programs (*About the House* and *MPI*) that are produced by the office and shown on Sky News and Australia's Public Affairs Channel.

## Outlook

The year ahead will see a full program of delegation visits and project work for the office. A number of events are planned, including a regional workshop on climate change and a Commonwealth Young Women's Forum. Particular attention will be directed to parliamentary strengthening projects, especially the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program.

Redevelopment of the Parliament of Australia website will provide the opportunity to expand the information available to the community on the international program.

Proposed reforms of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union could have implications for the Australian Parliament's interaction with those associations, which will need to be considered in the year ahead.

# Members' services

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The members' services program component comprises provision of advice, services and support to members in Parliament House and payment of members' salaries and allowances. The department's responsibilities include support for accommodation at Parliament House; the delivery of office and communication services such as stationery, printing and information technology; and the payment of salaries and allowances. These responsibilities are undertaken by the Finance Office, the Information Systems and Publishing Office, the People Strategies Office and the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office.

In providing these services, the department liaises closely with the Department of Parliamentary Services. That department is responsible for building maintenance and the central information technology services for Parliament House generally, while staff in the Department of the House of Representatives are the primary contacts for members in relation to the provision of services.

The expenditure for members' services in 2010–11 was \$3.051 million. The budget allocation was \$3.215 million. Staff levels, by location, are shown in Appendix 11.

## Performance summary

The results of the 2011 members' survey indicated the levels of satisfaction with the work of the areas. The work of the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office in supporting members received a high level of satisfaction (87 per cent satisfied, 100 per cent in 2010) and 78 per cent extremely or highly satisfied (67 per cent in 2010). All members were satisfied again this year with their home pages on the Parliament of Australia website (50 per cent were either extremely or highly satisfied compared with 45 per cent in 2010). In respect of services for base salary, electorate allowances and deductions, 87 per cent of members were satisfied (100 per cent in 2010) and 58 per cent were extremely or highly satisfied (44 per cent in 2010).

## **An election year**

An election year is marked for the members' services program component by significant activity and workload and a large event management role.

The period following dissolution of the House on 19 July 2010 involved payment of final salaries for, and clearance and programmed maintenance of the suites of, retiring members. Information technology equipment was retrieved and cleared, network accounts were cleared and members' internet home pages were updated. As polls were declared, letters were sent to new and returning members informing them of entitlements and services, members' suites were allocated, salary payments were initiated, information technology equipment was provided and services were arranged.

Associated with the end of the Forty-second Parliament and the beginning of the Forty-third Parliament, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office supported the House, the Speaker and members in arranging, or contributing to the arrangement of:

- ▶ the ceremony on the forecourt of Parliament House on 19 July 2010 to mark the prorogation of the Forty-second Parliament and dissolution of the House
- ▶ the opening of the Forty-third Parliament on 28 September 2010
- ▶ the presentation to the Governor-General at Government House of the Address-in-Reply on 2 March 2011.

## Services and advice

### **Information services**

To help keep members and their staff informed about developments in the House, four editions of the members' bulletin, *House Update*, were published during the year. In addition, the annual

## Highlights

Highlights for the members' services program component this year included organising the welcome to country ceremony for the opening of the Forty-third Parliament. This was the first time a ceremony of welcome had taken place as part of the normal procedures for opening a new parliament, in accordance with a resolution of the Senate and the standing orders of the House. The ceremony was held on the mosaic on the forecourt of Parliament House and was attended by Indigenous elders, members, senators and their guests.

The program component also coordinated arrangements for the address by the Right Honourable John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand, on 20 June 2011 to members and senators in the House of Representatives Chamber. It was the first address by a Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Australian Parliament.

Heightened public and media interest in the formation of a minority government, and the new parliament and its members, led to increased engagement between the

department and the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery in relation to media activity in and around Parliament House. A review, by members of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings, of media arrangements applying in Parliament House, was begun during the year.

A high priority for the program component continued to be the provision of advice and support to the Speaker and his office in relation to control and management of the precincts and ceremonial and other events at Parliament House. We worked closely with colleagues in the Department of the Senate and the Department of Parliamentary Services on these matters. We also worked in partnership with parliamentary departmental colleagues to deliver major projects, such as physical security and information technology enhancements. Another important priority was to represent the department and support the interests of the House and members in whole-of-parliament governance arrangements.

series of briefings on procedural and other developments in the House was continued; seven briefings were held during the year.

The department continued to operate its drop-in centre every sitting Tuesday to enable members and their staff to get information or provide feedback on any of the services provided by the department. During the year, the centre operated during all 13 sitting Tuesdays, and 16 members or their staff used the service. It was staffed, as before, by senior departmental staff members. The department continued to invite a representative of the Department of Finance and Deregulation to attend to increase the value of the service to members. Any comments relating to services provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services were referred to the appropriate office of that department.

## Accommodation services

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office manages accommodation, capital works and maintenance services within the House of Representatives wing.

A number of accommodation changes occurred as a result of the general election in August 2010, with 32 new members entering the parliament, and several changes to parliamentary office holders and the ministry. The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office coordinated 90 office relocations, including removals for retiring members, moves for returning members, and establishing offices for new members. During the year, 556 requests to supply and move furniture were actioned (64 more than 2009–10). Most involved rearranging furniture to meet the changed needs of members and their staff following the election.

All tasks were performed to agreed timeframes and standards, and to the satisfaction of party whips and individual members. This was a significant achievement, given the limited time between formation of the government and commencement of the parliament.

We contributed to several accommodation projects in the House of Representatives delivered by our colleagues in the Department of Parliamentary Services. Major security projects included security entry redevelopments in the House of Representatives galleries and between the Marble Foyer and House of Representatives wing, and relighting of the car parks.

### **Maintenance, access and transport services**

Maintenance requests are coordinated by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, and include emergency, routine and periodic work. During the year, 375 emergency requests were processed; all were attended to within five minutes of receipt. Routine maintenance requests for repairs or alterations to suites or

common areas totalled 234. By implementing a pre-emptive maintenance program, the office avoids a large number of emergency requests, particularly by members returning after a break. Three major refurbishments were undertaken in members' suites, which involved redecoration, replacing carpet and refurbishing furniture.

There were 337 requests for assistance with telephone faults, relocations and allocations of telephone numbers. Faults reported were referred to telephone support within five minutes of receipt, and telephone support officers resolved faults within an agreed time period.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office approved 929 requests for access to suites and general circulation areas for general maintenance and services provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services. This reflects the high level of project activity in Parliament House.

During the year, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office responded to 274 filming or photography requests and dealt with 529 proposals to use the facilities at Parliament House. Requests for filming and photography during functions and



*The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Harry Jenkins MP (foreground, right), with members of the House and departmental staff, Address-in-Reply, 2 March 2011. Picture courtesy of Auspic.*

events are now included with proposals to use facilities, and no longer reported separately.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office continued to coordinate transport services for members, including managing the shuttle service on behalf of the Department of Finance and Deregulation during sitting weeks. In 2010–11 there were 12,320 bookings (up from 10,372 in 2009–10) with a 99 per cent success rate. Despite fewer sitting weeks in an election year, this increased activity is because many members now arrive in Canberra on Sundays, due to earlier sitting times on Mondays.

### **Security screening**

Guests of government and parliament are subject to automatic exemption from security screening on entry to Parliament House. Approvals for any other exemptions from security screening are jointly made by the Usher of the Black Rod and the Serjeant-at-Arms as delegates of the Presiding Officers. During the year, exemptions from security screening were approved for 20 groups or individuals.

### **Software and hardware services**

The election saw a changeover of 32 members. This resulted in a great deal of movement and reallocation of information technology equipment as well as creation and deletion of network accounts and updates to internet pages for members. Laptops and desktop computer equipment were retrieved from retiring and defeated members and hard disks were sanitised. As part of the asset replacement program, and timed to coincide with the new parliament, approximately 200 new laptops were provided to members.

Projects to replace many of the support systems for the chamber and members' services began. These systems included the Table Office's document production system, Procedural Records System and the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office bookings systems for school visits, galleries and committee rooms. The initial phases of these projects were conducted including extensive requirements analysis and process mapping. The market will be

approached for solutions and products in the next financial year.

In the previous parliament a database was developed to track the processing of all petitions for the petitioning process for the House of Representatives. A large number of enhancements were made to this database during the year.

Implementation of the electronic records management system e-Trim continued during the year. Additional committee secretariats and the office of the Clerk Assistant (Committees) now use the system (see page 59).

### **Internet and intranet services**

During the year, the department worked closely with the Department of the Senate to look at sharing some of the information technology support systems for committees (see page 37). Further use of the relevant systems across the two committee areas will occur during the next financial year and consideration will be given to enhancing and integrating the two systems.

Redesign of the Parliament of Australia website continued. This project is being conducted by the Department of Parliamentary Services in conjunction with this department and the Department of the Senate. Due to the complexity of the website content and the implementation of a new content management system, the revised website had not been launched by 30 June 2011. Work will continue on this project and it is expected to be released during the next financial year.

The register of members' interests was made available online on the Parliament of Australia website. Updates to this register are made available on the website as soon as practicable after receipt by the registrar.

New intranet sites were developed for the department and for members. These sites have been developed on a SharePoint 2010 platform. SharePoint features have been incorporated to simplify many processes such as the expiry of content and reminders to update content. These intranet sites are to be launched early in 2011–12.

## Printing

The department's in-house printing service produced 2.8 million impressions in 2010–11 (5.2 million in 2009–10). The reduced numbers were a result of the election period and reduced printing volumes for committees (briefing papers in particular). Committee members routinely access electronic documents via CommDocs. Most of these impressions relate to documents for the operations of the Chamber (such as the *Notice Paper*, the *Daily Program* and assent prints of bills), committee and delegation reports, briefing papers, bound volumes of submissions and documents for conferences, seminars and visiting delegations.

The printing service also produces other documents for members such as party directories, first-speech booklets and school certificates. Limited printing services are provided for the shadow ministry.

## Messenger services

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office provided courier and mail services, as well as chamber support for the House of Representatives and the Main Committee, in accordance with its service charter; despite an increase in the sitting hours of both chambers. Some flexibility was achieved by utilising staff who undertake both messenger and office-based duties.

## Parliamentary assistants program

The parliamentary assistants program is managed by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. Parliamentary assistants are university students who perform the duties of messenger attendants for an average of 10 hours per week; rosters are planned around student commitments and the requirements of the House of Representatives.

Six positions were offered this year: two existing parliamentary assistants and four new students were appointed. The successful applicants came from metropolitan and country New South Wales and Victoria, and all study at universities in Canberra. Former parliamentary assistants were also engaged in the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office to work on school bookings, transport and other members' services.

## Members' salaries

All processing of members' salaries and entitlements by the People Strategies Office was in accordance with legislation and administrative decisions. In the 2011 members' survey, 58 per cent of members were extremely or highly satisfied (44 per cent in the 2010 survey), and in total 87 per cent were satisfied with services in relation to their base salary, electorate allowances and deductions (100 per cent in the 2010 survey). On the basis of survey comments provided by members, some of the reduction in overall satisfaction reflected concerns about services provided by the Department of Finance and Deregulation. Annual expenditure on members' salaries and other entitlements was \$29.430 million during 2010–11, an increase of \$1.411 million over the \$28.019 million spent last year. All performance targets were met during the year, with all salary variations completed when required and with 99 per cent accuracy. The average cost per transaction rose slightly, from \$6.75 to \$6.95.

The office processed an increase to members' rate of pay during the year, with effect from 1 August 2010. The pay rise increased the base rate of members' pay to \$136,640 per annum. Office holders' additional salaries were also adjusted in accordance with the formula outlined in the Remuneration Tribunal's Determination 2010/16.

The office processed the cessation of Office Holders' Allowance at the dissolution of parliament. Thirty-two members' entitlements ceased either at the date of dissolution or on the day before election day. The office also processed the payment of Resettlement Allowance, which was payable to former members elected from 2001 onwards who met certain criteria.

The 32 new members were paid their initial entitlements within two weeks of their poll being declared.

During the year the Remuneration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 passed both Houses. The bill expanded the jurisdiction of

the Remuneration Tribunal to determine the base salary of parliamentarians. It gave effect to the government's decision to implement the recommendation in the report of the Committee for the Review of Parliamentary Entitlements to:

- ▶ restore the ability of the Remuneration Tribunal to determine parliamentary base salary
- ▶ require the tribunal to publish reasons for its decisions in relation to parliamentary remuneration
- ▶ remove the parliament's ability to disallow parliamentary remuneration determinations made by the tribunal.

The government released the report of the review, dated April 2010, during the year; and the department briefed the Speaker on the report and its implications for the parliamentary administration.

## Improving performance

High-definition digital flat-screen televisions were installed throughout the House of Representatives wing, replacing analogue televisions that had become redundant.

The department's business plan includes a project for the replacement of office furniture used by members' staff and departmental staff. During the year, a furniture style guide was developed in partnership with the other parliamentary departments, and has been used by the Department of Parliamentary Services. A review was undertaken of the basis for the replacement of office furniture, which will inform further decisions.

Various opportunities to improve flexibility and deliver efficiencies were identified. For example, leases on franking machines were not renewed as internal charge-back accounts are now being used, providing an efficient, auditable service without the added leasing costs. Members were also offered the option to discontinue receiving a portion of the communications entitlement as a stamp allowance.

The department continues to work closely with the departments of Parliamentary Services and the Senate through its participation in the Senior Management Coordination Group, the

Project Assessment Committee, the Security Management Board, the Security Projects Program Board and other forums. These forums are important in giving direction to activities and projects that affect members and the department.

## Outlook

In 2011–12 the department will continue providing advice and services of a high standard to support members in Parliament House and to pay their salaries and entitlements. It is anticipated that activity levels during the year will be high in many areas, consistent with a middle year of the parliamentary cycle and the new ways of working of the Forty-third Parliament. The extended sitting hours of the Forty-third Parliament will mean workloads will remain high. The sustainability of meeting increased demands within current staffing levels is being reviewed.

Other important priorities for the member services' program component during the year include:

- ▶ supporting the implementation of parliamentary and departmental information and communications technology projects— including the website redevelopment, e-Trim, and redevelopment of three systems: the Table Office's document production system, committee systems and the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office booking systems
- ▶ the review of media arrangements applying in Parliament House
- ▶ the furniture replacement project
- ▶ business continuity planning, including implementation of recommendations from an internal audit report and whole-of-parliament planning
- ▶ development, with parliamentary departmental colleagues, of an information security policy for Parliament House
- ▶ preparation for activities to mark the 25th anniversary of Parliament House and the centenary of Canberra, in 2013.

The department will continue to ensure that whole-of-parliament governance arrangements operate effectively.