



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Annual Report 2020–21

Report No. 22

Department of the House of Representatives

**Standing Committee on
Appropriations and Administration**

October 2021
Canberra

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Membership of Committee — 46th Parliament

Chair Hon Tony Smith MP (Speaker)

Deputy Chair Ms Julie Owens MP

Members Mr John Alexander OAM MP

Hon Kevin Andrews MP

Ms Libby Coker MP

Mr Vince Connelly MP

Mr Chris Hayes MP

Mr Rob Mitchell MP

Mr Bert van Manen MP

Secretary Mr James Catchpole

Research/Drafting Ms Stephanie Mikac

Administration Ms Kathryn Harveyson



Standing Order 222A

- (a) A House Appropriations and Administration Committee shall be appointed to:
- (i) consider estimates of the funding required for the operation of the Department of the House of Representatives each year;
 - (ii) provide to the Speaker for presentation to the House and transmission to the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, the committee's estimates of amounts for inclusion in appropriation and supply bills for the Department of the House of Representatives;
 - (iii) consider proposals for changes to the administration of the Department of the House of Representatives or variations to services provided by the Department;
 - (iv) consider and report to the Speaker on any other matters of finance or services as may be referred to it by the Speaker;
 - (v) consider and report to the House on any other matters of finance or services as may be referred to it by the House;
 - (vi) consider and report to the Speaker on matters relating to the provision of facilities in Parliament House affecting the House, its committees or its Members;
 - (vii) make an annual report to the House on its operations;
 - (viii) consider the administration and funding of security measures affecting the House and advise the Speaker and the House as appropriate; and
 - (ix) consider any proposals for works in the parliamentary precincts that are subject to parliamentary approval and report to the House on them as appropriate.
- (b) When conferring with the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing, the House Appropriations and Administration Committee may:
- (i) consider estimates of the funding required for the operation of the Department of Parliamentary Services each year; and

(ii) provide to the Speaker for presentation to the House and transmission to the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, estimates of amounts for inclusion in appropriation and supply bills for the Department of Parliamentary Services.

(c) The committee shall consist of nine members: the Speaker as Chair, four government Members and four non-government/non-aligned Members. A quorum shall be three members of the committee.

(d) The committee shall be assisted by the Clerk, Serjeant-at-Arms, and officers of the Department of the House of Representatives appropriate to any matters under consideration.



Annual Report 2020–21

- 1.1 This annual report is made pursuant to Standing Order 222A(a)(vii), which requires the House of Representatives Appropriations and Administration Committee ('the Committee') to make an annual report to the House on its operations and covers the reporting period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Reports Presented

- 1.2 In 2020-21, the Committee presented three reports:
- Report No. 19, Budget Estimates 2020-2021
 - Report No. 20, Annual Report 2019-20 and
 - Report No. 21, Budget Estimates 2021-2022.

Meetings

- 1.3 During the reporting period the Committee met on seven occasions. Key matters considered included the:
- Electronic Access Control System (EACS) and Code of Practice
 - Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system and Code of Practice
 - Private Area Access Policy
 - Parliamentary Computing Network
 - capital works program at Parliament House
 - remote participation by Members in parliamentary proceedings via video link
 - Budget Estimates of the Department of the House of Representatives

- inquiry by the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee into the Operation and Management of the Department of Parliamentary Services ('DPS').

Electronic Access Control System Code of Practice

- 1.4 The EACS provides electronic swipe access to suites, including all Members and Senators' suites, and to other areas in the building. The EACS is managed by DPS. Of specific concern for both Houses has been the controls put in place to manage the EACS and allow access to the entry logs generated by the system.
- 1.5 Following a period of more than twelve months and continued deliberation by the Committee and the Senate Standing Committee of Privileges, the Presiding Officers in June 2020, finalised the EACS Code of Practice. The Code of Practice provides a framework that governs the creation, storage, use and access, release, and destruction of EACS data and takes into consideration any potential triggers of parliamentary privilege.
- 1.6 The EACS Code of Practice, like the EACS system itself is managed and implemented by DPS. The Code requires the relevant committee of each House – the House of Representatives being represented by the Committee – to receive quarterly reports detailing all requests for access to and release of EACS data. The Committee notes that the majority of requests for access were by Members, Senators or entities confirming which people had electronic access to their suites.
- 1.7 Following briefings by DPS and review of the quarterly access reports, the Committee is satisfied that the EACS Code of Practice has been implemented and that its provisions are being complied with by DPS.

Closed-Circuit Television Code of Practice

- 1.8 The CCTV system at Parliament House is also managed by DPS and the access and release of CCTV data is governed by the CCTV Code of Practice.
- 1.9 Pursuant to clause 15.6 of the CCTV Code of Practice, the Committee considered quarterly reports detailing the nature of

requests for viewing and release of CCTV footage and of any breaches of the Code. The Committee reviewed each quarterly report during the reporting period and was satisfied that DPS is administering the CCTV system in compliance with the Code.

Independent Review of CCTV Code of Practice

- 1.10 The CCTV Code of Practice requires that the Code be reviewed at least annually. In early 2020 Synergy Group Australia undertook an independent review of the Code and reported on 30 June 2020 to DPS and then to the Presiding Officers. The former Clerk of the House, David Elder, was engaged as an adviser to the review. In an attachment to the report Mr Elder advised:

Synergy has undertaken a thorough and competent review. The review has not provided any indication that parliamentary privilege has been threatened by the use of CCTV in the parliamentary precincts. While there have been some administrative shortcomings, the robustness of the Code and the culture that has been built around the importance of parliamentary privilege should provide reassurance to Senators and Members about the proper operation of the CCTV system.

- 1.11 The Committee reviewed the report at its meeting on 7 October 2020 and was advised by DPS officials that the department had accepted the majority of the recommendations and that they were being implemented. As indicated above, the Committee believes that DPS is administering the CCTV Code of Practice appropriately and that the Code provides a robust protective framework for Members and Senators.

Security of the Parliamentary Computing Network

- 1.12 The Committee continued its watching brief over the security of the Parliamentary Computing Network (PCN). The Committee was kept informed by DPS of the evolving cyber threat landscape and of the activities of the DPS Cyber Security Operations Centre. Members were reassured that the security of the PCN is a very high priority for DPS.

Inquiry into the Operation and Management of the Department of Parliamentary Services

- 1.13 In October 2020, the Committee lodged a submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee's *Inquiry into the Operation and Management of the Department of Parliamentary Services* at the invitation of the Senate committee.
- 1.14 In its submission to the inquiry, the Committee noted its ongoing oversight of services provided by DPS, particularly for EACS, CCTV, ICT, capital works and security matters. The submission noted that the Committee has a constructive relationship with DPS senior officials who brief Members regularly on matters of concern to the Committee.

Conclusion

- 1.15 The Committee continues to meet regularly to discuss matters of importance to the operation of Parliament House and the services provided to Members, particularly by DPS. Members appreciate the Speaker's support for the committee, the briefings provided and the Committee's ability to contribute to the quality of services provided to Members and Senators.

Hon Tony Smith MP
Chair

27 October 2021