

Report on Performance



Performance overview

The Department of the Senate has a single overarching outcome.

Outcome 1—Effective provision of services to support the functioning of the Senate as a House of the Commonwealth Parliament.

To achieve this, the department provides a broad range of services to the Senate, Senate committees, the President of the Senate, other senators, and members of the public. The department is responsible to the Senate and all senators, and maintains complete impartiality in serving them.

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

- effective support for the Senate chamber
- public awareness of the Senate and its work
- effective support for Senate committees and certain joint committees
- effective office and information technology support services for senators in their Parliament House offices.

The department's performance in achieving Outcome 1 is assessed using indicators that cover all the department's activities, as well as indicators that are specific to particular offices. The department-wide assessment indicators covering quality, timeliness, quantity and price are outlined in the table below. The report on performance for each office begins with a similar table.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTCOME 1

Outcome 1		
Effective provision of services to support the functioning of the Senate as a House of the Commonwealth Parliament		
	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the accuracy, quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.	<p>Feedback from the President, Deputy President, committee chairs, committee members and other senators indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of advice and the achievement of key tasks.</p> <p>The department's biennial survey of senators, the main formal feedback mechanism, was conducted in the first quarter of 2009. The results confirmed high levels of satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of support.</p> <p>All advices, documents and publications were of a high standard.</p>
Timeliness	<p>Advice or material given on request of a senator in time to be used for the purpose for which it was required.</p> <p>Key business documents for the Senate and its committees, including minutes, agendas, messages and schedules of amendments and reports, produced in accordance with predetermined requirements and the requirements of the Senate and its committees.</p>	All business documents were produced and advices were given in accordance with predetermined requirements and agreed timeframes in time to serve the purposes for which they were prepared.
Quantity	On the basis of recent experience, in 2008–09 the department would expect to support the Senate on approximately 65 sitting days and committees in accordance with their requirements.	The department supported the Senate on 56 sitting days. The department supported 664 hours of estimates committee hearings and the hearings of other committees in accordance with their requirements.
Price	The total resourcing for the department in 2008–09 is estimated to be \$20.6 million.	The actual cost of the department's outputs in 2008–09 was \$22.3 million.

Factors influencing performance

From 1 July 2008, 14 new senators, elected at the general election held in November 2007, formally took their places. The arrival of the new senators resulted in the need for a thorough orientation program and a range of other additional tasks, including increased training and support for senators and staff in new roles, and a large number of accommodation moves.

The number of sitting days increased to 56 in 2008–09 (from a very low 36 in 2007–08). The increase was expected as part of the return to a regular cycle of Senate activity that usually

occurs in the year following an election year. However, the distribution of sitting days was again skewed towards the first half of the reporting period (from August to December 2008).

Many of the departmental performance indicators for quantity are based on the expected number of sitting days. Previous reports have commented on the reduction in the number of sitting days in recent years. At 56, the number of sitting days in 2008–09 was lower than expected, but in line with recent averages.

Legislative activity is a major function supported by the department. Following lower levels of activity in 2007–08 (an election year), the number of bills considered and passed by both houses (a total of 148) returned to average levels in 2008–09.

The time and resources set aside for estimates committee hearings are a significant indicator of the demand for departmental services. Procedural and advisory support services provided by the department are highly concentrated on estimates hearing days. During 2008–09, a total of 664 hours was spent in budget estimates hearings (compared to 516 in 2007–08).

The other major factor affecting performance was the return to the pre-2006 committee structure, combined with a marked increase in the number of inquiries referred to those committees. During 2008–09, the Senate referred 135 matters to standing committees, 90 of which were bills or packages of bills.

Operational performance

The department continued to provide comprehensive, timely, high-quality and cost-effective support for the operations of the Senate and its committees during 2008–09.

Many areas of the department share in common tasks, such as providing advice to senators and their staff, and publishing information on the work of the Senate and its committees. Each office of the department also specialises in delivering particular services, as described in the 'Report on performance' chapter.

While many areas of the department experienced increased workload in 2008–09, the department maintained its high levels of efficiency in delivering a range of services throughout the year. For example:

- The number of written advices provided by the Clerk's Office increased, consistent with the fluctuations in demand that occur during an electoral cycle and the return of the Senate to a situation where no party has control.
- The Table Office managed a high workload and contributed to the development of two information systems which will improve access to documents by stakeholders.
- There was a significant increase in the amount of legislative drafting and procedural advice services provided to non-government senators by the Procedure Office.
- The promotion of public awareness programs offered by the Parliamentary Education Office, the Research Section and other areas continued, as demand for such programs and their resources increased and positive feedback levels remained high.
- Demand for the services of the Committee Office increased significantly. The Committee Office supported 125 inquiries and organised 326 hearings in Canberra and in other locations across Australia.
- The Black Rod's Office provided administrative support services which included rearranging senators' office accommodation, delivering support services to the chamber and committee rooms, and providing new information technology and other communications equipment to achieve a more efficient use of resources.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTCOME 1

The department continued to be flexible in its use of staff resources—particularly in its committee secretariats, whose workloads can vary markedly in a short period of time. A wide-ranging staff development program, building on similar programs offered in previous years, was conducted and was well supported by staff. The department continued to improve its documentation and planning processes to better monitor and manage workforce planning, risk management and financial management and governance. Further details are provided in the ‘Management and accountability’ chapter.

The department’s financial performance is detailed in the ‘Financial statements’ chapter. The budgeted resources of the department are outlined in Appendix 1.

Satisfaction with services

Since 1993, the department has conducted a biennial survey of senators to assist it in maintaining and improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the services it provides. A survey was conducted in the first half of 2009. It consisted of a quantitative self-completion survey that was sent to all senators (and completed by 44 senators), augmented by qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with a sample of 10 senators.

Of the senators who responded, 98 per cent indicated that they were satisfied overall with the services provided by the department, while the remaining 2 per cent reported that they were ‘neutral’. Very little active dissatisfaction was found in any area. As was the case in previous surveys, senators offered high praise for the work of the department and its officers, which was said to be often carried out under great pressure and with limited resources.

Senators expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the services provided in support of the Senate chamber. Compared with the 2007 survey, there was a significant increase (from 77 per cent to 97 per cent) in the proportion of participants who declared themselves either ‘satisfied’ or ‘highly satisfied’ with support for the legislative process.

Senators expressed high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the support provided to the Senate committees. Senators noted the heavy workloads of some committee secretariats.

Collectively, the administrative support services provided to senators – such as mail and freight services, payment of parliamentary salary and allowances, and accommodation services – received high ratings. The highest level of satisfaction in this area was with mail and freight delivery, with 94 per cent satisfaction from respondents.

While senators tended to be satisfied with public awareness of the Senate and its work, some senators seemed uncertain as to the extent of activities undertaken by the department to promote public awareness of the Senate and its committees. The work of the Parliamentary Education Office was roundly praised.

The report on performance for each office of the department describes how the office will use the relevant outcomes of the survey to support the development of work plans and projects that improve the delivery of services.

Scrutiny of activities

The department’s annual appropriation was determined by the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing and was reported to the Senate.

Estimates committee hearings are an important mechanism for evaluation of the department’s activities. Senior departmental officers were questioned by the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration at the 2008–09 supplementary budget

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estimates hearings on 20 October 2008 and additional budget estimates hearings on 23 February 2009, and by the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee at the 2009–10 budget estimates hearings on 25 May 2009. Issues considered included the resourcing of Senate select committees, the department’s overall budget position, and staffing.

The department’s activities were also scrutinised by both internal auditors and the Australian National Audit Office. Further details are provided in the ‘Management and accountability’ chapter.

Clerk's Office

Output Group 1

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

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

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

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	<p>The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.</p> <p>Advice, documentation, publications and draft reports are accurate and of a high standard.</p>	<p>The 2009 senators' survey reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of advice on powers, privileges and proceedings (97% satisfied or very satisfied) and no dissatisfaction.</p> <p>All advice, documents, publications and draft reports remained of a high standard and none was shown to be inaccurate.</p>
Timeliness	<p>Meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committee, as relevant.</p> <p><i>Odgers' Australian Senate Practice</i> updated each six months; new printed edition produced regularly.</p> <p><i>Procedural Information Bulletin</i> produced two days after end of sitting fortnights.</p> <p>Other procedural resources updated and augmented as required.</p>	<p>All the indicators relating to timeliness were met to the satisfaction of senators.</p> <p>The twelfth edition of <i>Odgers' Australian Senate Practice</i> was published and tabled in the Senate on 25 September 2008.</p> <p>The <i>Procedural Information Bulletin</i> was produced within the specified timeframe following all sitting periods and estimates hearings.</p> <p>Two new titles in the series <i>Brief Guides to Senate Procedure</i> were published.</p> <p>Work on a new publication, the <i>Annotated Standing Orders of the Australian Senate</i>, was completed.</p>
Quantity	<p>As required, on request, or proactively, to facilitate proceedings.</p>	<p>The demand for written advice returned to normal levels.</p> <p>Sufficient printed copies of all reports and documents were available immediately on publication or tabling, and all publications were made available online as soon as possible.</p>

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 1

Analysis

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

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

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Clerk’s office in 2008–09 was 4.0, the long-term average.

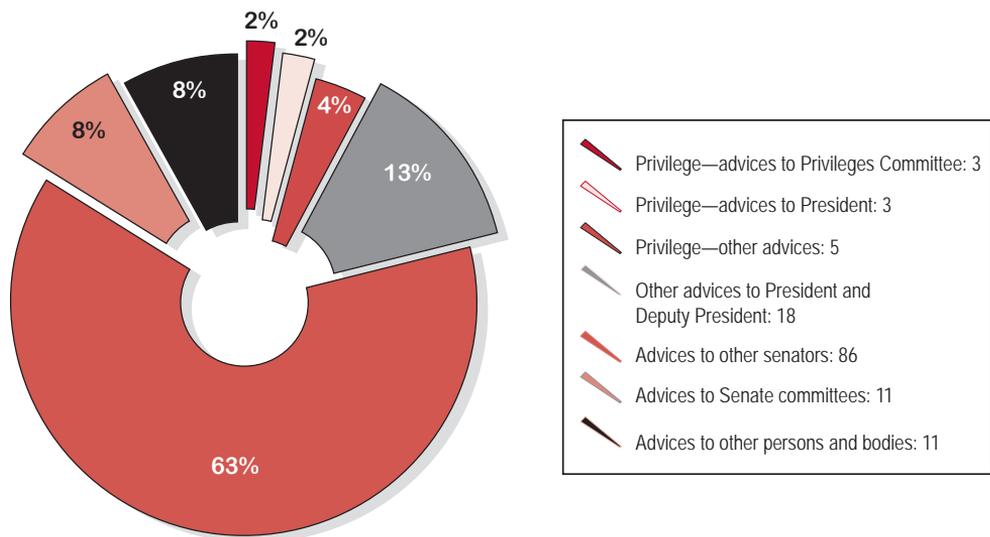
The cost of the office for 2008–09 was \$1.2 million (\$1.0 million in 2007–08).

Procedural advice

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

Figure 3 shows the number and kinds of written advices provided during 2008–09, and each kind as a proportion of the total. The total number represents a strong return to normal levels, consistent with the fluctuations in demand that occur during an electoral cycle and the return of the Senate to a situation where no party has a majority.

Figure 3 **Types of written advices provided by the Clerk, 2008–09**



The Clerk’s Office gave advice on subjects such as public interest immunity claims, orders for production of documents, section 57 of the Australian Constitution, requests for amendments to financial legislation, the effect of equally divided votes in particular circumstances, overseas and Australian court cases on parliamentary privilege, and processes for reconsidering legislation.

The breadth of topics covered continued to be wide, ranging from constitutional and governance issues to points of procedure.

Committees

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

Procedure Committee

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

The committee met six times in 2008–09 in relation to numerous matters and presented five reports. These were the first reports presented since August 2006 and reflected the Senate's return to its more habitual composition. The restructuring of question time was dealt with in three reports, as the Senate moved to implement a modified version of a scheme proposed by the Deputy President, Senator the Honourable Alan Ferguson. Questions to committee chairs and other senators were dealt with in two reports, with the Senate adopting the committee's recommendation that these barely used procedures should be abolished.

Another major subject examined by the committee in two reports was the restructuring of the Senate's committee system. The committee recommended a return to the pre-2006 configuration of references and legislation committees, and the Senate adopted the recommendation with effect from 14 May 2009. The committee also recommended the clarification of provisions in Standing Order 25 relating to deputy chairs of committees, and commented on a suggested procedure for referring Budget bills to committees in the Budget sittings.

Committee of Privileges

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

It was a quiet year for the committee, which met four times in 2008–09 (10 times in 2007–08) and presented three reports (five in 2007–08), all relating to people exercising a right of reply. Members of the committee also met informally with a parliamentary delegation from Colombia. At the end of the year, the committee was inquiring into one possible case of contempt of the Senate, relating to the treatment of a witness before a committee.

Committee of Senators' Interests

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

In 2008–09, the committee met twice (once in 2007–08), and presented its annual report as required by its terms of reference. Members of the committee also met informally with a parliamentary delegation from Colombia to discuss the ethical framework applying to senators.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 1

As required under the relevant resolution of the Senate, all senators lodged new statements of interests within 28 days of the new Senate meeting for the first time on 26 August 2008. Throughout the year, senators continued to register alterations to their statements of interests. Volumes of alterations and new statements were prepared by the secretariat and tabled on 25 September and 3 December 2008, and on 24 June 2009. Departmental Senior Executive Service (SES) officers' statements of interests were tabled on the same dates.

Declarations of gifts intended for the Senate or the parliament were tabled on 25 September and 3 December 2008. Notice of a motion for a proposed inquiry by the committee into accountability mechanisms in relation to sponsored travel and hospitality was withdrawn.

Procedural information

The main vehicle for procedural information is *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice*. As foreshadowed in last year's report, the Clerk completed the twelfth edition of this essential reference work in 2008–09. Supplements will continue to be produced between editions so that the work remains fully up to date and authoritative.

The Clerk produced issues of the *Procedural Information Bulletin* after each sitting fortnight or period of estimates hearings. The bulletin included occasional notes on aspects of parliamentary law, procedure and practice.

In addition to those documents, the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk produced and updated various forms of publications on procedures. Two new titles in the *Brief Guides to Senate Procedure* series were published in hard copy and online. The new titles dealt with parliamentary privilege as it applies to senators, and provisions governing the conduct of senators. The titles were produced in time for the orientation program for new senators elected at the November 2007 federal election whose terms began on 1 July 2008.

During the year, the Deputy Clerk, assisted by several members of staff from the Table Office, completed an annotated edition of the *Standing Orders and Other Orders of the Senate*. This large, illustrated volume traces the evolution and rationale of each of the Senate's current standing orders from their adoption early last century. At the end of the year, the work was in the process of being printed for publication in August 2009.

The Clerk and the Deputy Clerk contributed to training programs on parliamentary matters, including 'Parliament, Privilege and Accountability', the long-running program for SES officers of executive agencies. A particular focus during the year was the orientation program for new senators, held in July 2008 and again featuring the popular simulated chamber proceedings, chaired by the then President of the Senate, Senator the Honourable Alan Ferguson.

Information about Senate officers' presentations and papers appears in Appendix 4.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

As foreshadowed in last year's annual report, the return of the Senate to the commonly prevailing conditions, where no party enjoys a majority and negotiation is essential, created a demand for innovative and flexible procedural advice from the Clerk's Office.

Because the number of sitting days in the year continued to be lower than the long-term average, the demand for advice was often concentrated into sitting and estimates periods. Despite these time pressures, all advice was produced on time and to the satisfaction of its recipients, and none was shown to be incomplete or inaccurate.

The relatively large number of select committees in operation during 2008–09 also influenced the demand for advice, particularly in relation to obtaining information from government and dealing with claims of public interest immunity.

Figure 4 shows the number of written advices that the Clerk's Office has provided each year over the past five years.

Consistent with the changes in the Senate's composition, the Procedure Committee was more active than usual during the year, but this trend did not extend to the other committees supported by the office. Although the Committee of Privileges continued to consider a steady trickle of applications for a right of reply, no possible contempt was referred to the committee until the end of the winter 2009 sittings.

Figure 4 Number of advices provided by the Clerk's Office, 2004–05 to 2008–09



Evaluation

The principal medium for formal evaluation of services provided by the Clerk's Office is the biennial survey of senators' satisfaction, most recently conducted in February and March 2009.

Consistent with the previous survey (conducted in 2007), just over half (51 per cent) of respondents who reported having received advice indicated that they were highly satisfied with the service and 46 per cent that they were satisfied, with 3 per cent being neutral. No dissatisfaction was recorded. The survey report indicated that several of the senators surveyed regarded advice on powers, privileges and proceedings of the Senate as the most important support the department provides. The report said, 'the high level of satisfaction this attribute achieved in the survey is illustrative of the department successfully delivering crucial support to senators'.

Advice provided by the Clerk's Office may also attract scrutiny during the estimates process, either when the department appears before the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee or when advice provided by the Clerk's Office to senators or committees is immediately tested in public. On numerous occasions during the 2008–09 estimates hearings advice from the office was sought and relied upon to the satisfaction of the recipients.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 1

Evaluation of specific activities, such as staff contributions to training programs, occurs through participant feedback, usually in the form of written comments. On this measure, recipients of these services were well satisfied. In particular, the office's contribution to the orientation program for new senators held in July 2008 was very well received; feedback from the program will be useful in continuing to refine future programs.

Performance outlook

The office and the department face major change in 2009 with the retirement of the Clerk on the expiration of his fixed-term appointment under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*. In December 2009, Mr Harry Evans will have served the Senate as the Clerk for nearly 22 years. Notwithstanding the extensive documentation of Senate practices and procedure by the Clerk in such works as *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice* and the *Procedural Information Bulletin*, there will be a significant loss of corporate memory and experience.

At the end of the reporting period, the President of the Senate had initiated a recruitment process for a new Clerk. The focus of the office in 2009-10 will be on maintaining the consistently high levels and standards of service to senators, as recognised in the 2009 survey, despite the inevitable change in office personnel.

The *Annotated Standing Orders of the Australian Senate* will be published and launched in August 2009 and it is hoped that this work will be a useful addition to the resources available to departmental staff in advising senators and supporting the operations of the Senate and its committees.

Table Office

Output Group 2

Provision of programming and procedural support to the Senate.
 Processing of legislation.
 Processing of tabled documents and maintenance of safe custody of Senate records, and provision of a document distribution and inquiries service.
 Preparation of records of Senate business and proceedings.
 Dissemination of information on the work of the Senate.
 Provision of secretariat support to the Appropriations and Staffing, Selection of Bills and Publications committees.

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	<p>The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.</p> <p>Key business documents are accurate and of a high standard.</p>	<p>The 2009 senators' survey reported high levels of satisfaction with the advice and support provided, consistent with the findings of earlier surveys.</p> <p>Informal feedback and direct contact between senators and staff also indicated continued high levels of satisfaction.</p> <p>Business documents remained of a high standard, with none shown to contain significant inaccuracies.</p>
Timeliness	<p><i>Order of Business</i> finalised and distributed prior to sittings and advice prepared proactively or as required.</p> <p><i>Journals of the Senate</i> for the previous day and <i>Notice Paper</i> for the current day available prior to sittings; statistical and other documentation available as required or in accordance with predetermined requirements.</p> <p>Running sheets available as soon as practicable; proposed amendments distributed in accordance with requirements; schedules of amendments and prints of bills available in accordance with predetermined requirements.</p> <p>All inquiries answered and documents stored or distributed on a timely basis.</p> <p>Meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committee, as relevant.</p>	<p>The <i>Order of Business</i> was distributed in advance of all sittings. Advice was given proactively or as required.</p> <p>The <i>Journals of the Senate</i> and the <i>Notice Paper</i> were available as required.</p> <p>The <i>Dynamic Red</i> was updated in a timely manner during each sitting day and the <i>Senate Daily Summary</i> was published promptly after each sitting day. Requests for statistics were responded to promptly.</p> <p>Statistical summaries were produced after each sitting week and comprehensive statistics were published on the website after each sitting fortnight.</p> <p><i>Business of the Senate</i> and <i>Questions on Notice Summary</i> were tabled twice, in accordance with agreed timeframes.</p> <p>Running sheets were available for use in the chamber as required.</p> <p>Government amendments were distributed as required.</p> <p>Schedules of amendments, prints of Senate bills and legislative support documents were available as required.</p> <p>All documents were distributed in a timely manner. All inquiries were responded to and 92% were completed within five minutes.</p> <p>Committee meetings were held, and documents and reports were provided, within agreed timeframes.</p> <p>The senators' survey confirmed high levels of satisfaction with the provision of these services.</p>
Quantity	<p>As required to facilitate proceedings; quantities meet predetermined distribution requirements or are accessible electronically or both.</p>	<p>Feedback indicated continued high levels of satisfaction among senators with the provision of documents by the Table Office.</p> <p>All distribution and publishing targets were met.</p>

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 2

Analysis

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

Figure 5 Elements and responsibilities of the Table Office

<p>Executive and Programming <i>Maureen Weeks, Clerk Assistant</i> Procedural advice Business programming Production of the Senate <i>Order of Business</i> Secretariat services to the Selection of Bills Committee</p>	
<p>Legislation and Documents <i>Sue Blunden, Director</i></p>	<p>Journals and Notice Paper <i>Neil Bessell, Director</i></p>
<p>Processing of legislation and preparation of supporting documentation Processing and custody of Senate records Inquiries and document distribution services Secretariat services to the Publications and Joint Publications committees</p>	<p>Production of the <i>Notice Paper</i>, the <i>Journals of the Senate</i> the <i>Dynamic Red</i> and the <i>Senate Daily Summary</i> Collection and dissemination of statistical information Processing of questions on notice and petitions Secretariat services to the Appropriations and Staffing Committee</p>

During 2008–09, the office provided effective support for the Senate chamber by:

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

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

Staff in the Table Office participated in the orientation program for the 14 new senators whose terms commenced on 1 July 2008. The training preceded the swearing in of the senators at the first meeting of the Senate on 26 August 2008. The Table Office provided the procedural support for the swearing in.

Table Office staff continued to make a significant contribution to the seminar program administered by the Procedure Office and to the training and development of departmental staff. In addition to contributing to departmental training programs, the office conducted ‘field trips’ to give colleagues an insight into the operation of the Table Office. This year the

program was open to staff of other parliamentary departments; those who attended provided positive feedback.

The cost of the Table Office in providing procedural and administrative support for the conduct of Senate business was \$2.8 million (\$2.4 million in 2007–08).

Workload and staffing

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

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

The Table Office supported the Senate on 56 sitting days in 2008–09, a significant increase compared with 36 in 2007–08 (which included an election period). Although the number of sitting days increased, the distribution of sitting days was skewed towards the first half of the reporting period—the Senate sat for 31 days from August to December 2008 and 25 days from February to June 2009. This sitting pattern together with the commencement of the new Senate (in which no party holds a majority) in 2008 made for a particularly busy first half of the financial year.

In the same period, the Director, Journals and Notice Paper took six months leave, providing an opportunity for the Journals Officer (after a selection process) to gain experience working at the director level. The subsequent vacancy also provided an opportunity to introduce an officer from the Committee Office to the procedure and practice of the Table Office.

In the absence of the Director, Journals and Notice Paper, the duties of the Secretary to the Australian Delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), funded by the Procedure Office, were performed in the Committee Office. On resuming his position in early March 2009, the Director also resumed these duties.

As foreshadowed in the 2007–08 annual report, staff were occupied with the development of two key information systems:

- ParlInfo Search provides internet access to a range of parliamentary documents. While the Parliamentary Library administers ParlInfo Search, the Table Office provides access to certain parliamentary publications through the system.
- The Bills System provides online publishing for bills and associated documents, including the ability to track the progress of bills through the legislative process.

In the second half of 2008, when the Senate was not sitting, most of the office's staff participated in testing of the new systems.

Several Table Office staff members conducted research, wrote entries and checked references to assist the Deputy Clerk with the production of an annotated edition of the *Standing Orders and Other Orders of the Senate*, due to be published in August 2009.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the office was 17 (the same number as in 2007–08).

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 2

Programming and procedural support

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

- providing procedural advice to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Manager of Government Business in the Senate and other ministers, government senators, party whips and committee chairs
- preparing 1,288 procedural scripts for use in the chamber, an average of 23 each sitting day (19 in 2007–08)
- preparing draft and final editions of the *Order of Business* (daily program) to assist whips and other senators before and during the sittings of the Senate
- providing a broadcasting captioning service for Senate proceedings
- liaising with committee chairs and secretariats to facilitate interaction between the Senate and its committees
- maintaining the roster of temporary chairs of committees
- updating and reprinting the *Standing Orders*.

Staff also arranged for the presentation of documents by ministers, the Auditor-General and committees when the Senate was not sitting. This procedure has become an increasingly useful avenue for the timely publication of material of interest to the parliament. In 2008–09, 404 documents were presented this way—a 29 per cent increase on the 2007–08 total of 313.

The increase is significant, given that 2007–08 included a lengthy caretaker period when parliament was not sitting. The 2008–09 figure reflects a greater use of the process by departments and agencies tabling their annual reports out of sitting so that they would be available for the supplementary budget estimates hearings in October 2008, and by joint committees tabling reports.

The 2009 senators' survey revealed that 33 per cent of respondents were highly satisfied, and 61 per cent were satisfied, with programming services, including provision of procedural scripts, broadcast captions and the *Order of Business* (the 'Red'), while 6 per cent were neutral.

Legislation

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

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

The charts in figures 6 to 8 indicate the level of legislative activity in recent years and the effect this has had on the work of the office. With the number of sitting days returning to close to the historical average, an average number of bills was passed by both houses in 2008–09.

Figure 6 **Senate legislative activity, 2004–05 to 2008–09**

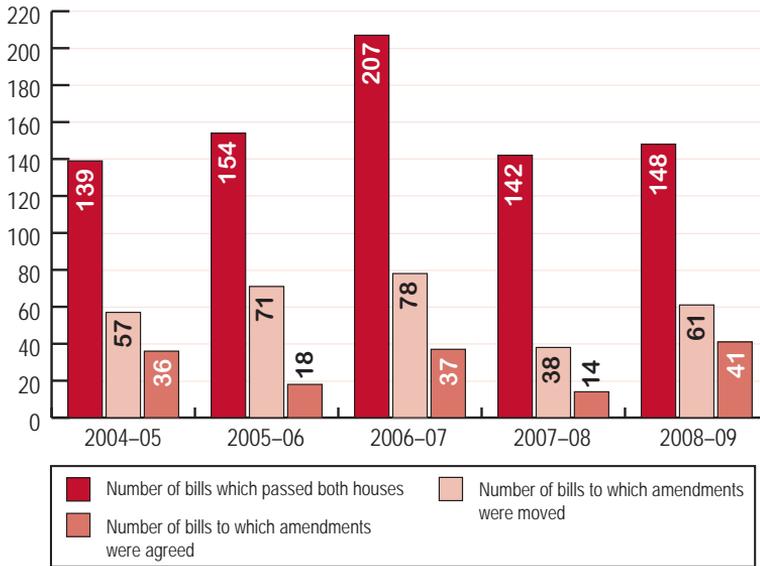
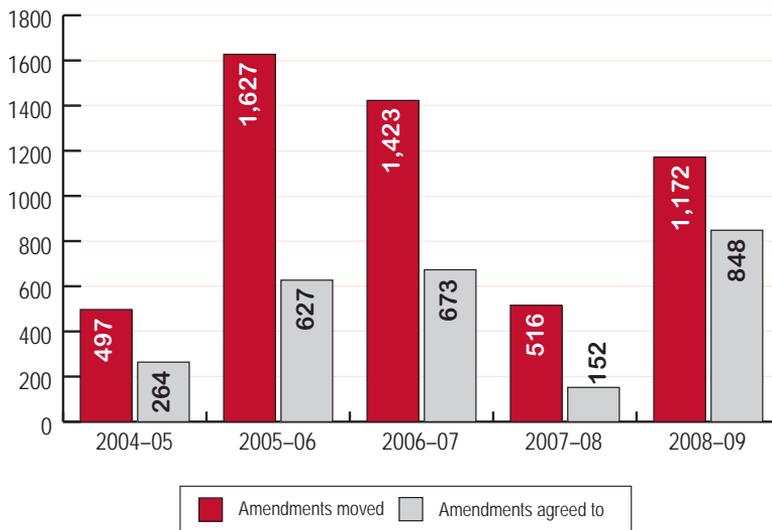


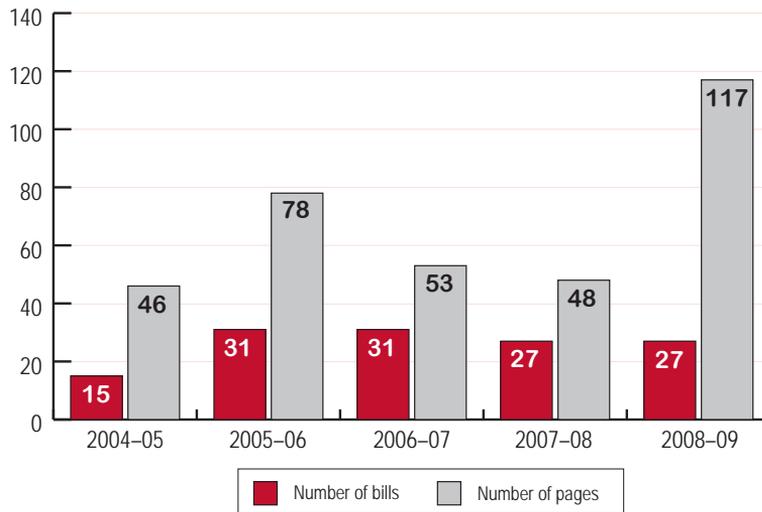
Figure 7 **Amendments moved and agreed to by the Senate, 2004–05 to 2008–09**



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

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Figure 8 Running sheets, 2004–05 to 2008–09



The level of activity relating to the number of amendments moved returned to average during the year. The proportion of amendments agreed to in 2008–09 (72 per cent) was a significant increase over previous years (47 per cent in 2006–07 and 39 per cent in 2005–06), not including election years. Almost 27 per cent of the amendments agreed to were made to the Fair Work Bill 2008 (228 amendments), the majority of which were moved by the government. These increases may reflect the new composition of the Senate from 1 July 2008, and the government’s willingness to negotiate with minor parties to progress its legislation program.

The office is responsible for preparing the formal ‘messages’ by which the two houses communicate on legislative and other activity. In 2008–09, 181 messages were prepared (163 in 2007–08). Of those messages, 154 related to the passage of bills, and 27 were administrative in nature (for example, relating to joint committee membership).

Running sheets facilitate the orderly and efficient consideration of all circulated amendments in committee of the whole. They are prepared when more than one set of amendments from more than one political party are circulated for consideration. Running sheets are revised when amendments are circulated after a running sheet is published. They are also revised to include outcomes and minor revisions when the consideration of a bill is complex and carries over a number of sitting days.

The number of bills for which running sheets were prepared in 2008–09 remained consistent with the historical average, but there was a significant increase in the number of pages of running sheets, as reflected in Figure 8. A number of revised running sheets were prepared to facilitate the chamber’s consideration of the Fair Work Bill 2008, and this work accounted for almost half (46 per cent) of the number of pages of running sheets for the period. Excluding the Fair Work Bill 2008, the average number of pages of running sheets at 63 pages is still above the historic average (an average of 45 pages for the period from 2004 to 2008). Running sheets are now provided electronically through the *Dynamic Red*.

The Bills System, in addition to providing online publishing for bills and associated documents, enables basic procedural information about each bill to be loaded to the relevant bill homepage. This information outlines the progress of a bill in the legislative process.

The Bills System has increased both the accessibility and profile of this information. Users accessing the homepages have indicated that they rely strongly on the accuracy and currency of the procedural detail, and this reliance placed administrative pressure on the legislation subsection. The increase in workload needed to meet users' expectations has required the subsection to review its work practices to ensure that its core work is not unduly affected.

The Table Office continued to provide detailed information about the progress of legislation in the Senate *Bills List* and *Daily Bills Update*. The *Bills List* was updated and published online after each sitting day to reflect legislative activity in both chambers. The requirement to keep these printed documents current while inputting procedural data into the Bills System resulted in a duplication of information and a considerable increase in workload. A review to consider whether it is necessary to continue to publish the *Daily Bills Update* will be undertaken in the next caretaker period.

The 2009 senators' survey indicated that 45 per cent of participants were highly satisfied, and 52 per cent were satisfied, with support for the legislation process, including the provision of running sheets, while 3 per cent were neutral. The survey highlights that, in comparison to the 2007 survey, there was a 'statistically significant increase (from 77 per cent to 97 per cent) in the proportion of participants who declared themselves either 'satisfied' or 'highly satisfied' with 'support for the legislative process, including the provision of running sheets'.

Formal and informal records of business

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

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

Formal records

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

The *Notice Paper*, the formal agenda of Senate proceedings, provides essential information including the current and future business of the Senate and committee matters. Two versions of the *Notice Paper* were published before each sitting day: an abridged printed version, averaging 51 pages (43 pages in 2007–08), and a 'full' online version. The *Notice Paper* expands during the course of each parliament as unfinished business accumulates and the number of unanswered questions on notice increases.

The *Journals of the Senate* are the 'minutes of the meeting' and the official record of decisions made by the Senate. During 2008–09, proof *Journals* were published online shortly after the end of each sitting day, and printed versions were distributed the next morning. Staff produced and published 56 proof *Journals*, each averaging 27 pages (26 pages in 2007–08).

Informal records and statistics

The *Dynamic Red* was made available on the department's website. Conceived as an online version of the Senate's *Order of Business* (the 'Red'), the *Dynamic Red* provides real-time

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information on the progress and outcomes of business on each sitting day. This assists senators, parliamentary staff, government departments and agencies, and the general public to monitor Senate proceedings. The publication is an invaluable tool to monitor the proceedings of the chamber and attracts a wide audience.

In 2008–09, the *Dynamic Red* was enhanced to include useful links to chamber-related documents such as notices of motion, legislation running sheets and the homepage for each bill under consideration.

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

Statistical summaries of business conducted by the Senate were produced after each sitting week. A more comprehensive set of statistics was also maintained online, providing timely access to the most commonly sought statistics on the work of the Senate. Staff also produced two volumes of *Business of the Senate*, which has recorded statistics on the work of the Senate for more than 30 years.

The office promptly met many requests for statistics from senators, parliamentary staff and other clients. In 2008–09, the Table Office produced statistics on matters such as:

- number of bills passed by the Senate
- allocation of time for government business
- private senators' bills dealt with on Thursdays, as provided for under Standing Order 57, from 1970 to the present
- number of committees given leave to sit during sittings of the Senate
- number of bills exempted from the provisions of Standing Order 111 (the 'cut-off') allowing them to be considered in the current period of sittings
- questions on notice and response times.

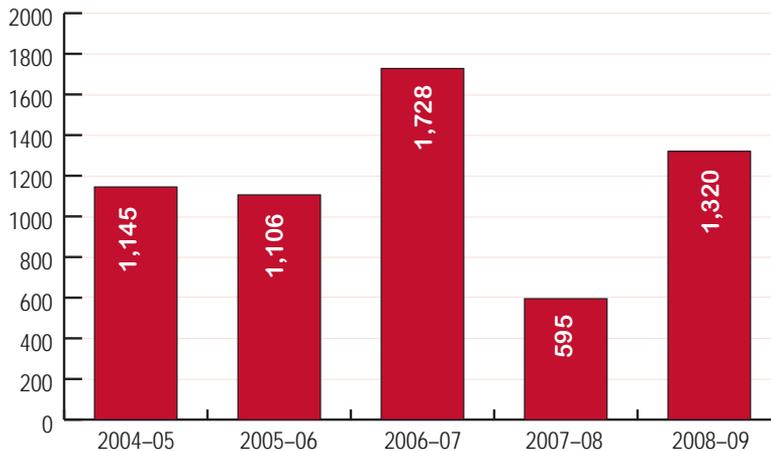
The 2009 senators' survey records that 69 per cent of survey participants were highly satisfied with the preparation of records of the Senate, and 23 per cent were satisfied.

Questions on notice, notices of motion and petitions

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

During 2008–09, staff processed 1,320 questions on notice. The *Questions on Notice Summary* records statistics and other information relating to these questions, including response times. Figure 9 shows the trend in the numbers of questions on notice in recent years.

Figure 9 Questions on notice, 2004–05 to 2008–09



Notices of motion are a means by which senators indicate their intention to move particular motions on specified days. They are integral to the Senate’s business. Notices are drafted by senators, the Table Office and the Procedure Office. In 2008–09, Table Office staff drafted or edited and processed 500 notices of motion that appeared in the *Notice Paper* and *Journals of the Senate*.

During 2008–09, senators presented 45 petitions (59 in 2007–08), collectively representing 82,198 signatories. The office continued to provide advice to senators and members of the public on whether proposed petitions, including electronic petitions, conformed to the requirements of the Senate Standing Orders. All conforming petitions were processed promptly and presented in the Senate.

A high level of satisfaction with processing questions on notice, notices of motion and petitions was also recorded in the 2009 senators’ survey, with 49 per cent indicating that they were highly satisfied and 43 per cent that they were satisfied.

Documents and inquiries

The Table Office processed the 7,675 documents presented to the Senate during 2008–09, and recorded them in the *Journals of the Senate* and the *Index of Papers Presented to the Parliament*. Copies of all documents were made available through the inquiries and distribution services.

All the original documents presented to the Senate since its first meeting in 1901 are stored in Parliament House under archival conditions. The area available for storing these documents is limited and under increasing pressure as the collection grows. A major rationalisation project reduced the holdings of duplicate copies of certain tabled documents. The rationalisation enabled an additional basement area to be used exclusively for the original documents. Also, there is now the capacity to store original documents for approximately another five years.

The work to establish the former stationery store as a supplementary storage area was completed. The area now contains the bound master sets of *Journals of the Senate*, *Senate Notice Papers*, bound volumes of *Hansard* and other miscellaneous material.

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In previous reports it was noted that there was an increase in the number of Clerk's documents presented to the Senate due to the requirements of *Legislative Instruments Act 2003*. This trend did not continue in 2008–09. Although the number of disallowable instruments as a percentage of Clerk's documents increased (57 per cent of Clerk's documents in 2008–09 compared to 42 per cent in 2007–08), the number of Clerk's documents as a percentage of the total number of documents presented decreased. In 2008–09, 78 per cent of documents presented to the Senate were Clerk's documents, representing a decrease of 6 per cent over the previous year. As would be expected, the number of other types of documents tabled increased. The number of committee documents tabled increased by 25 per cent and miscellaneous documents tabled (for example, returns to order) increased by almost 150 per cent over the previous reporting period.

Statistics collected by staff answering inquiries indicate that 7,615 inquiries were responded to during 2008–09. Most of the inquiries (92 per cent) were responded to within five minutes. The remainder of the inquiries were answered by staff in timeframes agreed on with clients. Most inquiries came from senators and their staff or departmental staff.

The ability of office staff to respond effectively to inquiries is supported by the use of the Document Movement System or 'telelift', an automated, rail-based system which conveys containers throughout Parliament House. The system is maintained by the Department of Parliamentary Services. The Table Office uses the telelift to distribute documents in response to inquiries from clients, and to carry out routine distributions of documents. The ability of the telelift to move varying quantities of documents simultaneously and immediately is essential to the high-quality, reliable distribution and inquiries services provided to senators and their staff and departmental staff.

The 2009 senators' survey indicated that 39 per cent of participants were highly satisfied with the inquiries service and document distribution (a 9 per cent increase from the 2007 survey), 55 per cent were satisfied and 6 per cent were neutral.

Digital imaging project

The office is using digital imaging to copy, preserve and ensure access to the collection of all documents presented to the Senate. This major project consists of two streams of work: making digital images of the documents presented to the Senate since 2002 and creating digital images from the microfilm record of the documents from the Senate's first century. The digital images are stored in an electronic 'web repository' available through the department's website.

During 2008–09, the digital imaging team performed quality assurance processes on 17,000 images prior to loading the images to the web repository. This considerable effort resulted in a significant increase in the number of documents available online. The digital imaging team also scanned 6,374 documents and undertook associated preservation and indexing work.

The conversion of microfilm to digital images, which began last year, is now complete. The images are being processed for loading to the web repository. Documents (containing approximately four million images) presented to the Senate during 25 per cent of the parliaments between 1901 and 2001 and most of the Forty-first Parliament (2004 to 2006) are now available online.

Secretariat support for various committees

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

Over the budget estimates period, the Selection of Bills Committee met twice, having been given authority by the Senate on 14 May 2009 to report to the President, making recommendations for the referral of certain budget-related bills to committees for inquiry and report. The aim of the motion of 14 May was to ensure that the legislation committees had the opportunity to consider the bills prior to the June sittings, when the legislation would be required to be passed. The motion provided for the automatic referral of the bills to committees on introduction to the House of Representatives, with the Selection of Bills Committee acting as an arbiter. The committee met and made changes to the bills references as determined by the resolution. In the main, these changes had the effect of withdrawing references. The committee did not agree to all proposals considered and the questions on which no agreement could be reached were resolved by the Senate when it sat again.

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

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

Factors influencing workload and staffing levels are set out in the ‘Analysis’ section.

As in other areas of the department, the effectiveness of the Table Office in supporting the work of senators, the Senate and its committees is heavily dependent on the expertise of staff. During 2008–09, a number of staff in the office undertook challenging new roles. Their success in doing so, particularly given the composition of the new Senate and the pace of the sittings, is testimony to their abilities, their training and the support they receive from their colleagues.

All staff in the office also met the challenge presented by major changes in the information technology underpinning their work. The technical hiccups that accompany such rollouts were met with a positive approach and there were no resultant interruptions to the work of the office. The usual high standard in both work quality and productivity was maintained.

Evaluation

The principal medium for evaluating the Table Office’s services is the biennial survey of senators’ satisfaction with the services provided by the department. The most recent survey was conducted in the first half of 2009.

The 2009 senators’ survey again revealed high levels of satisfaction among senators with the advice, documents and services of the office, comparable with levels reached in earlier surveys, and did not suggest any areas of major concern.

Particularly high levels of satisfaction—97 per cent—were recorded in relation to the support for the legislative process. The result is particularly significant as this was the one area of the office that received a satisfaction level below 90 per cent in the 2007 senators’ survey. Satisfaction with both programming and inquiries services and document distribution continued to be high (94 per cent). The other activities of the office, including the preparation of records of business and the processing of procedural material such as notices and questions were also highly rated, with a satisfaction level of 92 per cent. No dissatisfaction was recorded.

The office also monitors its own performance; for example, by keeping track of response times for inquiries. This monitoring provides useful benchmarks for the provision of its services.

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Finally, much of the office's work involves direct contact with senators, their staff and other clients. This presents an ongoing opportunity for feedback about the office's services. Such informal feedback continues to be very positive.

Performance outlook

In 2009–10, the Table Office will continue its core work relating to the sittings of the Senate. In particular, staff will provide advice and produce documents to facilitate chamber proceedings and the legislative process; prepare formal and informal records of Senate business; process and archive tabled documents; provide inquiries and document distribution services; and support the work of committees.

In the context of the Senate's sitting demands, the first half of the 2009–10 financial year also promises to be one of intense activity, with the consideration of major government legislation already programmed.

The office is examining the interactions between workflows, practices and information technology systems, with a view to establishing a plan for upgrading those systems.

Staff, together with colleagues in the Department of the House of Representatives, will continue to contribute to the Bills System project. A number of technical issues were identified in the warranty period and some still require rectification.

The office is also reviewing options for streamlining further work on the digital imaging project and making the documents available more accessible to those interested in parliament. Staff are examining possible changes to work practices to more closely integrate the preparation of documents for digitising into the routine workflow of tabled documents. It is intended that any changes will result in a more logical sequence of processes underpinning the tabled documents workflow, to reduce tabled document handling across a number of office processes. This will provide both digital imaging project and whole-of-office efficiencies.

Procedure Office

Output Group 3

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

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

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

Provision of parliamentary information services to the community.

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

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

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	<p>The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.</p> <p>Procedural advice is accurate and covers all foreseeable eventualities.</p> <p>Amendments and bills are accurate and legally sound.</p> <p>Public information and parliamentary research is accurate, comprehensive and targeted for particular needs.</p> <p>Education Centre teaching and other PEO projects accurately reflect the parliament and its work.</p>	<p>The 2009 survey of senators revealed high levels of satisfaction with the group's outputs. This was supported by consistently favourable feedback from the group's ongoing evaluation processes.</p> <p>Senators continued to acknowledge the accuracy and value of procedural advice.</p> <p>Legislative amendments and bills were prepared to the satisfaction of senators.</p> <p>Public information resources were updated as required to reflect arrangements and procedural changes in the Senate.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) continued to deliver its Education Centre program at near capacity and further expanded its services to include greater online interactivity and a range of new resources.</p>
Timeliness	<p>Procedural advice is timely.</p> <p>Scrutiny committee meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committees, as relevant.</p> <p>During sitting periods, amendments drafted as soon as possible after receipt of instructions.</p> <p>Seminars and lectures held on time and in accordance with advertised schedule; public information projects delivered according to programmed schedule.</p> <p>PEO teaching programs held on time and in accordance with booking schedule.</p> <p>PEO projects delivered according to programmed schedule.</p> <p>Information available on the internet and in publications is up to date and available as soon as practicable.</p>	<p>Procedural advice met all chamber deadlines.</p> <p>All meetings of the scrutiny committees were held as scheduled and documentation was provided within the timeframes set by the committees.</p> <p>Amendments were drafted in accordance with timetables set by senators and the Senate.</p> <p>All seminars and lectures were held on time and in accordance with advertised schedules.</p> <p>All programs were held in accordance with the booking schedule.</p> <p>Projects, programs and outreach activities were delivered as scheduled.</p> <p>Information resources were updated as required to reflect changes in personnel and procedures.</p> <p>The PEO website was constantly monitored, with required changes addressed immediately.</p>

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Analysis

The Procedure Office provides a range of advisory, support and information services closely aligned with the role and work of the Senate. The office is divided into the functional areas shown in Figure 10.

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

Executive and Legislative Drafting <i>Richard Pye, Clerk Assistant</i> Procedural advice and training Drafting of legislative amendments and private senators' bills		
Public information and parliamentary research	Parliamentary education	Legislative scrutiny
<i>David Sullivan, Director, Research Section</i>	<i>Chris Reid, Director, Parliamentary Education Office</i>	<i>James Warmenhoven, Secretary, Regulations and Ordinances Committee</i> <i>Julie Dennett, Secretary, Scrutiny of Bills Committee</i>
Publications, seminars, exhibitions and research on parliamentary matters Production of <i>The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate</i>	Parliamentary education services and resources for schools, teachers and students	Secretariat, advisory and administrative support to the committees

The office is managed by the Clerk Assistant (Procedure), who also undertakes procedural and legislative work, principally for non-government senators, and performs duties as a clerk at the table in the Senate chamber.

The office provides secretariats for the Senate's legislative scrutiny committees, the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, which examine bills and legislative instruments against certain rights and accountability criteria.

The Research Section undertakes parliamentary research and produces publications, lectures and exhibitions, each with a focus on the work and role of the Senate and the parliament. The section also provides and coordinates training and seminars on parliamentary and procedural matters for a wide range of audiences. A unit within the Research Section produces *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, a multi-volume work containing biographies of senators focusing on their parliamentary careers.

The Parliamentary Education Office produces educational programs and resources for school students, teachers and others, with an increasing focus on outreach activities through school and regional visits and through its website: www.peo.gov.au.

In 2008–09, the cost of the Procedure Office in providing its services was \$6.1 million (\$5.3 million in 2007–08). The full-time equivalent staffing level for 2008–09 was 34 (32 in 2007–08).

Procedural support and legislative drafting

The Procedure Office provides direct support to the work of senators by two principal means:

- providing procedural advice and support
- drafting legislative amendments and private senators' bills.

The services are provided to ensure that senators are supported in undertaking their legislative work. The demand for these services is substantially driven by the requirements of senators and the Senate chamber.

Procedural support

In 2008–09, the office assisted non-government senators and their staff by providing procedural advice relating to the role and work of the Senate and its committees. The office does not keep statistics on the quantum of advice given, but there was consistent demand for such advice during sitting periods.

The office prepared an average of seven procedural scripts per sitting day for senators' use in the chamber and elsewhere. This was slightly lower than the 2007–08 average of eight. The scripts included notices of motion, the text of procedural motions and terms of reference for committee inquiries. The closely balanced numbers in the Senate chamber also led to a demand for procedural advice and the drafting of procedural motions designed to test support for dealing with motions and legislation other than in accordance with government programs.

Legislative drafting

In 2008–09, the office provided legislative support to senators' work by:

- drafting amendments to bills, in response to instructions from senators and their staff and recommendations contained in committee reports
- drafting private senators' bills, in response to instructions from senators and their staff.

This work was undertaken primarily for non-government senators, but a small number of backbench government senators also used these services.

Peaks in demand for legislative amendments reflected the concentration of legislative work within a small number of sitting weeks, and an unpredictable legislative timetable.

The office drafted and circulated 147 sets of 'committee of the whole' amendments, containing 859 individual amendments. Committee of the whole amendments are amendments proposed to the text of bills dealt with by the Senate. Two key debates—on the Water Amendment Bill 2008 and the Fair Work Bill 2008—jointly accounted for a quarter of those amendments.

The office also prepared and circulated 25 'second reading' amendments. These are proposed resolutions which comment on or affect the passage of bills, but do not propose specific changes to the text of bills.

Many more committee of the whole and second reading amendments were drafted—for use in negotiations between parties, for instance—but were not proceeded with.

Private senators' bills continued to be used as vehicles for non-government parties and individual senators to put down policy footprints and advance debate across areas of interest. During the year, the office drafted, finalised and processed 23 private senators' bills for introduction—a record number for any reporting period. Another 28 bills were drafted to

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different stages of development, for introduction at a later date or for use by senators outside the chamber. Two private senators' bills were passed by the Senate during the year, but neither was debated by the House of Representatives.

Table 1 summarises senators' use of the office's legislative drafting and procedural services over the past four reporting periods.

Table 1 **Legislative drafting and procedural advice services provided to non-government senators, 2005–06 to 2008–09**

Service	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Committee of the whole amendments	736	1,524	423	859
Second reading amendments	56	111	56	25
Private senators' bills prepared	34	41	28	51
Private senators' bills introduced	6	20	19	23
Procedural scripts prepared	274	353	304	394

Legislative scrutiny committees

During the year, the office provided secretariat, research and administrative support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, assisting the committees to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the standing orders. The two committees examine all bills and disallowable instruments within their jurisdiction.

The secretariats, assisted by their legal advisers, completed all of the necessary administrative work to enable the committees to undertake these tasks. The Regulations and Ordinances Committee staff processed 3,404 instruments during 2008–09 (2,982 in 2007–08). The Scrutiny of Bills Committee secretariat processed 210 bills during 2008–09 (207 in 2007–08) and the committee commented on 111 bills (108 in 2007–08).

The secretariats also prepared material arising out of the work of the committees, for use in the Senate chamber and for publication elsewhere. This included:

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

In addition to its regular alert digests and reports, the Scrutiny of Bills Committee published *The Work of the Committee during the 41st Parliament, November 2004 – October 2007*, which provides an overview of the legislative scrutiny work undertaken by the committee during that period, along with statistical data.

Staff from both secretariats briefed several international delegations about the role and operations of the Senate legislative scrutiny committees, and conducted a training seminar for public servants.

The secretariats also organised the Biennial Australia–New Zealand Scrutiny of Legislation Conference, to be hosted by the Commonwealth Scrutiny Committees in July 2009.

Public information and parliamentary research

The Research Section of the Procedure Office continued to coordinate and deliver seminars and professional training programs for senators and their staff, departmental staff, Australian public servants and other audiences. The section also produced publications, lectures and exhibitions, each with a focus on the work and role of the Senate and the operations of the parliament. The section also managed an internship program and a formal research partnership with the Parliamentary Studies Centre at the Australian National University.

The aim of these programs is to ensure that senators and their staff are supported in their legislative work, and that other audiences are able to develop appropriate levels of knowledge and awareness of the Senate and its work.

Seminars and training programs

In July 2008 a major orientation program was conducted for new senators who commenced their terms on 1 July 2008. The three-day program, conducted by senior officers of the department, focused on the operations and procedures of the Senate and its committees, as well as services provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services. The program is widely regarded by new senators as an essential part of their preparation for legislative duties.

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

The department's seminar series continued to provide members of the Australian Public Service with comprehensive training in the operations of the Senate and its committees, and the accountability to parliament of the executive and government departments and agencies. During 2008–09, a total of 1,090 people attended 33 seminars.

The seminar series remained an integral part of most graduate training programs in the public service. Some of the larger departments enrolled all of their graduates in the full-day Introduction to the Senate seminar. A range of half-day seminars on the budget and the Senate estimates process, Senate committees, the legislative process and role of legislative scrutiny committees was also well received. The section also conducted half-day seminars for Senior Executive Service officers on the accountability of public servants to parliament and the law and practice of parliamentary privilege. The seminars were conducted by senior officers of the department.

The section organised seminars tailored to the needs of individual government departments and other interested groups, including the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism; the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts; AusAID; the Office of the Chief Scientist; the Defence and Industry Study Course; the Rural Leadership Program; and a group of Indigenous graduates.

Seminars and training programs were also organised for parliamentary officers visiting from overseas parliaments, including from Hong Kong, Jordan and Namibia. The Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, conducted jointly with the Department of the House of Representatives, provided training for 15 officers from overseas parliaments, including Afghanistan, Bhutan, Canada, China, East Timor, Estonia, Ghana, Hong Kong, Iceland, Indonesia, Marshall Islands, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Sweden, and Vietnam.

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Occasional lectures

During 2008–09, the section produced lunchtime lectures as part of the popular Occasional Lecture series. Topics ranged from the implications for Australia of the 2008 election result in the United States, to the powers of a republican head of state in Australia and the role of parliament under an Australian charter of human rights.

The department published lecture transcripts in its free journal *Papers on Parliament* and made audio recordings available on its website. Lectures were filmed and broadcast on television and the internet by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Australian Public Affairs Channel, increasing the audience for, and accessibility of, the lectures.

Publications and information services

The Research Section edited and published two editions of *Papers on Parliament* during 2008–09. Entitled *Constitutional Politics* (August 2008) and *Parliament, Politics and Power* (March 2009), these editions largely comprised papers in the Occasional Lecture series. A number of *Senate Briefs* and *Brief Guides to Senate Procedure* were revised and reissued to account for the election of Senator Hogg as President in August 2008 and changes to the structure of the committee system which took effect from May 2009.

The third volume of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, covering senators whose terms ended between 1962 and 1983, was submitted to the publisher in May 2009 for publication in early 2010. During 2008–09, editing and checking of the manuscript was completed and extracts were read by specialists in military history and state politics. Genealogical research and the acquisition of illustrations for the volume were also concluded. Work continued on the 109 entries for the fourth volume, which will cover 1983 to 2002. A total of 75 entries have been allocated to authors.

The section continued to issue a range of free publications raising awareness of the Senate and parliamentary processes. A revised and updated *Senate Brochure* was issued in May 2009. Details of the publications available in 2008–09 are provided in Appendix 4.

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

Exhibitions

During the year, the department commenced a major new public exhibition in the Presiding Officers' exhibition area on the first floor of Parliament House. Entitled 'Acting Wisely: the Work of the Australian Parliament', the exhibition documents and illustrates the work of the contemporary parliament.

The introductory segment of the exhibition describes the role of parliament and illustrates its power to make laws under the Constitution. Leading off this segment is a display dealing with the way that parliament makes laws, including documents used by both houses during the legislative process, a graphic illustration of the passage of a bill on a video loop, and some illustrated case studies of bills that were considered by parliament before passing into law.

The next stage of this exhibition will incorporate Australia's copy of Magna Carta, which will move from its current position in the Members' Hall once appropriate preservation and security arrangements are complete.

Internships program

As in previous years, the department successfully ran the Australian National Internships Program in partnership with the Australian National University. During 2008–09, 39 students were placed in parliamentary departments and 34 students were placed in other departments and agencies. Interns continued to see Parliament House as an outstanding venue in which to be placed. The Research Section coordinated an induction seminar for each group of interns and organised some of the functions associated with the program.

Research partnership with the Australian National University

During 2008–09, the department continued to play an active role in the Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions research program, which is funded by the Australian Research Council and run by the Parliamentary Studies Centre at the Australian National University. Senate officers participated in a series of workshops which provided feedback to authors who had submitted papers for publication.

In October 2008, the department co-hosted a two-day international conference on bicameralism as part of the research program. The conference investigated trends in bicameralism in Australia and related these trends to international developments in bicameral parliamentary systems. In April 2009, the department co-hosted a half-day workshop on parliaments and bills of rights. The workshop focused on ways that parliaments can respond to bills of rights by reforming their institutional rules and procedures.

Parliamentary education services

During 2008–09, the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) continued to deliver a high level of educational services to schools, teachers and students, with demand for its services and resources also remaining very high.

The PEO has two main strategies:

- Through its Education Centre, the PEO delivers a role-play involving simulations of chamber and committee proceedings of the House of Representatives and the Senate, for students visiting Parliament House.
- Through a sophisticated outreach strategy, the PEO provides other opportunities for students and teachers to learn about the parliament. To support this strategy, the PEO produces materials and resources on its website, on CD and DVD, and in print.

The PEO also undertakes several joint ventures and invests in a range of training and development activities for staff. During 2008–09, the PEO continued to work with and report progress to the PEO Advisory Committee and received positive feedback from the 2009 senators' satisfaction survey.

Education Centre activities

The Education Centre delivered its one-hour role-play program to 90,786 students in 2,533 groups during 2008–09. Trends in Education Centre attendance are shown in figures 11 and 12. The Education Centre continues to provide excellent opportunities for data and market research to assist the PEO evaluate and develop its programs and resources.

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Figure 11 **Students who visited the PEO Education Centre, 2004–05 to 2008–09**

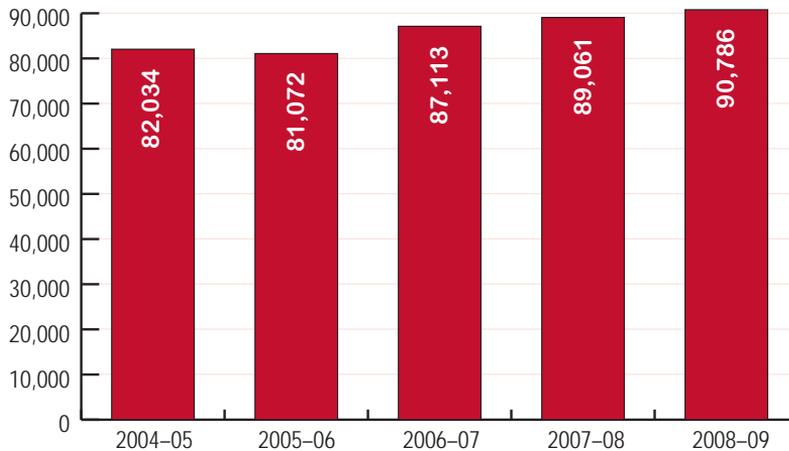
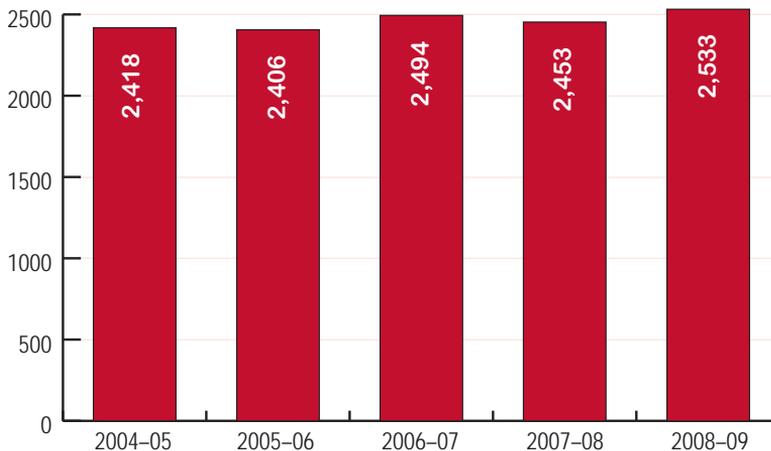


Figure 12 **School groups that visited the PEO Education Centre, 2004–05 to 2008–09**



Website and other resources

In 2008–09, the PEO continued to develop its website and other resources, as well as its capacity to produce quality educational resources in multiple formats.

Highlights included:

- enhancing the interactivity, usability and accessibility of the PEO website, including technical developments to reflect changes to World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- introducing a multimedia section to incorporate new video learning initiatives on the website
- developing Assignment Assistant, an interactive online study tool for students
- introducing an in-house video production unit to produce educational videos for the website and other outlets—two short videos were available on the website by the end of June 2009.

In addition, the site was developed to allow more PEO resources to be ordered online or downloaded from the website.

The PEO continued to produce and update print resources and publications, including:

- *Parliament of Wizards*, a new CD-ROM resource for teachers that introduces primary school students to the work of parliament through the world of magic
- an updated version of the successful *Parliament in Pictures* poster series which features as a public display in the schools hospitality area of Parliament House
- reprints of the pocket-sized *Australian Constitution*, *Peeling back Parliament*, and *Unravelling the parliamentary role-play*.

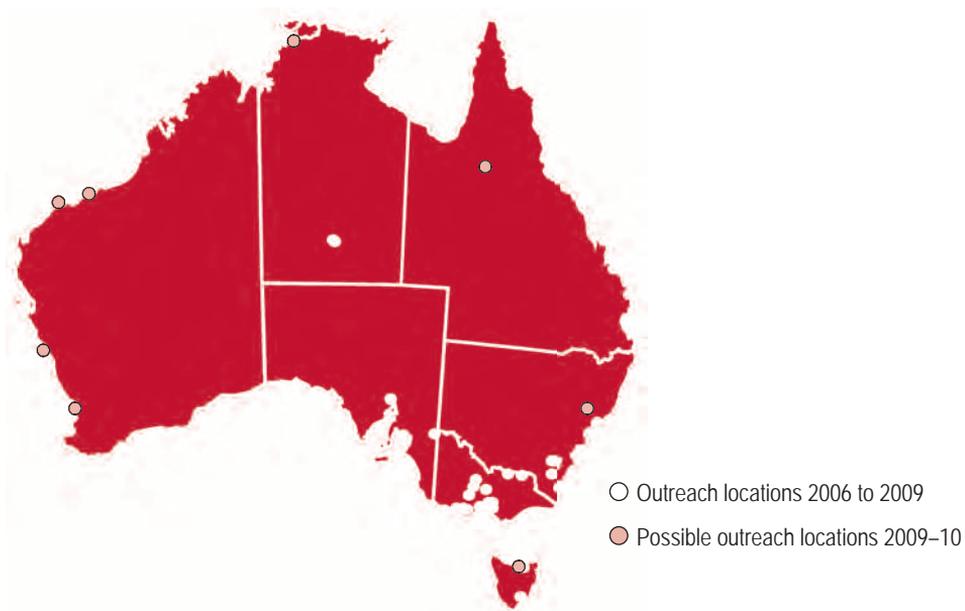
As an indication of the growing demand for PEO resources, web patronage increased again this year, with the website recording over 3.5 million page views, an increase of 21 per cent on 2007–08.

Outreach

An important part of the PEO’s objectives is to provide educational resources for students and teachers who cannot make the journey to Parliament House in Canberra. One popular solution to this has been conducting outreach activities across the country, taking the parliamentary role-play and other activities ‘on the road’. A satisfying geographical spread has been achieved in recent years. In 2008–09, the PEO participated in activities in the following locations: Ballarat, Bendigo, Brisbane, Caboolture, Canberra, Castlemaine, Colac, Dakabin, Dandenong, Deception Bay, Geelong, Gladstone, Grovedale, Gympie, Maryborough, Melbourne and Norfolk Island.

Plans for outreach activities in Western Australia were confirmed during 2008–09; the activities will take place in July and August 2009. Planning for visits to several other regions during 2009–10 has commenced. Figure 13 shows the geographical spread of outreach activities in the five calendar years from 2006 to 2010.

Figure 13 Locations of PEO outreach activities, 2006 to 2010



REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 3

An important feature of many of these outreach activities was the involvement of senators and members in both creating and executing PEO programs, especially in conjunction with local schools through an initiative called *Parliament Alive*.

Joint ventures

The PEO continued to work with a range of groups and organisations as part of its broader educational aims.

For the twentieth successive year, the PEO, in partnership with Rotary International, hosted the Rotary Adventures in Citizenship program at Parliament House. The five-day program for students from across the country gave 31 Year 11 students an opportunity to experience the work of the parliament, meet members of parliament and participate in an intensive learning program.

The PEO again contributed to the Talkback Classroom program by assisting secondary students to interview a member of parliament about issues important to young Australians. In 2008–09, students interviewed the Honourable Stephen Smith MP and met the Honourable Warren Truss MP, the Honourable Greg Hunt MP and the Honourable Pat Farmer MP in preparation for the interview.

As in past years, the PEO contributed to the Australian National University-sponsored National Youth Science Forum and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Heywire* program. These events attracted senior secondary school students from all states and territories to Parliament House where the PEO delivered specially designed experiential learning programs focused on the processes of parliament.

The PEO continued to work with the Australian Secondary Principals Association and helped coordinate periodic association meetings at Parliament House.

Staff training and development

In addition to standard training exercises, over recent years the PEO has developed and refined a comprehensive training program for new staff teaching in the Education Centre. This program continued in 2008–09. All participants have successfully completed the training and joined the PEO teaching staff.

The PEO's publishing capability continued to expand with the appointment of a dedicated web developer in March 2009. Training and development was also a focus, with an emphasis on the use of new web technologies, improved interface and application design, usability and accessibility.

From November 2008 to May 2009, a committee secretariat was created within the PEO to serve the Senate Select Committee on Men's Health. This six-month development opportunity was completed according to plan, and the committee's report was tabled on 29 May 2009.

International activities

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) brings together representatives of the parliaments of 153 sovereign states to foster contacts, coordination and the exchange of experience among parliamentarians, to consider questions of international interest and concern and to express its views on such issues in order to bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians.

During 2008–09, the department supported the work of the IPU by funding the attendance of delegations at two IPU assemblies. The Secretary of the Community Affairs Standing

Committee served as secretary to the delegation that attended the 119th IPU Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, in October 2008 and the Director, Journals and Notice Paper was secretary to the delegation to the 120th IPU Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in April 2009. Both officers provided sound advice on the procedures and practices of the IPU as well as administrative support.

The Deputy President of the Senate and the Deputy Clerk attended the thirty-ninth Conference of Presiding Officers and Clerks, held in Adelaide in July 2008.

The department also provided experienced officers to serve as secretaries to delegations that went to:

- Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in September–October 2008
- Serbia in October 2008
- Papua New Guinea and East Timor in October–November 2008
- Switzerland in April 2009
- Canada and Mexico in April–May 2009
- Austria, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States in April–May 2009.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

As noted, the demand for procedural and legislative services is substantially driven by the requirements of senators and the Senate chamber. Factors influencing demand include the frequency of sittings, the number of bills dealt with by the Senate and the legislative priorities of the government and others. The composition of the Senate is also a factor: a situation in which no one group controls Senate outcomes typically leads to a strong demand for these services.

The capacity of the office to undertake drafting work was increased in 2008 by the addition of a senior legislative officer on a trial basis. The trial was successful, and the arrangement was made permanent in October 2008.

The facilities for the PEO's education program at Parliament House operate at near capacity, with schools making bookings for the program many months in advance. This has been an important factor motivating the PEO to expand the range and quality of its online and multimedia services and resources.

Evaluation

The main vehicle for evaluating the services provided by the office is the survey of senators which is undertaken every two years. The 2009 survey reported continuing high levels of satisfaction with support to the Senate chamber, advisory services and support for the legislative process, all of which reflect well on the work of the office. Specific questions relating to legislative drafting services and procedural support for non-government senators found that 62 per cent were highly satisfied, 23 per cent were satisfied and the remaining 10 per cent were neutral. The survey also reported that five government senators had used such services, and each was recorded as being highly satisfied.

The survey reported an improvement in satisfaction since the 2007 survey with the promotion of public awareness of the Senate, reflecting well on the information resources and seminar programs provided by the Research Section. High levels of satisfaction were again recorded for the PEO.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 3

The Procedure Office monitors levels of satisfaction with its performance through formal and informal channels including letters, emails, phone calls, seminar evaluation forms and direct advice from senators and their staff and members of the public. This continual performance appraisal assists the office to make timely and responsive adjustments to the way it delivers its services. High levels of positive feedback were received in 2008–09.

The PEO in particular monitors feedback of its activities and resources from senators and members, as well as its target audiences of students and teachers. Figure 14 provides a few examples.

Figure 14 **Comments on PEO services and resources**

From senators and members

'The students were able to gain a better understanding of the workings of the parliament through the skilful delivery of the educational and entertaining role play exercise ... The experience provided a valuable opportunity for students to learn about democracy and law making in Australia, some of whom may never travel to Canberra.'

'The Parliament Alive sessions with the students from primary and high schools from my electorate were a great success. Thanks to the educators for their excellent work.'

'The PEO resources are a fantastic aid when visiting schools in my electorate and have been well received by teachers. I am impressed with the knowledge and understanding that students have retained from their sessions in the Education Centre.'

From teachers

'Congratulations on a wonderful support system to make our teaching job easier. All teachers at our school are impressed with your resources, which will add so much to our classroom and I'm sure that the students will gain a greater understanding of the functions of parliament.'

'Thank you for all of the fantastic resources that you have sent to our School. We are looking forward to making good use of the fantastic resources available, especially "Parliament of Wizards" ...'

'Congratulations on the Parliamentary Education Office website. The information is clear, factual, inspiring and accessible.'

From students

'It was good making decisions and feeling like you're a part of the outcome.'

'We were very proud to be part of the program and for the opportunity to speak out and act like a real government with cabinet ministers. It has a lot of meaning to us to see how a bill is passed and the process.'

Performance outlook

In 2009–10, the office will continue to provide its procedural and legislative services to meet the requirements of the Senate and individual senators. Training and seminar programs will continue, including a new round of procedural training for senators' staff.

The Research Section will further develop its information resources with publication of Volume 3 of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, a revised version of *The Pocket Guide to Senate Procedure* and an A to Z reference guide on the parliament.

The first segments of the 'Acting Wisely' exhibition on the legislative process and Magna Carta will be officially launched, and work will commence on additional segments that will explore the themes of representation and accountability.

The Senate will continue to participate in a range of activities as part of the Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions project, including conferences on benchmarking parliamentary performance, the state of oppositions, comparative legislative responses to global crisis management, and parliaments and architecture.

The office will also be involved in planning an event to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Senate's system of legislative and general purpose standing committees.

A new Richard Baker Senate Essay Prize aimed at secondary school students will commence in the second half of 2009, managed by the Research Section and promoted via the PEO.

The PEO will seek to complete and consolidate a range of projects and programs. In addition to facilitating role-play classes at Parliament House for more than 90,000 young Australians, the PEO will release new material on its website, with an added emphasis on interactivity and a specific focus on secondary students. Strategic outreach involving senators and members has been planned, as has the release of new interactive resources and print publications.

Committee Office

Output Group 4

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

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	<p>The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.</p> <p>Advice, documentation, publications and draft reports are accurate and of a high standard.</p>	<p>The senators' survey revealed uniformly high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the support provided to Senate committees. The level of satisfaction ranged from 95% for procedural advice to 91% for the preparation of briefing papers and research.</p> <p>In addition, formal and informal feedback mechanisms continued to show that senators consider the support provided by the Committee Office to be effective.</p> <p>When debating committee reports, committee chairs and senators recognised the high quality of services provided by secretariats in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drafting reports • dealing effectively with witnesses and clients • organising committee meetings and hearings • producing quality committee briefings • providing sound procedural advice • liaising closely with senators' offices. <p>The senators' survey revealed that the overwhelming majority of senators (92%) were satisfied with the provision of briefing papers, background research and draft reports.</p>
Timeliness	<p>Meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committee, as relevant.</p> <p>Tabling deadlines met in all but extraordinary circumstances.</p>	<p>Committee secretariats organised meetings, hearings, briefings and inspections in accordance with committee requirements, within constraints arising from the availability of members.</p> <p>New secretariats were established in time to support the first meetings of new select committees.</p> <p>Reports were drafted and presented to the Senate in accordance with the timelines set by committees and deadlines set by the Senate.</p>
Quantity	<p>Documentation is sufficient for committee purposes and material available to the public is available promptly, electronically or in hard copy.</p>	<p>Committee staff provided committee members, witnesses and others with documents in accordance with secretariat procedures, orders of the Senate and committee requirements.</p> <p>Upon tabling, reports were promptly made available to senators and others in both printed and electronic formats.</p>

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Analysis

The Committee Office administers legislative and general purpose standing committee secretariats, select committee secretariats and certain joint statutory committee secretariats. The staffing and administrative structure of the Office is outlined in Figure 15. It is led by the Clerk Assistant (Committees) who performs duties as a clerk at the table in the Senate chamber and as a committee secretary.

Figure 15 Elements and responsibilities of the Committee Office

Executive		
<p>Cleaver Elliott, Clerk Assistant Roxane Le Guen, Senior Clerk Procedural advice and training Planning and coordination Secretariat staffing and resources Statistics and records</p>		
Legislative and general purpose standing committee secretariats	Joint statutory committee secretariats	Select committee secretariats
Community Affairs <i>Elton Humphery</i> Economics <i>John Hawkins</i> Education, Employment and Workplace Relations <i>John Carter</i> Environment, Communications and the Arts <i>Ian Holland</i> Finance and Public Administration <i>Stephen Palethorpe/Christine McDonald (acting)</i> Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade <i>Kathleen Dermody</i> Legal and Constitutional <i>Peter Hallahan</i> Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport <i>Jeanette Radcliffe</i>	Australian Crime Commission <i>Jacqui Dewar</i> Corporations and Financial Services <i>Geoff Dawson (acting), Cleaver Elliott, Shona Batge</i> Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity <i>Jacqui Dewar</i>	Agricultural and Related Industries <i>Jeanette Radcliffe</i> State Government Financial Management <i>Stephen Palethorpe</i> Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities <i>Toni Matulick</i> Fuel and Energy <i>Roxane Le Guen, Naomi Bleaser</i> National Broadband Network <i>Maureen Weeks, Alison Kelly</i> Men's Health <i>Chris Reid</i> Climate Policy <i>John Hawkins</i>

During 2008–09, the Committee Office provided secretariat support to Senate and certain joint committees by:

- giving accurate and timely procedural advice and administrative support to facilitate and expedite the work of committees

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

Procedural changes and advice

Secretaries continued to provide procedural and administrative advice to committee chairs and members as well as to members of the public. This included people inquiring about the activities of committees and people proposing to make or making submissions to committees, as well as witnesses appearing before committees. Higher-level advice was also provided by the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Clerk Assistant (Committees) and Senior Clerk of Committees.

The advice, both oral and written, covered a wide variety of procedural issues, such as the establishment of inquiries, the drafting of terms of reference for inquiries, the membership of committees, and the interpretation of a wide range of standing orders relating to the operations of committees. As in previous years, issues relating to parliamentary privilege, such as the unauthorised disclosure of committee proceedings, the power of committees to call for both witnesses and documents, and the protection of witnesses, were prominent. Dealing with adverse reflections on persons made in evidence to committees also continued to be an issue on which advice was sought. Advice was also provided on a number of matters arising from estimates hearings.

Of particular note was the Senate's adoption of a new order for dealing with claims made by witnesses for the non-provision of information to a committee on the grounds of public interest immunity. The department made significant efforts to ensure that all prospective witnesses at estimates hearings were made aware of the new order. In addition to the usual publication of the order in the *Journals of the Senate* and the *Senate Notice Paper*, all departmental secretaries and estimates liaison staff in all departments were notified of the new order in writing before the budget estimates hearings in May 2009. Copies of the order were made available at all hearings and the order was read into the Hansard record of the proceedings of all committees. The order was the subject of numerous advices to committees and their members during the May 2009 hearings.

The Senate made a significant change to the legislative and general purpose standing committee standing order late in the reporting period, abolishing the single standing committees and replacing them with pairs of legislation and references committees. This re-established a committee structure which had been in place prior to 2006. The change occurred in May 2009, in time for the budget round of estimates hearings. The new pairs of legislation and references committees are each supported by a single secretariat using the administrative procedures used prior to 2006.

In addition to procedural advice, the office provided extensive training on committee operations and procedures to new senators, new staff of senators and new departmental staff.

Legislative and general purpose standing committees

Since the amendments to the standing orders, the Senate has had eight pairs of legislation and references committees established pursuant to Standing Order 25 as permanent committees.

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Permanent committees continue for the life of a parliament. They are re-established at the commencement of each new parliament, with their membership determined by the Senate.

During 2008–09, the Senate referred 135 matters to standing committees, 90 of which were bills or packages of bills. As shown in Table 2, those committees tabled 160 reports, excluding reports on estimates. In 2007–08 the committees tabled 101 reports.

Table 2 **Activities of standing committees**

	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Meetings (number)			
Public	150	90	307
Private	267	207	313
Inspections/other	11	3	7
Meetings (hours)			
Public	660	445	1,671
Private	130	70	109
Matters referred			
Bills/provisions of bills	79	50	90
Other ^a	27	39	45
Reports presented^b	109	101	160
Submissions received	3,028	3,905	6,296
Witnesses	1,860	1,165	2,556
Extensions of time granted	33	25	79

a Includes 16 annual reports.

b Excludes estimates; includes reports on annual reports.

As shown in Table 3, the usual cycle of estimates hearings was conducted during the year, commencing with a week of supplementary hearings for the 2008–09 Budget, held in October and November 2008. A week of additional estimates hearings were held in February 2009. The initial estimates hearings for the 2009–10 Budget took place between 25 May and 4 June 2009.

A significant variation in estimates hearings was caused by a resolution of the Senate, on 26 August 2008, requiring the holding of an additional day of hearings into Indigenous matters that would include all the portfolios with budget expenditure or responsibility for Indigenous issues. The first such meeting was held on 24 October 2008, the second on 27 February 2009 and the third on 5 June 2009.

Table 3 **Activities of committees considering estimates, 2007–08 to 2009–10 budget cycles**

Budget cycle	Hours of budget estimates hearings		Hours of additional estimates hearings	Total hours	Witnesses	Pages of evidence
	May–June ^a	October–November ^b				
2009–10	332	–	–	332	1,974	3,884
2008–09	322	176	166	664	5,758	10,191
2007–08	333	Not held	183	516	1,832	4,004
2006–07	334	187	194	715	4,329	9,335

a Main hearings.

b Supplementary hearings.

Overall, the 2008–09 budget cycle estimates involved 664 hours of hearings, an increase on the 2007–08 budget cycle. Sixteen reports on estimates were prepared by committees and tabled, eight after the budget estimates and eight following the additional estimates.

The activity of committees considering estimates generates considerable administrative effort for committee secretariats. Timetabling and coordination of the hearings is complex, involving all departments and statutory bodies of the Commonwealth. Extensive coordination with ministers is required to ensure that ministers are in attendance to take responsibility for questioning. The standing orders provide for only four of the eight committees to meet at one time, to facilitate senators being able to participate in the activities of more than one committee. Because of the requirement for senators to attend more than one estimates hearing, secretariats spend time coordinating and adjusting programs and timetables to enable senators to participate in hearings.

In the course of the estimates hearings, senators place many questions on notice. Secretariats devote a great deal of time to following up and publishing the answers to questions placed on notice. Typical numbers of questions placed on notice in the last budget hearings range from 213 before the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee to 732 before the Community Affairs Committee.

Select committees

A select committee is an ad hoc committee established by the Senate to inquire into and report on a specific matter or matters. In most cases, a select committee ceases to exist when it presents its final report. Often, select committees also present interim reports.

The Senate had eight select committees operating during 2008–09. Two of these committees, the Select Committee on Men’s Health (which operated for three months) and the Select Committee on Climate Policy (which operated for six months), presented their reports to the Senate during the reporting period and no longer exist.

The Committee Office continues to provide secretariat support for:

- one select committee established by the Senate on 14 February 2008, the Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries—due to report on 27 November 2009
- one select committee established on 19 March 2008, the Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities—due to report every six months and to present its final report on 30 September 2010
- two select committees established on 25 June 2008
 - the Select Committee on Fuel and Energy—due to report on 21 October 2009
 - the Select Committee on the National Broadband Network—due to report on 23 November 2009 (its terms of reference were revised by the Senate on 14 May 2009 and the reporting date was extended).

During 2008–09, select committees held 139 meetings (public and private), for a total of 390 hours. They received 8,620 submissions and heard 789 witnesses. The corresponding figures for 2007–08 were 43 meetings (public and private), for a total of 142 hours, 211 submissions and 207 witnesses.

Joint committees

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

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During 2008–09, the Committee Office supported three statutory joint committees: Corporations and Financial Services, the Australian Crime Commission, and the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity.

The committees held 96 meetings (public, private and inspections) for a total of 148 hours. They received 392 submissions and heard 188 witnesses. The corresponding figures for 2007–08 were 56 meetings, 61 hours, 72 submissions and 105 witnesses.

Meetings

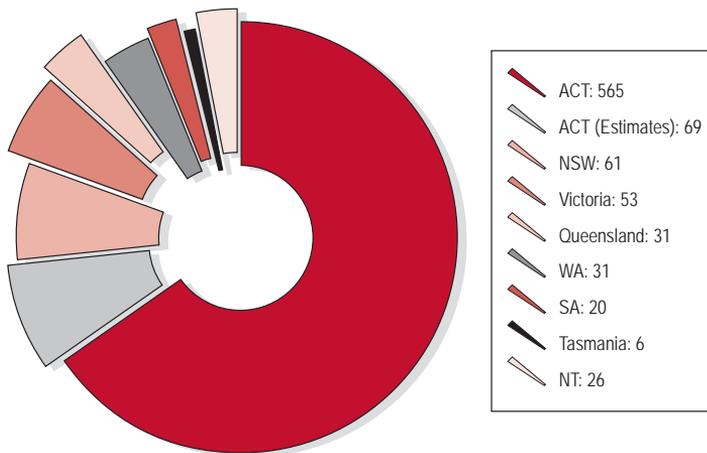
Senate committee secretariats supported 862 meetings, hearings and site inspections during the year, an increase compared with 451 in 2007–08. Those statistics include estimates hearings held by the committees.



Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities meeting at Balgo, August 2008

Committee members place considerable value on engaging a broad range of people as they conduct each committee inquiry. This is achieved through a variety of strategies: advertising of all inquiries in the national media and on the internet; direct correspondence with parties known to be interested in an inquiry; travelling interstate, including to regional centres and remote areas, to confer with witnesses and to visit the sites of matters under investigation; and conducting telephone and video conferences, including with witnesses overseas. The office has commenced discussions with stakeholder representatives regarding accessing material on the department's website. A breakdown of meetings by location appears in Figure 16.

Figure 16 Committee meetings by location, 2008–09



Development of a committee support database

Work continued on the development of the Senate Centralised Information Database. The purpose of this database is to assist committee secretariats in the speedy and accurate handling of the large volume of information used to support committee inquiries. Features of the database include the capacity for the public to enter submissions directly; for secretariats to rapidly collate data, such as addresses for mail-outs; and for information to be transferred electronically from witnesses to committee members. Early technical complications have been resolved and the system is now in place in seven out of a possible 15 secretariats. It is beginning to produce results by saving staff time and improving the office’s capacity to manage the very large numbers of submissions received by committees.

Contributions to the work of other offices

During 2008–09, Committee Office staff continued to assist other offices. Secretaries were supplied to two parliamentary delegations and committee secretaries regularly acted as presenters in the department’s training and seminar programs. In addition, secretaries provided briefings about Senate committee work for parliamentary delegations coming from overseas to learn about the operations of the Australian Parliament. Briefings about estimates hearings continued to be of particular interest to international visitors.

As in previous years, the department offered the Working in the Senate program, a program in which officers from other parts of the public service come to the Senate department to gain experience in the workings of the legislative arm of the Commonwealth. This program is run on a calendar year basis. In 2009 the department had two participants in the program. They were stationed in the Committee Office and provided administrative and research support to Senate committee inquiries.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

Workload

The significant feature of 2008–09 was the change in workload for committee secretariats, with a marked increase in the number of referrals of inquiries to committees by the Senate and the significant increase in the activities and workloads of all committees. This increase is indicated in Table 4.

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Table 4 **Committee workloads and resources, 2006–07 to 2008–09**

	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Number of references	96	89	125
Number of hearings held	237	171	326
Number of select committees operating	0	7	8
Number of staff	52	53	62

In 2007–08, it was noted that the reporting times for bills inquiries were shorter than ever before, with an average reporting deadline of 14.7 days. However, this average was taken over an unusually short period owing to an election being called. In 2008–09, bills referred to committees had a 35-day average reporting deadline. These statistics do not include weekends, which often have to be worked if a report is to be presented in time for tabling in the Senate.

This figure conceals the continuing trend of a requirement for very rapid inquiries into bills, with many bills being referred and reported on within either a week or a fortnight to meet the requirement to have the bill available for debate in the Senate. As an example of the significant time constraints which can be imposed, during the year two committees had matters referred to them with three working days within which to complete their work. Other committees had inquiries with reporting deadlines of four, five and eight days.

Short reporting deadlines make it difficult to complete the administrative work needed and require rapid support from Hansard and broadcasting. They also limit the amount of time that can be spent on analysing evidence and drafting reports. Another problem with short deadlines is that there is not enough time for interested members of the public to make submissions. Table 5 provides details of bills inquiries.

Table 5 **Referral of bills inquiries, 2006–07 to 2008–09**

	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Number of bills introduced into parliament	243	197	235
Number of individual bills referred	107	65	129
Proportion of total individual bills referred (%)	44	33	55
Packages of bills referred	79	50	90
Proportion of total packages of bills referred (%)	33	25	38

The statistics indicate a significant difference in the workload of Senate committees in the previous parliament (when the government held a majority in the Senate) and in the current parliament (when the government does not hold a majority in the Senate). Some of the department's service providers and suppliers believe that the high level of committee activity in the current parliament is atypical, when it is not—it is in fact typical of parliaments in which the government does not hold a majority in the Senate. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of the normal trends and fluctuations in workload across parliaments and election cycles, it is necessary to look at statistical material over the longer term. The following long-term tables should assist those who work with Senate committees to better prepare themselves for likely committee workloads in the next financial year.

Figure 17 Number of Senate committee references, 1995 to 2009 (calendar years)

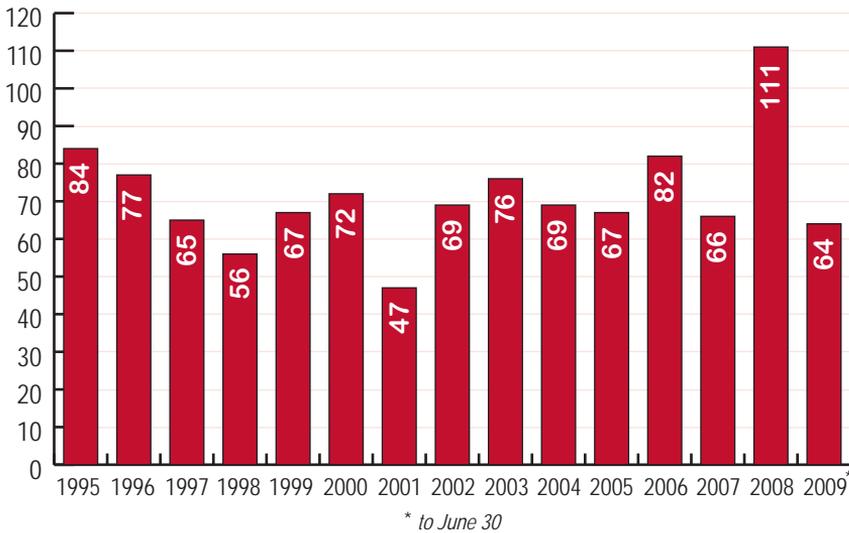
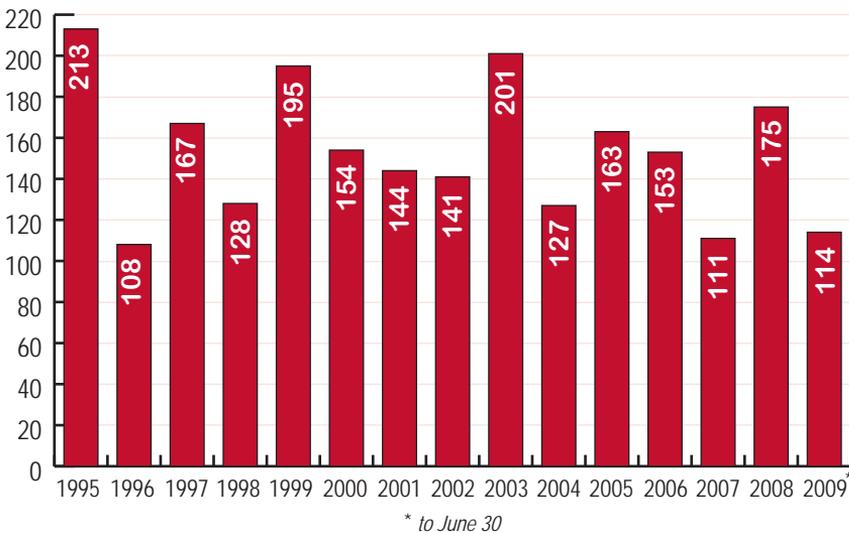


Figure 18 Number of Senate committee hearings, 1995 to 2009 (calendar years)



Resources

The resources available to the committee office to support the operation of Senate committees comprise a budget of \$9.0 million (\$6.8 million in 2007–08) and a team of support staff. The Committee Office’s full-time equivalent staff figure for 2008–09 was 62, an increase of nine from 2007–08. This increase was a direct response to the increasing pace of activity by all committees.

A series of strategies were deployed to manage the increased workload. They included:

- providing an increase from 2007–08 of 16 per cent in the staffing resources available for committee secretariat operations
- continuing the practice, reported in 2007–08, whereby staff from the committee secretariats experiencing lighter workloads were deployed to assist busier committee secretariats

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- securing secondments from other departments to assist with specific committee tasks, including serving as a committee secretary or assisting with research
- deploying officers from other areas of the department to assist committee secretariats in addition to carrying on their normal duties
- requesting committee staff to work additional hours (in some cases, a significant number of hours).

The last two strategies cannot be continued in the long term.

Senators have indicated—in estimates and other committee hearings, as well as to senior managers and in the senators' satisfaction survey—their concerns about the heavy workloads of some committee secretariats. One senator noted in the survey:

I appreciate that the committee secretaries have put in extraordinary hours in recent months. I believe we need to provide additional support when the pressure is on.

The typical staff structure of a committee secretariat supporting a legislative and general purpose standing committee comprises a committee secretary, a principal research officer, a senior research officer or a research officer and an estimates officer, and an executive assistant. Depending on the workload allocated to a committee, additional resources are often provided to assist with administration or with research, analysis and report writing.

The prime cost in operating a committee is for staffing, with a typical secretariat costing about \$308,000 a year. The other costs relate to administration and include items such as advertising, venue hire, refreshments at hearings, transport, including flights, charter flights and taxis, accommodation for staff at interstate hearings and report printing. The administrative costs for a typical secretariat over a year are about \$60,000.

The standing orders provide that committees are empowered to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee with the approval of the President of the Senate. While the most common source of information for Senate committees is free public evidence, access to specialist advice was made on two occasions during 2008–09:

- Rural and Regional Affairs—testing of fertiliser samples (\$1,204)
- Select Committee on Fuel and Energy—economic modelling (\$10,000).

The costs of senators' salaries are not included in the costs of committees, as it is not possible to establish what proportion of a senator's salary should be attributed to committee work. The flight and accommodation costs of senators attending hearings are paid by the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

Another major cost related to the work of committees is the cost of providing Hansard and broadcasting services for public hearings. Such expenses are borne by the Department of Parliamentary Services. Coordination and liaison in the provision of those services and in planning for the improvement and enhancement of those services is a major administrative task undertaken by officers of the Senate Committee Office and the Department of Parliamentary Services.

Evaluation

The principal means of evaluating the performance of the Committee Office in supporting Senate committees and certain joint committees is the biennial senators' survey. The latest survey, conducted in 2009, showed high levels of satisfaction with the work of secretariats. Some survey comments are set out in Figure 19.

Comments made in the chamber when a committee’s report is tabled or debated are another source of evaluation. As in 2007–08, senators were highly positive in their comments, some of which are listed in Figure 19.

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

Figure 19 **Senators’ comments on Committee Office secretariats**

‘The committee staff have continually impressed with their dedication and talent, and ability to pull off high-quality work despite the sometimes contradictory political demands placed on them.’

‘Over the years I’ve found the committees on which I’ve been fortunate enough to work to be well supported. When there have been problems, they have been ones that have been possible to work out. Again, we’re dealing with staff with a high level of expertise and skill and professionalism who, knowing the workload that many of them encounter, really do go above and beyond.’

‘Oh, they are all brilliant ... nothing’s a hassle for these people. Crises arise and they just deal with it. I think that sort of thing makes it much easier for us to do our jobs.’

‘The workload for Senate committees has increased dramatically over the past two years. Secretariat staff are to be commended for the hours they put in and support they give when attending Senate inquiries outside Canberra.’

‘I commend the staff ... for the hard work that they put into this entire exercise ... It is an extremely busy committee of the Senate, but it manages to produce high-quality reports on each occasion.’

‘I want to thank the staff of the committee, who do a tremendous job, year in, year out, in making sure that we, the senators who serve on that committee, look good by having high-quality reports available for the public to see.’

‘The sensitivity, the commitment and the professionalism of the people in the secretariat are what makes ... an effective committee.’

‘Professional, enthusiastic ... nothing is too much trouble ... briefing materials provided were outstanding ...’

The senators’ survey provided very useful information to assist the office in finetuning its provision of service to senators. For example, there was commentary about the lack of consistency in administrative procedures and documentation between committees. Although this was tempered with the remark that standardisation could only be used as a starting point and that each committee is best placed to decide its own practices, the office will examine the matter during the next reporting period.

Another factor raised, within the context of a 91 per cent satisfaction rating, was that ‘papers should be posted 24 hours ahead of the scheduled meeting time’. While meetings are often scheduled with much shorter lead times, the office will also examine this matter during the next reporting period.

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 4

Performance outlook

The level of Senate committee activity is likely to remain high during the next 12 months. The pattern of referring many bills with very short reporting deadlines is likely to continue. Now that references committees have been re-established, it is likely that there will be an increase in the number of general policy references.

The Procedure Committee report in April 2009 which recommended the re-establishment of the legislation and references committee system also forecast a general reduction in the number of select committees and the likely transfer of workload from select committees to references committees. This trend was becoming evident towards the end of the 2008–09, with two select committees completing their tasks. It remains to be seen whether the remaining select committees will complete their tasks during 2009–10 or whether they will be granted extensions of time. If, contrary to the forecast, the Senate decides to establish further select committees, the Committee Office will respond in the usual way by providing timely and effective secretariat support.

The Committee Office responded to the increased pace of committee activity throughout 2008–09 by increasing its staff numbers, and it will continue to monitor its resource levels in 2009–10. The key resource which the office provides to committees is its people. Several experienced officers are expected to retire in 2009–10, and the office will need to begin recruitment processes to find their replacements.

The office will continue to recruit and seek to retain staff with strong research, administrative, writing and procedural skills. It will also make use of secondments to assist with short-term increases in workload, making it easier to release officers if the workload diminishes. Officers from other departments coming to the Senate to participate in the Working in the Senate program will continue to be based in the Senate Committee Office.

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

Several factors arising from the senators' survey will be followed up, including streamlining the formats for providing supporting documentation, and increasing the speed of its production where timetables and committee preferences permit.

The office is adopting innovative ways to meet the needs of Senate committees by using information technology to reduce routine processing and improve productivity. To this end, the office will continue implementing the committee support database to assist secretariats to efficiently manage their inquiry processes. It is hoped that the secretariats not yet using the database will be using it by the end of 2009–10.

Two other innovations will be pursued by the Committee Office during the forthcoming year. As video footage taken from Senate hearings is increasingly being used for broadcast on television, a committee comprising the various chairs of Senate committees has initiated ways of identifying Senate footage, enabling the public to recognise it by means of a watermark. The office also hopes to continue exploring the feasibility of telecasting public hearings that are held interstate, in the same way that public hearings held in Parliament House are telecast.

Black Rod's Office

Output Group 5

Senators' services

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

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

Administered items

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

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	<p>The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.</p> <p>Advice, documentation and publications are accurate and of a high standard.</p>	<p>The 2009 senators' survey indicated that senators were satisfied or highly satisfied with the provision of support services. Levels of satisfaction were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • office support 85% • mail freight delivery 94% • information technology support 85% • payment of salaries and allowances 88%. <p>High levels of satisfaction (98%) were also recorded for the work of the chamber support staff.</p> <p>Senators provided positive feedback on accommodation moves undertaken as a result of new senators commencing from 1 July 2008.</p> <p>Satisfaction with the quality of advice, documentation and publications provided by the office remained high.</p>
Timeliness	<p>All support services delivered in a timely manner.</p>	<p>The office successfully completed accommodation moves for 60 senators, including moves associated with the commencement of new senators from 1 July 2008.</p>
Quantity	<p>All support services and supplies delivered in accordance with entitlements on request.</p>	<p>All support services were delivered in accordance with relevant legislation.</p> <p>The number of accommodation moves was very high.</p>

Analysis

To provide effective senators' services and corporate and other services for the department, the Black Rod's Office is divided into five functional areas, as shown in Figure 20. The office is headed by the Usher of the Black Rod, who, along with the Deputy Usher of the Black Rod, performs duties in the Senate chamber.

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

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

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 5

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Black Rod's Office for 2008–09 was 46, the same as for 2007–08.

The cost of providing support services to the Senate chamber, committees and senators in their Parliament House offices was \$3.1 million (\$3.2 million in 2007–08).

Figure 20 Elements and responsibilities of the Black Rod's Office

<p style="text-align: center;">Executive <i>Brien Hallett, Usher of the Black Rod</i> Procedural, ceremonial, security and administrative advice Membership of the Security Management Board Advice to the Presiding Officers' Information Technology Advisory Group and to the House and Broadcasting committees</p>			
Senators' Services Section	Information Technology Section	Human Resource Management Section	Financial Management Section
<i>Nick Tate, Deputy Usher of the Black Rod</i>	<i>Joe d'Angelo, Chief Information Technology Officer</i>	<i>Anthony Szell, Director Human Resource Management</i>	<i>Joe d'Angelo, Chief Finance Officer</i>
Accommodation Assets management, purchasing and disposals Chamber support Committee room support Desktop publishing Fire and emergency warden administration Mail and freight Office equipment (not including information technology) Printing and photocopying Protective security—advice, keys, access approvals, containers and security clearances Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on facilities, security, projects and maintenance matters Travel and fleet management Comcar shuttle	Information technology equipment, including personal computers Internet publishing Support for departmental information technology applications Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on information technology matters	Recruitment and staffing Pay and conditions Workforce planning Learning and development Occupational health and safety Rehabilitation coordination Industrial relations Performance management Corporate planning Records management Fortnightly internal staff newsletter— <i>Information Bulletin</i>	Budget management and advice Financial reporting and systems management Accounting policy development and advice Accounts processing, general ledger maintenance and advice Strategic procurement advice Support for management decision making

Ceremonial support services

The major ceremonial function in 2008–09 was the swearing in of the new Senate on 26 August 2008—14 senators took the oath or affirmation of allegiance for the first time, and the President and the Deputy President were elected.

The office also provided assistance to the Ceremonial and Hospitality Section of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in connection with the swearing in of the new Governor-General on 5 September 2008.

Senators' services

From 1 July 2008 until the end of the first sitting period in August, Senators' Services focused on moving 14 new senators into their Parliament House suites and completing the associated moves of ongoing senators.

The update of the *Senators' Handbook—A guide to services, entitlements and facilities for senators* was completed and available to senators from mid-July 2008.

The new online stationery shopping cart was implemented. It has proven to be very effective for both clients and administrators.

Office services

During 2008–09, the Black Rod's Office:

- completed 45 accommodation moves associated with the commencement of new senators on 1 July 2009
- completed a further 15 accommodation moves associated with ministry and shadow ministry changes and the retirement of a senator, and other minor moves
- completed 14 refurbishments of senators' offices and departmental areas
- managed the refurbishment of eight sets of senators' furniture (this program is ongoing, with the aim of completing the refurbishment of all senators' furniture over the next four years)
- provided support services for Senate estimates hearings in November 2008, February 2009 and May–June 2009
- installed multifunction devices for office-holders, excluding party leaders, in August 2008 (the installation of multifunction devices for party leaders is planned for the second quarter of 2009–10)
- replaced inefficient instant boiling water units in suites with fewer than six occupants with more appropriate equipment (this change is expected to realise energy savings of up to 92 per cent)
- managed the implementation of a new key system and the changeover of keys, in conjunction with the Department of Parliamentary Services
- assisted with the transition of asset data from an old database to an assets database integrated with the department's Financial Management Information System (the transition was completed in December 2008)
- negotiated and managed departmental aspects of projects administered by the Department of Parliamentary Services.

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

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 5

Planning

The department continued to develop and implement new security management, business continuity and intellectual property plans. It also provided significant support to the development of whole-of-parliament strategic, security and continuity plans.

Printing and delivery services

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

The office completed the replacement of four monochrome copiers which had reached the end of their economic life and were becoming unreliable. Due to the quick turnaround time required for the majority of work carried out by the printing subsection, the outdated copiers were replaced with four monochrome copiers capable of higher print speeds and extra finishing capabilities. The new copiers have proved to be a useful addition, allowing the printing subsection to complete its work more efficiently.

During 2008–09, the office completed 1,286 printing jobs. Of these, 370 were for committees, 684 were in direct support of Senate chamber activities and senators, and 20 were for other parliamentary departments. The total value of work produced was \$602,335, of which \$264,693 was allocated to committee work. This was an increase of \$120,343 on the previous year's total, reflecting the greater number of sitting days this financial year, as well as increased committee activity.

The office continued to provide a high standard of delivery services to senators and their staff and departmental staff. Scheduled delivery run times were met for all deliveries, including internal stationery deliveries. This included successfully assisting the Table Office to deliver the Budget and Portfolio Budget Statements papers on Budget night.

Construction has commenced on a new departmental delivery services mailroom, which should be completed by August 2009. The new accommodation will enable the mail and freight staff to co-locate and thereby provide a seamless, more efficient service.

Information technology services

The office continued work on the development of the Senate Centralised Information Database (SCID) to make the management of committee inquiries more efficient and effective. The first phase of the SCID application, accepting submissions online, was released to the Committee Office for use in 2008–09. With the exception of two committees, all new committee inquiries use the SCID system and offer the option for the public to provide submissions online.

A major replacement of the department's desktop computers was completed in 2008–09.

A new intranet design, mentioned in last year's annual report, was successfully implemented, improving access, usability and functionality. On the public website, a new 'video on demand' service was released, providing access to recordings of question time for the preceding two weeks. The section continued its efforts to maintain a high level of metadata and World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines compliance on the website.

Other high-priority activities for the section included:

- implementing and supporting a new project management framework for the department
- updating departmental information technology policies and procedures
- reviewing and testing security and disaster recovery plans for critical information technology systems
- assisting the Procedure Office to develop an online version of the successful public exhibition 'Peace, Order and Good Government'
- supporting Senate estimates hearings
- developing an integrated, secure, centralised scanning solution
- assisting departmental staff with the transition to Microsoft Office 2007
- streamlining the department's travel approval processes by introducing an online form featuring electronic approvals and acquittals
- implementing, in conjunction with office services, an online shopping cart for managing stationery.

The section continued to provide input to wider parliamentary projects and tenders managed by the Department of Parliamentary Services. The department continued to support the Australian Public Service Information and Communications Technology Apprenticeship Programme by hosting an apprentice.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

The implementation of new systems and processes, including the stationery shopping cart, the key management system and the assets database, has resulted in improved administration, accountability, asset management and reporting capability.

The Black Rod's Office continued to work with the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Department of the House of Representatives to implement new processes for project support. While the new processes require more time to be spent in consultation, this has improved the department's interaction with the other parliamentary departments.

The department was also part of a working group reviewing recommendations of the *Review by the Parliamentary Service Commissioner of Aspects of the Administration of the Parliament*. In particular, the working group examined opportunities for shared services arrangements for the delivery of corporate support activities. This group is due to report to the Presiding Officers (through the Clerks and the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services) in the second half of 2009. While services delivered directly to senators were out of scope of the working group's review, a parliament-wide approach to shared services may be appropriate in some limited circumstances.

Evaluation

The principal medium for evaluating the Black Rod's Office services is the biennial senators' survey. The survey, conducted in 2009, reported high levels of satisfaction. The office achieved a satisfaction rating of 94 per cent for its provision of support to senators, such as mail and freight, payment of parliamentary salary and allowances to senators and office holders, and accommodation.

Much of the office's work involves frequent direct contact with senators, their staff and other clients, presenting an ongoing opportunity to receive feedback on the office's services. This informal feedback continued to be very positive in 2008–09.

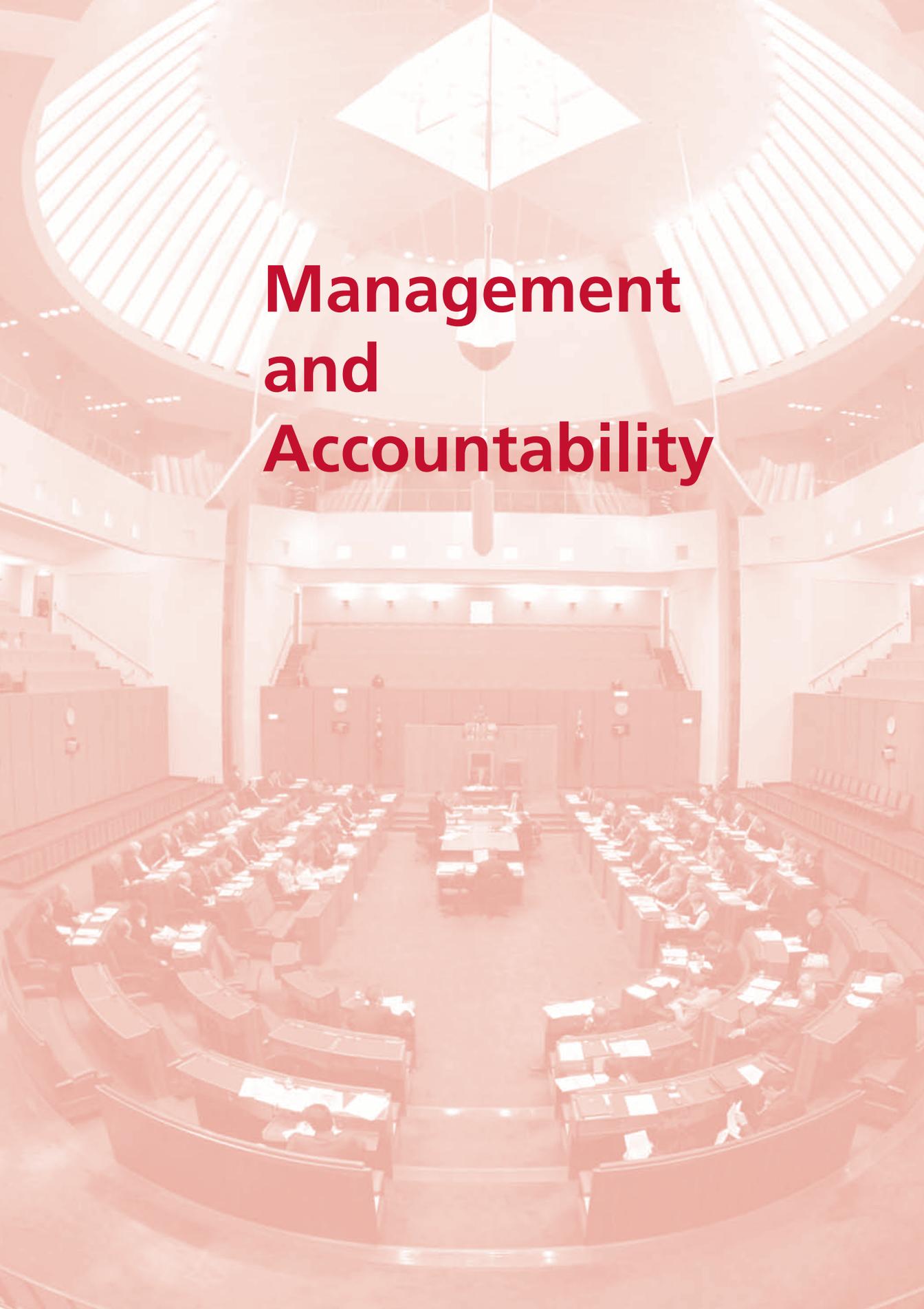
REPORT ON PERFORMANCE – OUTPUT GROUP 5

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

Performance outlook

In 2009-10, the Black Rod's Office will:

- replace executive chairs in senators' offices, and begin to roll out new office furniture to departmental staff and senators' staff
- roll out multifunction devices to party leaders
- move delivery services staff into the new mail room
- review the methodology and software tool used for the costing of printing and desktop publishing work
- upgrade the client management application to provide an improved user interface and improved reporting
- develop a proposal to improve current manual and information technology systems that individually manage committee room bookings; courtyard bookings; function requests; and film and photograph requests in conjunction with delegates from the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Department of the House of Representatives
- seek an improved storage solution for the department by reviewing both on-site and off-site arrangements in conjunction with the Department of Parliamentary Services sponsored accommodation review.



Management and Accountability