

Black Rod's Office

Outputs	
Provision of office, chamber and committee room support; information technology and ceremonial services; security advice for senators and Senate office-holders in Parliament House. Provision of support services, in conjunction with the Department of the House of Representatives, to the Former Members of Parliament Association.	
Performance information	Performance results
Services are provided to the satisfaction of the President, other office-holders, Senate committees and senators so that they are able to fulfil their roles.	Positive feedback from senators, their staff and parliamentary office-holders was received throughout the reporting period.
Services and materials are of a high standard, are provided promptly and are accurate. Formal and informal mechanisms will be used to measure.	Services and materials were delivered promptly and accurately.

Overview

The primary functions of the Black Rod's Office are to provide support services to the Senate chamber and committees and to senators when they are at Parliament House and to deliver administrative services to the department and its staff. The office is led by the Usher of the Black Rod and has five operational areas, as shown in figure 14. The Usher of the Black Rod undertakes formal and ceremonial roles in the Senate chamber, assisted by three senior staff.

The major factor influencing performance during the reporting period has been the cap placed on the number of full-time equivalent staff. A decrease from 42 to 35 full-time equivalent staff meant that all areas of the Black Rod's Office had to examine work processes to ensure that priority services continued to be provided to senators, the Senate and committees. Proposed changes to services which affected senators were raised with the Appropriations and Staffing Committee. In the small number of cases where concerns were raised, these were discussed further with senators and resolved. Levels of service and support to the Senate, senators and committees were maintained at a high level despite the reduced staffing level.

Figure 12 Elements and responsibilities of the Black Rod's Office

Executive			
Brien Hallett, Usher of the Black Rod			
Procedural, ceremonial, security and administrative advice Membership of the Security Management Board Advice to the Presiding Officers' Information Technology Advisory Group and to the House and Broadcasting committees			
Senators' Services	Information Technology	Human Resource Management	Financial Management
John Baczynski, Director Accommodation Assets management Chamber and committee room support Comcar shuttle Delivery services Fleet management Office equipment Printing and desktop publishing Project board membership Security advice and support	Joe d'Angelo,* Chief Finance and Information Technology Officer Information technology equipment Support for departmental information technology applications Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on information technology matters	Anthony Szell, Director Recruitment and staffing Pay and conditions Workforce planning Learning and development Work health and safety Rehabilitation coordination Industrial relations Performance management Records management	Joe d'Angelo,* Chief Finance and Information Technology Officer 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 senior management decision making

* till 28 April 2013

The regular work of the office involves frequent and direct contact with senators, their staff, parliamentary office-holders and other clients, all of whom provide regular informal feedback which is generally positive.

At a formal level, three Senate committees reviewed services provided by the department, and in particular the Black Rod's Office: the Senate House

Committee met twice during the reporting period; the Usher of the Black Rod joined the Clerk in appearances before the Appropriations and Staffing Committee and the department appeared at estimates hearings of the Finance and Public Affairs Legislation Committee.

As noted above, the full-time equivalent staffing level for the Black Rod's Office for 2012–13 was 35 (42 in 2011–12) and cost of running the office was \$2.4 million (\$3.3 million in 2011–12)

Senators' services

The Usher of the Black Rod and the Senators' Services Section assist the President and Clerk on ceremonial and other occasions, and also provide message delivery services to support the work of the Senate. In addition to the support provided while the Senate was sitting, the section also provided resources and advice to assist in the preparation for the National Apology for Forced Adoptions, which involved coordinating arrangements for access to the building and the Senate chamber galleries.

The Black Rod and the section also provided security advice and support throughout the year to the President and the department, including by way of the Black Rod's position on Parliament's Security Management Board.

The section continued to provide a range of office services to support senators, their staff and departmental staff to undertake their work at Parliament House, including

- general office support, asset management, maintenance of equipment and furniture, removal of classified waste, issuing of keys and stationery services
- coordinating transport arrangements and accommodation within the Senate wing
- accommodation moves for senators as result of resignations, filling of casual vacancies and ministerial reshuffles
- managing committee room bookings and providing support services to users of committee rooms.

During the year, provision of services was extended to assist in the establishment of the Parliamentary Budget Office, particularly in relation to temporary accommodation and parking facilities.

The section provided printing and delivery services for the department and, under contract, other parliamentary departments. Turnaround times were met consistently, ensuring that documents were available when required. In particular, timely printing assisted committees to meet deadlines for delivery of reports.

During 2012–13, the section completed 1,052 printing jobs. Of these, 362 were for committees, 545 were in direct support of Senate chamber activities and senators, and 25 were for other parliamentary departments. The total value of work produced was \$365,393, of which \$193,649 was attributable to committee work.

The section continued to provide a high standard of delivery services to senators, their staff and departmental staff even at peak times (for example, delivery of the May budget papers). Scheduled run times were met for all deliveries.

Whole of parliament activities

Throughout 2012–13, the section continued to work closely with the other parliamentary departments. In particular, the section:

- coordinated departmental aspects of infrastructure and security projects administered by the Department of Parliamentary Service (DPS)
- reviewed the department's Business Continuity Plan with reference to whole of parliament arrangements
- provided support and advice in relation to security matters within the Senate wing and the parliamentary precincts in collaboration with the Serjeant-at-Arms Office, DPS Security and the Australian Federal Police
- administered the Presiding Officers' Rules for Media Related Activity.

The Usher of the Black Rod worked closely with all parliamentary departments, formally through the Senior Management Coordination Group, the Security Management Board and the Heritage Management Board and as required in the management of the parliamentary precincts.

Human resource management

The Human Resource Management Section delivers human resource management services for the department, including payroll services for senators and departmental staff.

During the year, the section assisted in developing and implementing measures aimed at managing a reduced staffing budget. This included monitoring and reporting on staffing caps for the department and for each office.

The section supported the implementation of the Department of the Senate Enterprise Agreement 2012–2015, which commenced on 10 August 2012, and provided support to the Clerk in updating the collective senior executive determination. These employment frameworks continue to support the effective operation of the department.

The section continued to develop advice and seek clarification about the role and responsibilities of senators at Parliament House under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, and updated work health and safety policies and practices for staff.

Work commenced on enhancing payroll administrative processes for staff and senators. This included an independent audit of a sample of staff leave entitlements and the development of new payroll procedures.

In consultation with the other parliamentary departments, support and information was provided in relation to legislative changes made to the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* and its subordinate legislation.

Records management

The Human Resource Management Section completed planning for the greater use of electronic recordkeeping systems for non-parliamentary records. This was supported by a Senate Management Advisory Group report highlighting steps that needed to be taken to implement electronic recordkeeping for administrative records and some parliamentary records. Implementation of the recommendations of the report and staff training will commence in the next reporting period.

Financial management

During the year the Financial Management Section delivered the department's financial management, accounting and budgeting services. It administered the department's financial management information system, provided secretariat support to the Audit and Evaluation Committee, managed the internal audit contract and maintained the risk management framework and fraud control plan.

The section continued to ensure that the department complied with external reporting responsibilities, including audited annual financial statements and procurement requirements.

The section supported the department's budget process, including the preparation of new policy proposals, portfolio budget statements and internal budgets.

The section also provided monthly figures to senior managers to assist in monitoring and implementing the agreed cap on salary expenditure.

Audit of payment processing

In March 2012 the department received the new function of processing payments to shadow ministers. An administrative error saw the funds for that function drawn from an incorrect appropriation, an error replicated in each monthly pay until discovered in September of that year. The Deputy Clerk commissioned an internal audit of the matter. The department accepted and implemented the recommendations of that report, which focused on change control and verification measures. The Human Resource Management Section worked with the Financial Management Section to improve procedures.

Information technology systems

The Information Technology Systems Section provided senators with information technology hardware and support services throughout the year in their Parliament House offices, as well as limited support services and equipment away from Parliament House. The section provided similar support to the department and its staff.

Features of this work included:

- upgrading PCs to a Windows 7 standard operating environment
- rolling-out (in conjunction with DPS) the network faxing solution
- upgrading a number of departmental servers and applications
- supporting the redevelopment of SCID
- commencing an audit of senators' staff accounts.

As foreshadowed in the 2011–12 Annual Report, three web publishing positions were transferred to the Senate Public Information Office at the start of the reporting period. With the consolidation of parliamentary Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services within DPS (see below), the remaining staff and functions of the Information Technology Systems Section were transferred to that department at the end of the reporting period.

Consolidation of parliamentary ICT

A major focus of the reporting period was implementation of recommendations from the Presiding Officers' review of ICT for the Parliament.

One major change which affected the Senate department involved the establishment of a 'one stop shop' in the DPS for the provision of all ICT services, to commence from 1 July 2013. The office sought the necessary approval and undertook work to transfer three Senate department employees to DPS in accordance with the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*. At the end of the reporting period, planning was also well advanced for the transfer of assets and funding to DPS.

Performance outlook

Following the development of more streamlined processes in various parts of Black Rod's Office during 2012–13, the forthcoming year is expected to be a time of consolidation.

A major focus in the first half of 2013–14 will be the opening of the 44th Parliament, which the Black Rod's Office will coordinate.

Two other significant projects will be the replacement of television

monitors in the Senate wing following the switchover to digital television in Parliament House, and the introduction of a venue management application to replace the legacy system used for booking committee rooms and other spaces.

The final stages in the centralisation of parliamentary ICT will occur in the next reporting year, including the transfer of existing IT hardware, finalisation of support arrangements and agreement of ongoing service level guarantees.