

# Procedure Office

## Outputs

Advisory services and procedural support to non-government senators.

Drafting services to non-government senators.

Secretariat support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee, Scrutiny of Bills Committee, and Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.

Research and parliamentary information for senators, staff, public servants, officials from other parliaments, and the community; and support for inter-parliamentary relations.

Parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students.

| Performance information  | Performance results  |
|--|--|
| Procedural advice is accurate and timely, and support is provided to the satisfaction of senators.   | Senators and their staff continued to acknowledge the accuracy and value of procedural advice.   |
| Amendments and bills are drafted promptly, are legally sound, and are provided to senators in time for their use in the Senate chamber or elsewhere.   | Legislative amendments and bills were accurate, and were prepared within required timeframes and to the satisfaction of senators.  |
| Advice, documentation, publications and draft reports are accurate, of a high standard and produced to meet the required timeframes.   | Advice and documentation provided to, and publications prepared for, the scrutiny committees were accurate, of a high standard and provided within the timeframes set by the committees.   |
| Research and parliamentary information is accurate, timely and comprehensive. Seminars, lectures and other parliamentary information projects are provided to the satisfaction of target audiences, increasing their awareness of the work and role of the Parliament, in particular the Senate and its committees. Inter-parliamentary functions are supported to the satisfaction of stakeholders. | Accurate and comprehensive parliamentary research was provided within required timeframes. All seminars and lectures were held on time and in accordance with the programmed schedule, and public information projects were delivered in accordance with the required timeframes. Training was provided to the satisfaction of target audiences, demonstrated by consistently favourable feedback from evaluation processes. Inter-parliamentary functions were carried out to the satisfaction of stakeholders, demonstrated by consistently favourable feedback. |
| Education Centre teaching and other Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) projects accurately reflect the Parliament and its work. PEO teaching programs held on time and in accordance with booking schedule. PEO projects delivered according to programmed schedule.   | PEO website and publications were promptly updated to ensure accuracy and to accommodate electoral and other events. Teaching programs were consistently conducted in accordance with the booking schedule. PEO programs were managed and delivered in accordance with current implementation plans.   |

## Overview

The Procedure Office is led by the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and has four functional areas, as shown in figure 8.

**Figure 8 Elements and responsibilities of the Procedure Office**

| <b>Executive and legislative drafting</b>  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Maureen Weeks, Clerk Assistant</b>  |  |  |
| Procedural advice, support and training<br>Drafting of legislative amendments and private senators' bills  |  |  |
| <b>Public information and parliamentary research</b>   | <b>Parliamentary education</b>   | <b>Legislative scrutiny</b>  |
| <b>Tim Bryant, Director, Research Section</b><br>Publications, seminars, public lectures, exhibitions and research on parliamentary matters<br>Production of <i>The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate</i> | <b>Simon Harvey, Director, Parliamentary Education Office</b><br>Parliamentary education services and resources for schools, teachers and students | <b>Toni Dawes, Secretary, Scrutiny of Bills Committee</b><br><b>Ivan Powell, Secretary, Regulations and Ordinances Committee</b><br><b>Ivan Powell, A/g Secretary, Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights</b><br>Secretariat, advisory and administrative support to the committees |

The office provides a range of advisory, research and public information services closely aligned with the role and work of the Senate, including legislative drafting services and support for the Parliament's legislative scrutiny committees. The Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) produces educational programs and resources for schools, students, teachers and others. The office also supports the Parliament's international programs.

The demand for procedural and legislative services is substantially driven by the requirements of senators and the Senate chamber. The work of the secretariats of the legislative scrutiny committees is similarly driven by the volume of legislation coming before the Senate and the requirements of senators.

The Procedure Office monitors levels of satisfaction with its performance through formal and informal channels such as letters, emails, phone calls, seminar evaluation forms and direct advice from senators and their staff, educators, students, and members of the public. This continuous performance appraisal assists the office to make timely and responsive adjustments to the ways in which it delivers its services.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Procedure Office in 2014–15 was 29 (29 in 2013–14). The cost of providing the services of the Procedure Office in 2014–15 was \$5.6 million (\$5.6 million in 2013–14).

## Procedural support

In 2014–15, the office assisted non-government senators and their staff by providing advice, both written and oral, relating to the role and work of the Senate and its committees, and the Parliament more generally. There was strong demand for such advice, particularly during sitting periods.

Advice was sought and provided on many issues of Senate procedure, but also more broadly to include, for example, the provisions in section 53 of the Constitution, the legislative process and the disallowance process for delegated legislation.

Staff of the office ensured the accuracy of advice by researching appropriate precedents and consulting other departmental officers—principally the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk. Advice was non-partisan, consistent, and provided to senators and their staff in a timely fashion.

In 2014–15, the office prepared an average of 10 procedural scripts per sitting day for senators' use in the chamber, typically related to matters such as orders for the production of documents, the suspension of standing orders or other procedural devices, committee references and unanswered questions on notice.

The office also checked material for procedural accuracy on request from senators and their staff. The advice provided was accurate and provided in time to enable senators to use the material in the Senate and elsewhere.

## Legislative drafting

In 2014–15, the office provided legislative support to senators by drafting amendments to bills and drafting private senators' bills, primarily for non-government senators.

The office drafted and circulated 145 sets of committee of the whole amendments, and drafted numerous amendments that were not circulated, because, for example, they were drafted for use outside the chamber to inform negotiations between parties. This is an increase on the number of amendments prepared in the previous year and demonstrates a return to a full legislative program. Six bills attracted a large number of amendments, reflecting the interests of a greater number of cross bench senators and often involving different options for the Senate to consider on the same issue.

Where amendments were framed as requests to the House of Representatives, in accordance with section 53 of the Constitution, the office also produced statements required under Senate procedure explaining the applicability of section 53 and the precedents of the Senate.

The office also prepared and circulated 30 second reading amendments.

Private senators' bills continued to be used as vehicles for individual senators and non-government parties to advance debate across areas of interest. In 2014–15, the office drafted 62 private senators' bills, of which 30 were finalised for introduction. A number of other bills were drafted to different stages of development.

Notwithstanding the unpredictable levels of demand, the complexity of some proposals and finite resourcing, the office met all timeframes for the drafting of amendments and bills. These services form a substantial part of the support provided by the department to the legislative work of senators. Consistent feedback from senators and their staff confirmed the value and quality of the advice provided by the office.

Table 2 summarises senators' use of the office's legislative drafting and procedural services in recent years.

**Table 2 Legislative drafting and procedural advice services provided to senators**

| Service                                      | 2011–12 | 2012–13 | 2013–14 | 2014–15 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Committee of the whole amendments circulated | 505     | 651     | 222     | 145     |
| Second reading amendments circulated         | 26      | 21      | 24      | 30      |
| Private senators' bills introduced           | 26      | 37      | 32      | 30      |
| Procedural scripts prepared                  | 559     | 529     | 484     | 626     |

## Support for legislative scrutiny committees

During the year, the Legislative Scrutiny Unit provided secretariat, research and administrative support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee, Scrutiny of Bills Committee and Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.

The committees examine all bills and instruments according to their terms of reference. In 2014–15:

- the Regulations and Ordinances Committee secretariat examined 1,653 legislative instruments (1,614 in 2013–14) and provided draft comments on 86 legislative instruments (117 in 2013–14). In addition, 236 legislative instruments were identified in relation to subsection 33(3) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901* (relating to the identification of that subsection where it is relied on in relation to the making of an instrument).
- the Scrutiny of Bills Committee secretariat examined 228 bills (192 in 2013–14) and provided draft comments on 86 bills (64 in 2013–14)
- the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights secretariat examined 240 bills (191 in 2013–14), providing draft comments on 69 bills and Acts (71 in 2013–14); and examined 2,000 legislative instruments (1,954 in 2013–14), providing draft comments on 28 legislative instruments (37 in 2013–14).

The secretariats also produced material arising from the work of the committees for use in the Senate and for publication. This included:

- the Scrutiny of Bills Committee Report and Alert Digest, tabled each Senate sitting week. The secretariat also prepares a 'Scrutiny News' email, which is sent to all senators and their staff each sitting week to highlight recent committee comments
- the Regulations and Ordinances Committee Delegated Legislation Monitor (each Senate sitting week)
- the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Report (each sitting week of both the Senate and House of Representatives).

The secretariats made progress in key IT projects by continuing to streamline the legislative instruments and bills databases and by harmonising workflows and processes to support the work of the committees.

## Public information and parliamentary research

The Research Section helps raise awareness of the role and work of the Senate by coordinating a range of public information activities and producing publications and exhibitions.

### Seminars, training programs and lectures

During 2014–15, the section coordinated and delivered seminars and professional training programs for senators and their staff, parliamentary staff, public service officers and others, and a series of lectures for the general public.

The section prepared an orientation program for new senators whose terms commenced on 1 July 2014 and coordinated and delivered procedural support for new senators appointed to casual vacancies throughout the year. Nine seminars were offered to senators' staff to provide specialised training about the operations and procedures of the Senate and its committees. Five bespoke training sessions were also undertaken for the new staff of senators.

A new internal website to assist new senators and their staff to navigate the work of the Senate was launched on 1 July 2014. Developed in collaboration with SPIO, it is designed to complement face-to-face training by senior staff. It will continue to be developed with informative content and departmental contacts.

Fourteen seminars on aspects of Senate practice were provided for approximately 310 public service officers. This represented an increase in both seminars and attendees for the first time in three years. A further two seminars were provided to community groups. Staff from across the department contributed to the delivery of the seminar series.

The section arranged 10 public lectures during 2014–15 as part of the department's occasional lecture series on aspects of Australian governance and democracy, attended by approximately 1,100 people. Lectures are generally live-streamed and are available 'on demand' on ParView. Transcripts are also made available on the Senate website.

The Research Section also runs the Australian National Internships Program in partnership with the Australian National University, which involved placing 39 students with senators and members in their Parliament House offices in 2014–15.

### **Publications, exhibitions and conferences**

The section continued to produce publications and exhibitions with a focus on the work and role of the Senate and its committees and the operations of the Parliament.

One edition of the department's free journal, *Papers on Parliament*, was edited and published during 2013–14. Work also continued on volume 4 of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate* containing biographies of senators whose terms concluded by 2002.

The section continued a collaborative project with the House of Representatives to develop 360 degree virtual tours of the parliamentary chambers, a Senate committee room and the Federation Chamber. The virtual tours, to be released by the end of 2015, will give people who are unable to visit Parliament House views of and information about how the work of Parliament is done. The section also created new displays for the Making Laws exhibition on the law-making work of the Parliament.

The department contributed to the commemoration of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Magna Carta by releasing a second edition of its booklet, *Australia's Magna Carta*, hosting a lecture by the British High Commissioner on Magna Carta, and commencing preparations with the Rule of Law Institute of Australia for a Magna Carta Symposium in October 2015.

The department also commemorated a 100 years since events of World War I by hosting two public lectures and providing a dedicated search function on the online Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate identifying those senators who served.

## **Parliamentary Education Office**

The PEO delivered an extensive range of educational services to schools, teachers and students and worked closely with members and senators to identify and address their requirements.

Highlights of PEO activities in 2014–15 included:

- development of additional PEO website resources for teachers and students, including videos (such as a three-part video exploring the important role of the parliament during World War I), Your Questions on Notice (a new interactive feature) and new *Closer Look* papers aimed at secondary students
- regular postings on significant parliamentary events and statistics and the introduction of a carousel of advertisements for PEO resources, including those developed to promote the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta
- the development and promotion of PEO teaching resources, including units of work, to support the draft national curriculum in civics and citizenship

- tailored training programs, briefings and seminars for student teachers from universities and student groups visiting Parliament House, visiting staff from Australian and international legislatures and other visiting groups
- the detailed examination of the potential of inter-active video conferencing, to assist the PEO to discharge its national responsibilities.

The PEO works with and reports to the PEO Advisory Committee, jointly chaired by the Deputy President of the Senate and the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, and works closely with stakeholders in other parliaments, parliamentary and government departments and educational institutions.

The PEO continues to support the work of the National Capital Civics Education Group, a forum which brings together education and outreach managers from civic and citizenship institutions in the Parliamentary Triangle. The Group met on three occasions during the year with the PEO providing the convenor. Through this forum and independently the PEO closely monitored the development of the national curriculum in civics and citizenship.

Throughout the year the PEO continued to invest resources in support of members' and senators' educational activities with students. In addition to providing them with an annual allocation of PEO resources and promotional items, the PEO facilitated the involvement of members and senators in PEO teaching programs, both at Parliament House and during outreach programs. The PEO also maintains a range of educational resources, which members and senators can personalise for use in their electorates or States or Territories. A new resource, *Representing You*, which explains the role of members and senators in representing their constituents was developed and is proving popular.

### **Education Centre activities**

The PEO Education Centre provides parliamentary education programs for school students and teachers from around Australia visiting Parliament House. Through its facilitated role-play program, the PEO Education Centre offers the opportunity to explore four key functions of the Parliament: legislation, representation, formation of government and scrutiny.

In 2014–15 parliamentary education role-play programs were delivered to more than 90,000 students visiting Parliament House, 3 percent more than in 2013–14. The PEO role-play program remained very popular and operated at or close to capacity for much of the school year. Program demand remained highest between the months of May through to November.

The PEO reviewed and amended procedures for visiting school groups to ensure compliance with enhanced security arrangements at Parliament House, and a new venue management system, incorporating a school booking component, was implemented.

## **Outreach and educational resources**

The PEO outreach program ‘Parliament Alive’ provides an opportunity to deliver parliamentary role-play programs to schools around Australia. Three week-long programs were conducted involving more than 3,100 students from 62 schools. In mid-April 2015, an outreach program visited regional Victoria (the electorates of Gippsland and McMillan) with Senator Ricky Muir, Senator Janet Rice and Mr Russell Broadbent MP participating. The second outreach to suburban Adelaide (electorates of Kingston, Wakefield, Makin and Port Adelaide) was conducted in late April to early May with the participation of Mr Tony Zappia MP, the Hon Mark Butler MP, the Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP and Senators Alex Gallacher and Bob Day. A third outreach visited north central New South Wales (electorate of Parkes) in mid-May with Mr Mark Coulton, MP participating.

Several PEO programs were also successfully delivered to remote locations by interactive video conferencing.

The PEO produced and maintained a wide range of high quality online and multimedia services and other resources. Publications and resources were constantly updated to maintain their currency and reflect significant parliamentary developments, including changes in the membership of the Senate.

To further enhance accessibility of PEO resources (particularly for rural and remote schools), the PEO continues to develop new ways of providing its resources. It maintains a strong web presence through an extensive website, which in 2014–15 was expanded with new video material, an interactive parliamentary timeline and enhanced information and statistics recording the current work of the parliament. The website has a contemporary feel which is designed to broaden its audience appeal. During the year it recorded more than 900,000 visitor sessions, a 25 percent increase on the previous year.

## **Joint ventures and other programs**

In 2014–15 the PEO assisted the National Youth Science Forum, sponsored by the Australian National University, to provide a summer study program for almost 400 outstanding senior secondary school science students from around Australia. The students examined legislative work and Senate committee processes through role-play and a related program of professional development for science teachers was also conducted.

The PEO also again collaborated closely with Rotary International to conduct the Rotary ‘Adventure in Citizenship’ program in Budget Week 2015 for Year 11 students from across Australia. The program, which has been conducted for more than twenty years, offers participating students a unique opportunity to experience the work of the Parliament, meet members of parliament and participate in an intensive parliamentary learning program.

## Inter-parliamentary relations

The Australian Parliament's international program focuses on parliamentary engagement, cooperation and strengthening, with an emphasis on parliamentary relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

As foreshadowed in last year's annual report, and as a result of the review of the international program commissioned by the Presiding Officers in 2013, the International and Community Relations Office was restructured and two separate offices established with responsibility for different aspects of the Australian Parliament's international program. The International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO), established in July 2014, manages the incoming and outgoing delegation programs, membership of inter-parliamentary organisations, and the international interests and travel of members and senators. The Parliamentary Skills Centre (PSC), established in August 2014, has responsibility for all parliamentary strengthening and capacity building assistance programs undertaken by the Australian Parliament. In addition, and as a result of the review, a new Inter-Parliamentary Relations Advisory Group was established consisting of two parliamentarians (appointed by the Presiding Officers in consultation with the whips), the heads of the parliamentary departments and the Parliamentary Librarian. The role of the group is to provide advice to the Presiding Officers and to develop a strategic plan for the international program.

Activities and projects in 2014–15 were coordinated primarily through IPRO and the PSC, with input from all four parliamentary departments. IPRO and the PSC are funded jointly by the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives.

### Parliamentary engagement

During 2014–15, IPRO coordinated 20 official visits overseas, including bilateral visits to six countries, attendance at seven assemblies, conferences, workshops and seminars, and 10 other visits, including Presiding Officer visits and the annual committee exchange visits to New Zealand and the Pacific, Asia and China. There were 10 official visits to Australia by parliamentary delegations from other countries as guests of the Australian Parliament and 28 other visits. A significant regional focus was maintained in the visits program. Eleven of the 20 overseas visits were to countries in Asia or Oceania, with 4 of the 10 official visits to Australia being from parliaments in our immediate region, including the first official parliamentary delegation from Fiji in 12 years.

The Presiding Officers approved the introduction of a multi-country Latin American delegation visit to Australia which took place in August and September 2014.

In addition, a trial was undertaken of a new program – the 'parliamentary field visit'. The visit, to Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, was driven by consideration of policy issues, rather than by geographic destination, and is intended to allow parliamentarians with a particular interest in an issue to deepen their understanding and report back to the Parliament. Following the success of the first visit, two further field visits were approved on the outgoing delegations program for 2015.

## Parliamentary cooperation

The Australian Parliament maintained its commitment to regional and international parliamentary cooperation. In 2014–15 delegations attended the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, two Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) assemblies, the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum and the Australian and Pacific Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference.

In June 2015 IPRO organised a visit to the Parliament from the Secretary-General of the IPU. A focus of the visit was opportunities to strengthen parliamentary democracy in the Pacific region.

## Parliamentary strengthening

Following the changes outlined above, the international parliamentary strengthening work of the Parliament was coordinated through the PSC. The major focus of the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program during the year was capacity building to support the re-establishment of the Fiji Parliament and the ongoing development of the Papua New Guinea Parliament.

The Parliament continued to provide support for capacity-building programs and responded to requests for assistance from other parliaments and international organisations, including through collaborative work with the PSC. A highlight of professional development activities at the international level was the Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, coordinated by the PSC. The Program took place over ten days in March 2015. Senior staff from national parliaments in Brazil, China, Germany, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand and Zimbabwe participated.

Contributions were also made to study programs for Members and staff of a number of parliaments, including those of Bahrain, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Japan and Papua New Guinea.

## Performance outlook

In 2015–16, the Procedure Office will continue to provide its procedural and legislative services to meet the requirements of the Senate and senators and to support the work of the legislative scrutiny committees. Training and seminar programs will continue, with the focus on providing tailored programs to senators and their advisers.

The Research Section will further develop the *Navigating the Senate* website, launch the virtual tours of Parliament House and organise Parliament House Open Day in September 2015. The section will also inaugurate an annual lecture series commemorating the work of the late Clerk of the Senate, Mr Harry Evans, and will also hold a one-day symposium to discuss Magna Carta's relevance to 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia.

The scrutiny committee secretariats will continue their work and progressively prepare and release detailed notes on the work of the committees.

Demand for the PEO's education programs is expected to remain strong, as demonstrated by forward bookings for the remainder of 2015 and 2016. The PEO will continue to develop and adapt resources to support the new national curriculum in civics and citizenship

and will further explore options to improve the accessibility and delivery of parliamentary education programs to schools and students unable to participate in PEO programs at Parliament House. The PEO will continue to evaluate the potential of interactive video conferencing and explore the possibility of acquiring an in-house capability.

In the first half of 2015–16, 20 outgoing delegations (including committee visits, parliamentary field visits and attendance at assemblies) and six official incoming parliamentary delegations are scheduled. Delegation visits over the second half of the year, in particular outgoing delegations, are expected to decrease as the 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament draws to a close.

Parliamentary strengthening programs administered through the PSC will remain a priority area for the international program, and initiatives and activities established under the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program and the Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships Project will continue to be supported.

It is expected that the strategic plan for the international program, developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Relations Advisory Group, will be formalised during 2015–16.