

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.

Parliamentary and research 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 including through responses to an evaluation survey.
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.
Parliamentary research information is accurate, timely and comprehensive. Seminars, lectures and other parliamentary information projects are provided to increase the 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. Seminars and lectures were held 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 stakeholders, demonstrated by consistently favourable feedback from evaluation processes. Inter-parliamentary functions were carried out to the satisfaction of stakeholders.
Education Centre teaching programs 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 role-play programs, website and publications were promptly updated to ensure accuracy and to accommodate electoral and parliamentary events. Teaching programs were consistently conducted in accordance with the booking schedule. PEO projects 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 9.

Figure 9 – Elements and responsibilities of the Procedure Office

Executive and legislative drafting		
Maureen Weeks (July 2016 to March 2017)		
Jackie Morris (May 2017 to June 2017), Clerk Assistant		
Procedural advice, support and training		
Drafting of legislative amendments and private senators' bills		
Public information and parliamentary research	Parliamentary education	Legislative scrutiny
Tim Bryant, Director, Research Section Publications, seminars, public lectures, exhibitions and research on parliamentary matters Production of <i>The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate</i>	Tim Grainger (September 2016 to June 2017), John Studholme (July 2016 to September 2016) Director, Parliamentary Education Office Parliamentary education services and resources for schools, teachers and students	Anita Coles, Secretary, Scrutiny of Bills Committee Toni Dawes, Secretary, Regulations and Ordinances Committee and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights 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. The work of the secretariats of the legislative scrutiny committees is similarly driven by the volume of legislation coming before the Senate and any additional inquiries undertaken by the committees.

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 was supplemented during the reporting period by a survey of senators and their staff to gauge satisfaction with legislative drafting and procedural advice services.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Procedure Office in 2016–17 was 28 (28 in 2015–16). The cost of providing the services of the Procedure Office in 2016–17 was \$5.5m (\$5.7m in 2015–16).

Procedural support

In 2016–17, the office assisted non-executive 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 provided on many procedural issues including the constitutional powers of the Senate, the legislative process, the process for disallowance of delegated legislation, reference of matters to committees and opportunities for debate.

Staff of the office ensured the accuracy of advice by researching appropriate precedents and consulting other departmental officers particularly the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk. Advice was non-partisan, consistent, and provided to senators and their staff in a timely fashion often within extremely short time frames.

In 2016–17, the office prepared an average of 15 procedural scripts per sitting day for use by senators in the chamber. This was an increase on the previous year when an average of 12 scripts per sitting day were drafted. These scripts assist senators to pursue matters of concern to them through, for example, orders for the production of documents, committee references and following up 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 2016–17, 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 142 sets of committee of the whole amendments, comprising 667 individual amendments. This was a reduction on the 1,158 amendments circulated in the previous year though an increase on the 119 sets of amendments circulated in 2015–16. A further 81 sets of amendments to 39 different bills were drafted but not circulated, because, for example, they were drafted to inform negotiations between parties or as an alternative position to circulated amendments.

In accordance with section 53 of the Constitution, 25 sets of amendments were framed as requests to the House of Representatives. For these requests, 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 43 second reading amendments (an increase on the previous year, when 22 second reading amendments were circulated).

Senators and non-government parties continued to use private senators' bills as a means of furthering policy debate and, in some cases, influencing the government to pursue legislative action. In 2016–17, the office received requests for 64 private senators' bills, of which 21 bills were introduced. The remaining bills were at various stages of drafting or were not proceeded with.

Given that 2016–17 included part of the election period, the level of demand for legislative drafting services was unusually high.

Table 1 summarises legislative drafting and procedural services provided to senators over the last four years.

Table 1 – Legislative drafting and procedural advice services provided to senators, 2013–14 to 2016–17

Service	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Committee of the whole amendments circulated	222	825	1158	667
Second reading amendments circulated	24	30	22	43
Private senators' bills introduced	32	30	17	21
Procedural scripts prepared	484	626	593	701

Feedback from senators and their staff confirmed the quality of the advice provided by the office. In particular, 23 responses were received to an electronic survey seeking feedback from senators and their staff regarding the legislative drafting and procedural advice services provided by the office. Survey responses revealed very high levels of overall satisfaction with the timeliness and quality of those services (all respondents considered those services to be either excellent or good). A few respondents acknowledged the high workload of the office sometimes delayed drafting of private senators' bills and expressed the view that additional resources should be made available for that purpose.

Support for legislative scrutiny committees

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

The committees examine all bills and instruments according to each committee's terms of reference. The committees report each sitting week on the scrutiny review undertaken and also report annually, outlining their work for each year and highlighting the significant matters they have pursued.

The Regulations and Ordinances Committee secretariat examined 1,483 legislative instruments (1,976 in 2015–16) and drafted 12 *Delegated legislation monitors*, containing comments on 480 legislative instruments (189 in 2015–16), raising matters related to the committee's scrutiny terms of reference (under Senate standing order 23).

The Scrutiny of Bills Committee secretariat examined 254 bills (189 in 2015–16) and drafted 12 reports, containing comments on 115 bills (75 in 2015–16), raising matters relating to the committee's scrutiny terms of reference (under Senate standing order 24).

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights secretariat examined 255 bills (187 in 2015–16) and drafted 10 reports containing comments on 64 bills (43 in 2015–16), raising matters relating to the committee’s scrutiny terms of reference (contained in the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011*). The secretariat also examined 1,720 disallowable and exempt legislative instruments (2,370 in 2015–16) and drafted comments on 44 instruments (96 in 2015–16). In addition, the secretariat provided support for an inquiry referred to the committee by the Attorney-General regarding freedom of speech. The committee held nine public hearings and produced a report on the inquiry.

The work of the committees in scrutinising bills and instruments supports parliamentary consideration of legislation in a number of important ways, including:

- influencing the drafting of bills and legislative instruments so that they conform with human rights obligations and good legislative practice;
- improving explanatory material;
- informing consideration of issues in legislation committee reports;
- informing debate in the Senate and the House of Representatives; and
- resulting in amendments to bills and the disallowance of legislative instruments.

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 2016–17, the section coordinated and delivered seminars and professional training programs for senators’ staff, parliamentary staff, public service officers and others, and a series of lectures for the general public.

Nine seminars were offered to senators’ staff to provide specialised training about the operations and procedures of the Senate and its committees. One seminar was cancelled following the simultaneous dissolution. Six bespoke training sessions were also delivered to new staff of senators. Staff training seminars were well attended and anecdotal evidence indicates that the subject matter is appropriate and well received.

Twenty one seminars on aspects of Senate practice were provided for 537 public service officers. This was the third consecutive increase in both seminars and attendees since 2013–14. A further seminar was provided to a community group. Staff from across the department contributed to the delivery of the seminar series which successfully met the learning objectives of those participating. Evaluation surveys of participants indicated that 92 per cent considered that their learning objectives had been fully met.

The section organised two orientation seminars for new senators who commenced their terms on 1 July 2016. The three-day program in August and a full day program in October 2016 focused on administrative arrangements, the operations and procedures of the Senate and its committees, as well as services provided in Parliament House.

Feedback indicated that the program is regarded by new senators as an essential part of their preparation for legislative duties. The section also maintains online information to augment the training program for senators and their staff and to provide accessible information to staff located outside of Canberra.

The section arranged ten public lectures during 2016–17 as part of the department’s occasional lecture series on aspects of Australian governance and democracy, attended by approximately 900 people. Lectures are generally live streamed and are available ‘on demand’ on ParView. There were 222 online views of the lectures in the reporting period. Transcripts of the lectures are made available on the Senate website. The department convened the annual Harry Evans Lecture, commemorating the service of the longest serving Clerk of the Senate. The lecture was presented by Professor Anne Twomey on 4 November 2016 with 180 people in attendance.

The Research Section also runs the Australian National Internships Program in partnership with the Department of the House of Representatives and the Australian National University. Due to the 2016 election, no students were placed with senators and members in semester two 2016. The intake of students for semester one 2017 increased to 87, of which 43 were placed with senators and MPs.

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.

Two editions of the department’s journal, *Papers on Parliament*, were edited and published during 2016–17. Volume 4 of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate* was launched by the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon. Stephen Parry on 28 February 2017. The volume contains biographies of senators whose terms concluded between 1983 and 2002. This brings to a close a project that commenced in 1993 to record the lives and careers of senators who served in the first one hundred years of the Senate. The complete Biographical Dictionary is available online.

Parliamentary Education Office

Jointly funded by the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives, the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) delivers parliamentary education services to teachers, students and other learners across Australia through:

- experiential learning programs that enable students and teachers to understand and engage with the work of the Parliament
- comprehensive websites covering fundamental concepts such as representation, law-making, the separation of powers and responsible government
- teaching resources aligned to the Australian Civics and Citizenship Curriculum.

To date, almost 2.3 million students have expanded their knowledge of the role, function and value of the Australian Parliament through participating in a PEO program.

Education Centre activities

Regarded as a highly effective method of parliamentary education, the PEO's immersive learning program at Parliament House continued to run at capacity, with 88,169 students from 1,621 schools across Australia participating in 2016–17.

While these figures represent a very small decrease on the previous period, student participation rates at Parliament House remain ahead of most national institutions in Canberra and parliaments in a number of significantly larger countries.

Outreach, online and classroom resources

The PEO maintained its focus on providing and expanding options for schools, students and teachers unable to travel to Canberra.

In 2016–17, the PEO delivered three weeks of outreach to 3,585 students in 64 schools in Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

The PEO's primary website, www.peo.gov.au, continued to perform strongly, with 1.35 million visitor sessions (representing a total of 3.06 million pageviews) over the past year. Similarly, the PEO's supporting websites – Your Questions on Notice, the Federal Parliament History Timeline and To Our Last Shilling – remained popular, each recording increases in visitor sessions in 2016–17.

Dedicated video conferencing capability – allowing the PEO to run 'virtual' education sessions in classrooms across Australia – was successfully introduced, with full implementation of the technology in teaching programs expected in the coming year.

In response to the release of version 8.3 of the Australian Curriculum, the PEO made significant updates to education resources – including lesson plans, assessment rubrics, activity sheets and videos – for teachers of students in Years 6–9. In addition, the PEO produced and distributed a range of publications about the Parliament, including:

- 11,049 copies of the *Australian Constitution Pocket Edition*
- 6,864 copies of *Get Parliament*, an easy-to-understand booklet that explores Australia's system of governance
- 3,386 copies of *Role-play the Parliament: a Teacher's Guide*, a step-by-step guide to conducting immersive parliamentary education in the classroom.

Support for Senators, joint ventures and other initiatives

In 2016–17, the PEO delivered several tailored education programs, including:

- Rotary Adventure in Citizenship, a week-long program for 25 Year 11 students from around Australia
- committee and chamber debate role-play sessions for over 400 Year 12 students participating in the 2017 National Youth Science Forum
- professional development to assist 40 science teachers incorporate civics and citizenship in their work as part of the Australian Science Teachers Association's STEM X Academy.

In conjunction with the Parliamentary Skills Centre, the PEO facilitated *The Outrigger – Navigating Gender Equality through Pacific Parliaments*, a three-day training workshop on gender equality for parliamentary clerks and senior officers from 13 nations around the Pacific.

The PEO continued to support and assist senators and members engaging with schools and students. During the year, five senators and 99 members met with students undertaking a PEO program at Parliament House.

Senators and members are also offered an annual allocation of materials to support their educational activities: 35 senators and 116 members requested their allocation in 2016–17 (an increase of 25 per cent from 2015–16).

Inter-parliamentary relations and capacity building

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.

Activities and projects in 2016–17 were coordinated primarily through the International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO) and the Parliamentary Skills Centre (PSC), with input from all four parliamentary departments. IPRO manages incoming and outgoing delegation programs, membership of inter-parliamentary organisations, and the international interests and travel of senators and members. The PSC is responsible for all parliamentary strengthening and capacity building programs of the Australian Parliament.

IPRO is administered by the Department of the House of Representatives and funded jointly by the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives.

Parliamentary engagement

During 2016–17, IPRO coordinated 12 official visits overseas, including bilateral visits to 10 countries; attendance at 6 assemblies, conferences, workshops and seminars; and other visits, including Presiding Officer visits. There were seven official visits to Australia by parliamentary delegations from other countries as guests of the Australian Parliament, and 23 other visits coordinated by IPRO or the PSC, including a range of capacity-building activities.

A regional focus was maintained in the visits programs. 19 of the 30 visits to Australia were from parliaments in the Asia-Pacific region, including the annual visit by a combined delegation from ASEAN countries. Four of the 12 overseas visits were to countries in Asia or Oceania.

In October 2016, the Presiding Officers hosted the second annual MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia) Speakers' Consultation in Hobart, Tasmania. The meeting was attended by more than 120 delegates from the five member countries. The speakers met in Hobart to consult on the topic 'Open parliament for open government', which generated a wide-ranging discussion on the challenges, solutions and benefits of maintaining open parliaments.

The work of incoming and outgoing parliamentary delegations continued to be promoted through the Parliament of Australia website, including publication of short articles and video interviews with delegation leaders.

Parliamentary cooperation

The Australian Parliament maintained its strong commitment to regional and international parliamentary cooperation in 2016–17. However, due to the timing of the election, the parliament was not represented at some association assemblies. Nevertheless, delegations attended an Inter-Parliamentary Union assembly and the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum.

Parliamentary strengthening

The PSC has responsibility for coordinating the parliament's capacity-building activities. The centre is funded by the Department of the House of Representatives and draws on the support of members, senators and colleagues from throughout the parliamentary service, as well as some state and territory parliaments. The centre facilitates the parliament's capacity-building and parliamentary strengthening activities with Pacific Island nations and other countries' parliaments.

The PSC continued to coordinate activities under the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships Program (largely funded by the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) and the work of the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project (funded under the Australian Government's Pacific Women's Shaping Pacific Development Initiative), with assistance provided by the PEO. The major focus of the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program during the year was work with the parliaments of Fiji and Samoa.

Staff from all parliamentary departments contributed to study programs for visiting members and staff of a number of overseas parliaments. In March 2017, an Inter-Parliamentary Study Program was conducted for parliamentary staff, with participants from China, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu.

Performance outlook

In 2016–17, 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.

The historically large number of senators on the cross bench has increased demand for procedural and legislative drafting support and advice for non-executive senators in this Parliament. In order to support the needs of these senators, duties of staff in the rebadged Procedure and Research Section will be revised to provide increased focus on providing support to the chamber. In addition, the Office of Parliamentary Counsel has agreed to provide legislative drafting training to Procedure Office staff in order to enhance the drafting skills of the office and respond to increased demand for these services.

The numbers of bills and legislative instruments examined by the legislative scrutiny committees was reasonably consistent with previous years, though higher than expected considering the election period at the beginning of the year. The workload of the Legislative Scrutiny Unit in coming years will largely be determined by the number of additional inquiries undertaken by the legislative scrutiny committees.

With advance bookings for learning programs at Parliament House remaining high, the PEO will continue to explore strategies to effectively meet demand and maintain program quality in 2017–18. As part of this, the PEO expects to increase options for students and schools unable to travel to Canberra, including a greater use of video conferencing and digital technology, to extend and enhance access, and help teachers deliver parliamentary education in their own classroom.

Demand for training and seminar programs, including requests for bespoke programs for departments and agencies, was increasing towards the end of the year and this is expected to continue in 2017–18. The office will continue to give priority to providing tailored training to new senators and their advisers.