

Black Rod's Office

Outputs

Chamber, committee room, office and printing support, ceremonial services, and security advice. Corporate services, including payroll services for senators and departmental staff, and support to the Clerk in meeting public governance, performance and accountability and certain record keeping requirements.

Support services, in conjunction with the Department of the House of Representatives, to the Association of Former Members of the Parliament of Australia. (AFMPA).

Financial management and human resource corporate services to the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO).

Performance information	Performance results
Services are provided to the satisfaction of the President, office holders, Senate committees and senators so that they are able to fulfil their roles.	Services were delivered within timeframes and legislative requirements. Consistently positive feedback from senators, including office holders, and their staff was received throughout the reporting period.
Provision of corporate services facilitates the operations of the Senate and meets accountability obligations under the law and to the Senate.	Services were delivered within timeframes. Services supported the Clerk as the accountable authority to meet legislative obligations and the requirements of the Senate.
Services to the AFMPA are of a high standard, are provided promptly and are accurate.	Support was provided to the AFMPA as required and to a high standard.
Provisions of services to the PBO is of a high standard and is in accordance with the memorandum of understanding which includes a service level agreement.	Services were delivered to the satisfaction of the PBO.

Overview

The primary function of the Black Rod's Office is to provide support services to the Senate, including to Senate committees and to senators at Parliament House, and to deliver certain corporate services to the department. The office is led by the Usher of the Black Rod and has three operational areas, as shown in figure 13. The Usher of the Black Rod is supported by an Executive Officer.

The Usher of the Black Rod undertakes duties in the Senate chamber, including clerking and ceremonial roles, assisted by four senior staff and the chamber attendant team, among others. A major focus for the Black Rod's Office during this reporting period was assisting with various accommodation moves in the Senate wing of Parliament House due to the high number of vacancies that occurred as a result of decisions of the High Court in relation to section 44 of the Constitution.

The Usher of the Black Rod represented the department at cross-parliamentary forums including the Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group and the Security Management Board. The Usher of the Black Rod also administered the Presiding Officers' *Rules for Media Related Activity in Parliament House and its Precincts* as the President's delegate.

The Black Rod's Office maintained its high level of service and support to the Senate, the President, senators and committees during this reporting period.

Figure 13 – Responsibilities of the Black Rod’s Office

Executive

Brien Hallett, Usher of the Black Rod²

Fiona O’Loughlin, Executive Officer to the Usher of the Black Rod

Procedural, protocol, ceremonial and security advice.
 Advice on corporate and certain parliamentary administrative matters.
 Membership of the Security Management Board.
 Support to the House Committee.
 Secretariat support to various committees including the Senate Standing Committee of Senators’ Interests and the Audit Committee.

Senators’ Services	Human Resource Management	Financial Management
John Baczynski, Deputy Usher of the Black Rod and Director, Senators’ Services Agency security advice and support Information technology security advice Accommodation Equipment management Chamber and committee room support Comcar shuttle liaison and coordination Delivery services Fleet management Office equipment Printing Project board membership Furniture replacement project	Anthony Szell, Director, Human Resource Management Recruitment and staffing Pay and conditions Learning and development Work health and safety Rehabilitation coordination Industrial relations Performance management Records management Services to the PBO	Michelle Crowther, Chief Finance Officer Financial management and advice Financial reporting and systems management Asset management Accounts processing Strategic procurement advice Support for senior management decision-making Services to the PBO

The regular work of the office involves frequent and direct contact with Senate office holders, senators and their staff, and other stakeholders, all of whom provide regular informal feedback which is generally positive. The work of the Black Rod’s Office was also subject to scrutiny by the Appropriations, Staffing and Security Committee and the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee in estimates hearings.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Black Rod’s Office for 2017–18 was 36.2 (34.3 in 2016–17) and the cost of running the Office was \$3.3m (\$2.9m in 2016–17).

² At 30 June 2018

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 chamber, committee room and message delivery services. Three officers from other sections of the department shadowed the chamber attendants to learn the job and provide additional support if required.

During the reporting period the section also provided certain office support services to senators, their staff and departmental staff.

The printing and delivery services section commenced printing the Notice Papers and *Journals of the Senate*. Over the period, service turnaround times were met consistently, ensuring that documents, including committee reports, were available when required. The section also provided a high standard of delivery services to senators, their staff and departmental staff. Scheduled run times were met for all deliveries.

The section facilitated 40 suite moves for senators in the Senate wing of Parliament House as a result of vacancies, and ministry and shadow ministry changes.

The furniture replacement project continued and approximately 75 per cent of suites have had their furniture replaced.

The section also represented the interests of senators and the department in relation to building projects that continued throughout the reporting period. One such project was the modification of a senator's suite to improve accessibility and related adjustments to a senator's place in the Senate chamber.

Security advice

The Usher of the Black Rod and the Deputy Usher of the Black Rod provided security advice and support to the President, Senate committees, other senators and the department. Security matters continued to have an increased profile in Parliament House during the reporting period as a range of physical security upgrades continued to be rolled out.

The Usher of the Black Rod and Deputy Usher of the Black Rod worked with colleagues in the Department of Parliamentary Services' Security Branch, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office and the Australian Federal Police, providing input into security matters from a Senate perspective.

Human resource management

The Human Resource Management Section deliver human resource management services for the department, including the administration of certain allowances paid to senators and payroll services to departmental staff.

During the period a new enterprise agreement was approved by the Fair Work Commission covering non-SES staff and new determinations covering SES staff were also made.

Records management

The Human Resource Management Section, which is also responsible for the administration of certain records, commenced work on digitisation of Class A in camera records.

Financial management

The Financial Management Section deliver financial management, accounting and budgeting services, and supports the Clerk in meeting his governance and accountability obligations. The section administers the department's financial management information system and oversees the fraud control framework.

During the reporting period, the section continued to provide assurance to the Clerk and other senior officers that the department had complied with financial reporting responsibilities, including audited annual financial statements and procurement. It also supported the department's budget process, including the preparation of the portfolio budget statements and internal budgets.

The section also implemented a new expense management system during the reporting period.

Corporate services for the Parliamentary Budget Office

The department provides certain financial management and human resource corporate services to the PBO on a fee-for-service basis. This is done in accordance with a memorandum of understanding which includes a service level agreement.

During the reporting period, the memorandum of understanding for the delivery of these services was reviewed and updated. The PBO expressed satisfaction with the department's delivery of certain corporate services functions during the period. Services provided by the department included transactional human resource and financial management services.

Performance outlook

Key priorities for 2018–19 are planning for the opening of the 46th Parliament and working with the Department of Parliamentary Services on the scoping of a transactional business centre. The next reporting period will also see the retirement of incumbent Usher of the Black Rod, Brien Hallett, and the appointment of his replacement, John Begley.