



Clerk's Message

Dear Alumni

It is some considerable time since I last communicated with you. Since then there has been much action in the life of the House. Earlier in the year we saw a number of the by-elections, including five on one day - 22 June 2018, referred to as "Super Saturday". This year's by-elections brought to the House two new Members as well as a number of Members who were returned after resigning because of issues to do with their eligibility under section 44 of the Constitution.

Later in the year we had a change in Prime Minister. This resulted in a further by-election when the former Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, resigned his seat of Wentworth. This by-election was won by an independent Member moving the Government into a minority government position. This was further exacerbated when the sittings resumed in late November with a Liberal Party member, Julia Banks, the Member for Chisholm, choosing to sit as an independent.

Needless to say, the final two weeks of sittings were very testing both for the government and for the staff of the Department. We continued to test new procedural ground, adding to the entries that will appear in the

forthcoming edition of the House of Representatives Practice (see below).

One matter that will be of interest to Alumni is that the Australian Parliament has re-joined the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the CPA has been re-constituted.

The CPA's purpose is to connect, develop, promote and support parliamentarians to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA brings parliamentarians and parliament staff together to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify benchmarks of good practice and new policy options they can adopt or adapt in the governance of their societies. The CPA was first established in 1911 with the Australian Parliament one of six founding Branches. As at December 2016, the CPA has 180 active Branches worldwide. It is very pleasing to see the Commonwealth Branch re-join.

In August we saw the completion and launch of the seventh edition of The House of Representatives Practice, the flagship publication of our practice and procedure. It captures the breadth of the House's practice, not just that related to the Chamber, but also the support for committees and for Members. In sending it out to interested parties, it has become evident how highly regarded it is. It has already made its mark on the proceedings of the House and represents a major contribution by the Department to the long term institutional framework of the House.

Speaking of institutional development, I wanted to draw to your attention an exciting project that currently is underway. The project, to be



undertaken in association with the Australian Dictionary of Biography at the Australian National University, will produce biographies of all the Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks of the House of Representatives since Federation. In addition to the individual biographies, which will be published on the Parliament House website at the conclusion of the project, we will also produce short linking-pieces on the evolution of these key offices since Federation. The completion of this project will tell a story of the House that is broader than that reflected in the day to day political reporting of the House.

A very successful Open Day was held on Saturday, 6 October. The focus of the Open Day was the 30th anniversary of the opening of Parliament House. In addition to the opening of the building on 9 May 1988, the first sitting in the new building occurred on 22 August 1988.

I understand there were 8,643 visitors recorded as having attended the Open Day, a very satisfactory result. There was a wide range (and perhaps wider range than on recent occasions) of activities to attract, and distract, visitors. Our display on committees attracted interest, and visitors were very keen to see the Chamber and the Speaker's Office (including the Mace).

The Open Day was also the occasion of the inaugural Speaker's lecture. We

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were very fortunate to have Paul Kelly, Editor-at-large with The Australian deliver the lecture. The topic of the lecture was "The Parliament in its new home: the House of Representatives in action 1988 – 2018". As Paul has reported on the whole of this period, including having written major works on the Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard governments, he was very

well placed to provide a prospective on how the House had changed during this period. We have printed copies of the lecture and you can obtain a printed copy by contacting my office on 6277 4111. Alternatively it is available to watch on line at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDm4NfrWOC0>.

Unfortunately, because of the late finish of the sittings it was not possible to fit

in an Alumni function this year. It is proposed to hold a function in the New Year when we are, hopefully, guaranteed of warm weather. The function will be held in the Formal Gardens at Parliament House on Friday, 8 February 2019, from 5.30-7.30pm. I hope to see as many of you there as possible.

David Elder
Clerk of the House



Where are they now?

We find one of our Alumni colleagues to see what he is up to.

JOHN HESSION

John Hession joined the Department (DHR) at a politically auspicious time. It was the week of one of the most controversial chapters in Australian history—The Dismissal in November 1975. And John revelled in it! He can just be seen at the back of the famous photo taken on the front steps of Old Parliament House when Sir David Smith read out the proclamation dissolving the Parliament.

Before joining DHR, John was a cadet journalist with Reuters at the Sydney Stock Exchange. He was conscripted into National Service from 1969 to 1971, serving in the Education Corps in the Northern Territory and Papua New Guinea. After two years of further tertiary studies at the University of New England John joined the Taxation Office in Canberra.

In 1975, he was recruited to the Table Office, and worked with Maurie Hopman, Phil Barnes, Jim Pender, Ian Harris and Bernard Wright. He also worked in the Committee Office at the Hotel Canberra (now the Hyatt) until 1981, when he moved on to the Superannuation Fund Investment Trust in Civic.

However, John was not ready to leave the parliamentary service forever. He returned to Parliament, joining the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff (Hansard), in February 1986 and worked on committee transcripts at the old Government Printing Office in Kingston.

While working at Parliament, John was always willing to assist Paul 'Harry M' Felsman by participating in lunchtime



▲ John and Stephanie at lunch at the Hyatt Hotel (formerly the Hotel Canberra where John once worked)

tennis and squash games at a moment's notice. Working at Kingston meant he could sometimes wander across the road to the Railway Station to catch the evening train home to Bungendore. This peaceful existence came to an end when Hansard staff were moved into Parliament House in 1991.

John has fond memories of working as an editor at Hansard on committee transcripts and occasionally travelling with committees, particularly the committee inquiry into the ABC and the racing industry, where he could use his knowledge of horse racing. John was a part-time local bookmaker from 1983 to 1993, where he rubbed shoulders

with many Runyanesque racing identities such as Mad Mick, Johnnie the Pom and Kenny the Christian.

John attended district race meetings from Pambula to Kembla, and from the Harden Picnics to the Wagga Wagga Gold Cup. At this time John also became a 'multimedia personality', running Hession's Session on SSS Radio in Canberra every Saturday morning. Two of his more memorable interviews were with well-known racing officianos Andrew Peacock and Bob Hawke.

While living in Bungendore, John also ran farms near Braidwood—at Mongarlowe from 1982 to 1988 and later at Tarago. The farms provided agistment for a multitude of Hession family pony-club horses and fattening calves. They also provided the firewood that kept family and friends warm on cold Bungendore and Canberra nights. The farms also earned him the nickname 'Squire' at Hansard.

John became a Queanbeyan local in 1989 and then moved to Yarralumla in 1997, from where he now kayaks on the lake, cycles and does long lunches with friends. Despite no longer working at Parliament, he has a keen interest in current affairs and in keeping up-to-date with world happenings. John's interest in racing has waned of late, but he retains his in-depth knowledge of horse breeding.

John is married to award-winning author Dr Stephanie Owen Reeder, who he met while they were both working at Hansard. Between them, they have five children and five grandchildren, who keep them very busy!



Alumni Annual General Meeting, 21 November 2018 —Co-chairs report

We have been privileged to act as co-chairs for the Department of the House of Representatives Alumni for a third consecutive year.

While this year has not been an active one for the Alumni, we continue to appreciate the ongoing links to the Department and former colleagues afforded through the Association. Of course we all enjoy the annual Alumni Reception and recognise the efforts of the Department in organising this.

We particularly appreciate the support of the Clerk, David Elder, and his staff. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of Tracy Weston in providing her support to the Alumni and look forward to our continuing relationship.

A number of Alumni members attended the Parliament House Open Day in October to celebrate 30 years of operation of this building. They were privileged to serve in various capacities to support the visiting public and it was a great success with more people having access to special parts of the building such as the Chamber and Speaker's Office.

We had the opportunity to recently speak with Dan Barton (see below for another of Dan's interests), a former Senate officer who runs an informal group of previous Senate staff and friends. He was keen for any interested Alumni members to be included on his list and offered to advise our group of any future activities.

The Alumni Newsletter continues to provide members with interesting

insights into the careers and lives of former colleagues and we read with sadness about the passing of some of these colleagues. These reflections are very important to Alumni members and keep memories of the Department in our minds. The editor Jim Pender is very interested in new articles and encouraged people to volunteer their stories.

We thank Jim Pender for his ongoing efforts in producing the Newsletter and Dean DaCosta who has acted as Secretary for a number of years.

We look forward to increasing Alumni activity in 2019.

Office bearers for 2018-19

At the AGM Michael Salkeld and Carolyn Scheetz were re-elected as co-chairs, Dean DaCosta was re-elected as secretary and Jim Pender was re-appointed Newsletter editor.

All alumni present at the meeting, those who tendered an apology and others who are currently listed as Board members were deemed to be Board members unless they had indicated otherwise. No one had so indicated therefore all were welcomed to the Board.

Email addresses

In the past email addresses for alumni have been provided to and held by the Department. Until now if alumni Board members wished to contact fellow alumni they had to rely on the good offices of the Department's People Strategies Office. Your Board is not able to make direct contact with you!

At the recent annual general meeting this matter was discussed and the meeting determined that an approach should be made to each alumnus to see

if you would be willing to make your email address available to the secretary, presently Dean DaCosta.

If you are willing could you please email a 'Yes' to Dean at the following address:

DHRalumnisec@gmail.com

Parliamentary rugby union 50th anniversary

Dan Barton, formerly an officer of the Department of the Senate, is putting together an article for the ACT Brumbies magazine to mark the 50th anniversary of Parliamentary Rugby Union. Several alumni including former Clerk, Doug Blake, who were involved in Parliamentary Rugby teams since 1968 have been helping Dan in this endeavour. If any alumni has any memories of these matches, originally against the ABC, Dan would like to hear of them. He can be contacted at danbarton50@gmail.com

For the diary

The annual reception is to be held on Friday, 8 February 2019, 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. in the Formal Gardens opposite the House of Representatives Entrance, Parliament House.

RSVP by 1 February 2019 to Alumni.reps@aph.gov.au

Further information

For any further information on alumni events or information please contact email - DHRalumnisec@gmail.com, Alumni.reps@aph.gov.au or go to the blogspot - <http://depthouseofrepsalumni.blogspot.com.au/>



HAPPY NEW YEAR