



Clerk's Message

Dear Alumni

This will be my last contribution to you as Clerk of the House of Representatives before I join you in the ranks of the Alumni. At this stage I am expecting to retire in early August after the conclusion of the first three sitting weeks of the House in the 46th Parliament.

That naturally brings me to the outcome of the Federal election and the makeup of the 46th Parliament.

It would not be unfair to say that the election outcome was somewhat of a surprise to many. However, it has returned the Morrison Government with a relatively slim majority, not unlike the position of the Turnbull Government at the start of the 45th Parliament. Needless to say, I think my colleagues in the Department can expect an interesting time over the course of the next three years.



▲ The Official Secretary to the Governor-General, Paul Singer MVO reading the Proclamation at the front of Parliament House.



▲ The Clerk, David Elder and the Official Secretary to the Governor-General, Paul Singer MVO signing copies of the Proclamation that Prorogued the Parliament and Dissolved the House of Representatives.

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We have welcomed the new Members of the 46th Parliament, 27 in total, at a seminar for new Members. The number of new Members is the smallest there has been for many years. Like all previous intakes, it will be interesting over time to see how the "Class of 2019" makes its mark.

Prior to the election, of course we had the end of the 45th Parliament marked by the usual ceremony, on 11 April 2019. You will be pleased to know that many of the same ceremonial procedures are followed, with the Official Secretary to the Governor-General reading the Proclamation on the forecourt of

Parliament House proroguing the Parliament and dissolving the House of Representatives. The Proclamation is then placed on display outside the House of Representatives Chamber. I have included some photographs of the ceremonial events.

On other matters, you will be interested to know that the Federation Chamber (originally known as the Main Committee) has marked its 25th anniversary. The Main Committee first met on 8 June 1994. Since its beginning its role has expanded significantly and it has become an essential component in the way the House does its business. It would be very difficult to imagine

the work of the House without the Federation Chamber. The work has become so well regarded that it has been copied (in a different form) by the United Kingdom House of Commons. And there has been recent interest from both Canada and Malaysia.

As well as the week beginning 1 July being the Opening week of the 46th Parliament, it has also seen the swearing in of the new Governor-General, General David Hurley, AC, DSC, FTSE. General Hurley succeeds General Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC, whose official portrait was unveiled in Parliament House on 20 June 2019. The portrait can be viewed in the public area on level 1, Parliament House.

I look forward in the future to meeting you all as one of the Alumni.

David Elder
Clerk of the House



▲ The Clerk, David Elder and the Official Secretary to the Governor-General, Paul Singer MVO posting the Proclamation outside the House of Representatives Chamber.

Where are they now?

We find some of our Alumni colleagues to see what they are up to.

MARGARET ATKIN

Margaret Atkin worked in the Department of the House of Representatives (DHR) from February 1973 to September 2010.

Prior to joining DHR, Margaret had worked for two Governors-General. She was recruited from Navy Office to work at Government House on the staff of Lord Casey, and later as Personal Secretary to Sir Paul Hasluck. Her work there involved a visit to Papua New Guinea (prior to independence), preparing personal confidential reports to The Queen and many speeches. She was also involved in preparations for the Royal Visit to Australia in 1969. Later, Margaret attended one of the Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace, London, and had a working holiday in England during 1971 and 1972.

Margaret's DHR career started as an agency employee in February 1973 – supporting the Serjeant-at-Arms and Deputy. One memory – towering Malcolm Fraser visiting to obtain some stationery items. Most members took stores away, but he asked for

it to be delivered to his office – like every backbencher in those days he had no staff. Margaret then occupied a permanent position in the Bills and Papers Office, preparing messages, plus managing the papers and bills documents, and being the 'face' to individual members and Ministers (who also had few staff). This included Joan Child who was Labor's first female Member (and only the fourth female to sit in the House). She presented herself to the Bills and Papers Office shop-front, to request a copy of a Bill – with a handbag on her arm. It was such an unusual sight! Also, Margaret remembers Prime Minister Whitlam who, on at least one occasion, wanted to borrow overnight the last 'tag' copy of a voluminous report. It came back the next day, pencil-annotated throughout!

The Whitlam years were tumultuous for the country, but also for DHR staff. Many sittings with late hours unfolded, with a huge legislative agenda, often contentious. Record numbers of divisions were recorded and checked manually, plus bills (many with similar subject or names) were introduced. The



▲ Margaret Atkin

Bills' manual checking process, that Margaret managed, was repetitive and time-consuming; she being part of a small cell of dedicated staff. Margaret compiled the first Bills Officer duties manual. Margaret was part of the support team for two Joint Sittings, where new rules and procedures were applied, and she worked through the historical events of 1975.

Tertiary education (part-time) was encouraged in this parliamentary environment. Margaret remembers that Jim Pender and herself wore a track out to the University of Canberra for lectures, tutorials - and to read results on a notice board, this being before the electronic communications of today.

At times, Margaret was Votes Officer, Papers Officer, Procedures Officer, and for a much longer period as the Bills Officer. Her work was labour-intensive and required considerable dedication and attention to detail. She found it rewarding when all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle fitted together!

Margaret also worked in the team at the old Hotel Canberra (now the Hyatt Hotel) researching materials for the first *House of Representatives Practice*, very ably led by Alan Browning. She has many happy memories of those famous morning and afternoon tea breaks out under the beautiful trees in the courtyard; of being housed in the old hotel suites; of staff running around the Lake in lunch breaks; and being close enough to Old Parliament House to still use the tennis courts in those magnificent rose gardens.

Old Parliament House (OPH) was quite cosy and compact for politicians and staff alike, and has left Margaret with many treasured memories which, years later, she recorded in the oral history interviews about OPH. Both the video footage and interview, filmed in the OPH gardens and on the tennis court, are part of *Whispers in the Corridor* now running continuously in the OPH corridors.

Following the new Parliament House being opened by The Queen in May 1988, the then DHR Procedure Office was one of the first to move. A team of about 5, including Margaret, were tasked with moving library items and records. On arrival, no signage existed. Staff explored during their lunch-break, to work out where various Offices



▲ Margaret between Peter Fowler and Bernard Wright, with Alan Browning (Clerk) and Paul Thomas

were located. Margaret remembers meeting the then Clerk at Aussie's café one time, and they congratulated themselves for finding their way there! Another memory was meeting John Howard (just deposed as Opposition Leader, looking lost 'like Peter Rabbit') in a corridor when it was obvious he had no idea where he was or where he was going. While Margaret tried to help, he wouldn't admit his dilemma.

Just a few of Margaret's many highlights included:

- coordinator for the first new Members' seminar in the new building;
- Newcombe and Roche officially opening the new tennis courts and her subsequently winning the inaugural women's tennis singles trophy;
- being tasked with running four trail-blazing workshop/seminar events, with some exciting personalities (musicians & artists), for the *Equal Opportunity for Australian Women* committee inquiry - Jon Stanhope was committee secretary and Michael Lavarch was the chair;
- working in the Parliamentary Relations Office on Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) matters for the then Speaker, the Hon Leo McLeay MP - later, Margaret attended an

- International IPU Workshop Seminar (10 days) in Geneva;
- being one of two staff selected to manage arrangements (planning, organisation and a \$2m budget) from the ground-up for Australia's hosting of the "bigger than Ben-Hur" 1993 IPU Conference in Canberra - ultimately the whole of the Parliament, and much of the wider public service, was involved in arrangements for the 1500 international visitors - then heralded by international participants as the most successful event ever;
- directly managing the \$250,000 IPU conference gala concert;
- being a participant in the 1997-8 public service Senior Women In Management program along with 26 other participants from across Australia;
- completing an Australian and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table (ANZACATT) course in Parliamentary Law Practice and Procedure at Queensland University of Technology in 2005, and later attaining a Graduate Certificate in Legal Studies (University of Canberra) in 2008;
- managing an emotionally-charged committee inquiry on *Child Custody*, instigated by the Prime Minister and chaired by the determined Kay Hull MP with a 6-month deadline - it attracted 2000+ submissions, held 21 public hearings nationally and captured headlines around the country; and
- representing the Australian Parliament at the IPU Regional Seminar on *Developing a protective framework for children: the role of Parliaments* in Vietnam in 2006.

When Margaret worked in the Parliamentary Relations Office (PRO), she was the escort officer for a number of parliamentary delegations visiting from various countries, including Zimbabwe, Canada, the United Kingdom, many Pacific Islands and New Zealand. Also, Margaret worked on the back-to-back high-profile events - the 16th Speakers and Presiding Officers Conference and the 8th Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum. Following these

successful achievements, Margaret's team was awarded the Australia Day Medallion in January 2000.

Margaret played a major role in various significant committee inquiries. These included *Child Custody "Every picture tells a story"*, *Overseas Adoption in Australia*, *Education of Boys*, *Health Funding "The Blame Game"* plus those conducted by Electoral Matters and the Economics Committee on the Reserve Bank. In 2007, the secretariat of the Family and Human Services and Health and Ageing Committees, of which Margaret was a member, was recognised by the Clerk with an award "for recognition of outstanding contribution to the work of the department – for their outstanding work in complex and challenging circumstances and commitment to the parliamentary service values".

Margaret was possibly the first person in DHR to work permanent part-time, sub-editing, proof-reading and consolidating footnotes for the second edition of *House of Representatives Practice*, and then committee work.

In August 2010, after 30+ years, Margaret left DHR and started on another journey that included community work, family, sport and bridge. Margaret has been a Rotarian for 20 years and has continued to serve the community in various ways, including being a Club and District office-holder. Margaret has also worked as Telephone Support for *Lifeline*, and has helped to promote their education courses. Joining the Royal Canberra Golf Club in 2010, Margaret now is involved with the Women's Golf Committee and



▲ Margaret and Mike Salkeld with new members Laurie Brereton and Ted Mack.

has played competitively across the country. She combines travel and golf with touring. Countries so far visited include South Africa, Dubai (UAE), The Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. Bridge lessons were taken early after retirement and Margaret regularly plays club bridge and in some rural and regional Bridge Congress events.

Margaret has supported her ageing mother, over many years, and helped her to celebrate in great style, a 100th birthday in early 2018. A formal luncheon, with all the trimmings (PRO-style), and over 100 guests, was celebrated in the Leeton Historic Hydro Motor Inn, with formal messages from

The Queen, the Prime Minister, the Governor-General, State Governors, the New South Wales Premier, the local Member and all and sundry. The bagpipes signalled her regal entry. During those 100 years, Margaret's mother helped to "create the community fabric of Leeton" – a claim by the Mayor. Sadly, she passed away three months later, June 2018.

Margaret now focuses her love and dedication on her two wonderful grandsons, Will and Noah, as well as her three children, Hew, Fiona and Christina.

Bridge, golf, Rotary and community work all continue. Life is too good to stay still!

PAUL NICOLL

Recently I made a presentation to U3A on the implications for auditing of the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Finance Sector, and afterwards Jim Pender greeted me as a former colleague in the House of Representatives. I recognised him after many years and told him that he remained a formidable force, to which comment he smiled and invited me to write about my Parliamentary experiences. In responding, it became even clearer that my engagement with Parliament has taken a number of forms and is continuing after some decades.

I was privileged to have had two experiences in working within Parliament House and other experiences working with Parliamentarians but in roles outside Parliament. The first direct experience was in the 1970s when, as an administrative trainee, I was assigned to the Legislative Research Service within the Parliamentary Library in Old Parliament House. I was responsible for education legislation and there was much activity on that topic. I enjoyed working directly to Members of the House and Senators who assigned a large number of diverse topics for research. A pleasure was access to the Parliamentary Library,

which I still miss years later.

Once a colleague and I were leaving the building for lunch, and we happened to stroll past the door of Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. Immediately before us three persons left his office, and these were Margaret Thatcher, Leader of the United Kingdom Opposition, the British High Commissioner and an adviser. They were also leaving the building and we followed because we were going in the same direction. Doors were opened for Mrs Thatcher and we followed and it felt like we were part of her delegation. Mrs Thatcher and her two companions exited through

the main doors and entered a Rolls Royce at the bottom of the main stairs. We continued descending the stairs and noticed a second limousine behind the Rolls with the doors open. The chauffeur indicated that my friend and I should enter. We resisted the temptation, smiled at the chauffeur and walked around the rear of the car to look for an apolitical place to lunch.

Old Parliament House being crowded, the Legislative Research Service was moved out – researchers are accustomed to being orphans. We were moved to the former Hotel Canberra which now is the Hyatt. The Hotel had many original fittings, and I was given a large room with a dining table, a chaise longue and an ensuite. I guessed that this would be the only time in my career when I would have an office with a chaise longue and – I confess – I used it. It is safe now to make a confession or admission years afterwards, because from time to time after lunch I dozed there. I dreamt of introducing alcohol-free siestas to Parliament and although I failed the dream continued.


Old Parliament House was busy and friendly. However, after the Hilton Hotel bombing in Sydney it changed. That is because the following day there was an armed policeman outside our offices, and that was the beginning of much stronger security in the building.

After the new Parliament House opened

and as a member of the Executive Development Scheme, I was assigned to the former Public Accounts Committee. Robert Tickner was an excellent Chairman and together we conceived of the first Parliamentary review of the former Audit Office since Federation. I was appointed Secretary for the committee's inquiry. The *Audit Act 1901* was the fourth piece of legislation after Federation and, on studying it, I realized major changes were necessary. Consequently, I proposed to the Committee that the Act be repealed and replaced by new financial management and audit legislation. The Committee, Parliament and the Government accepted the recommendation, and this was the origin of the Financial Management Act, the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act and new Auditor-General Act. There was uncertainty about the role of the Auditor-General, so to clarify it I conceived of his role as an independent officer of the Parliament. I also proposed that the Parliament would benefit from an audit committee. These latter two recommendations were also accepted, leading to the JCPACs recreation as the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit. The Australian Audit Office appeared as a clear name but I wanted to highlight its national role, and proposed that it be renamed the Australian National Audit Office, ANAO, which proposal also was accepted.

Because of this work, the ANAO recruited me to performance auditing and I was privileged to work there. Parliamentary contact continued since our reports were always tabled in Parliament. Following the earthquake and tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia, the Commonwealth Government devoted many resources to assist Indonesia, and as part of the larger AusAid project I was seconded to the Indonesian Board of Audit. This was a unique opportunity in which I gained much insight and experience into public administration and the Indonesian political system. Within the Indonesian Legislative Assembly, I highlighted to elected representatives the benefits of a committee to review public accounts. This encouragement resulted in the Indonesian Legislative Assembly, the People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR), creating the country's first committee with functions similar to the Australian PAC or JCPAA.

Since retiring from ANAO, I am teaching and researching part-time at the University of Canberra. Once again, my interest in Parliament continues because we are researching how Members of Parliaments use information that agencies publish in their financial statements. Therefore, my interest and work with parliamentarians continues.

PS Paul is currently in Rio de Janeiro where he will live until November 

Alumni Annual Reception

Friday, 8 February 2019

Hours before alumni were scheduled to gather for the annual reception, unseasonable rain bucketed down, drenching the National Capital.

The function was moved from its usual venue, the House of Representatives Formal Gardens, to the Dame Enid Lyons site, on the third floor of Parliament House. Undeterred, some 40 alumni gathered to mingle with former colleagues and exchange news and views for the past year.

Introduced by the Clerk, David Elder, Dean Da Costa (who actually needs no introduction to alumni) standing in for Co-chairs Michael and Carolyn, welcomed the group and

read out the following message—

Carolyn and Michael have asked me to represent the Alumni Executive tonight. They are very sorry they are unable to attend and catch up with long time former colleagues and friends but have grandparent duties to attend to in Melbourne. Who said retirement sets you free?

They feel privileged to again act as Co-Chairs for the Department of the House of Representatives Alumni for a third year and wanted to acknowledge the work of the Department, as well as Jim Pender and myself in continuing to support the Alumni. We particularly

appreciate the support of the Clerk, David Elder and Tracy Weston.

The Alumni affords the opportunity for former colleagues to maintain links to the Department and each other. During 2018 a number of members volunteered to assist with the 30th Anniversary Open Day at Parliament House and Michael commented on how successful and well managed this event was. The highlight seemed to be a visit to the Chamber and Speaker's Office and visitors made some very positive comments.

The Alumni Newsletter continues to inform members about the activities of the Department and the Parliament,

which seem to have become more complex and unpredictable over time. As former staff we appreciate the huge amount of work that goes on behind the scenes. The Alumni Newsletter also provides 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.

We particularly appreciate the annual reception as the key Alumni event and thank the Department for this privilege.

At the most recent AGM we discussed organising other activities during this year and hopefully can progress these.

This would be easier for us to manage if we have our own email list, separate to the Department, and I encourage you to provide me with your email address or let Tracy know that you are happy for it to be passed on to me. We wish you all a safe, healthy and productive 2019 and look forward to catching up during the year.



▲ Alumni Reception attendees.



▲ David Elder, Clerk.



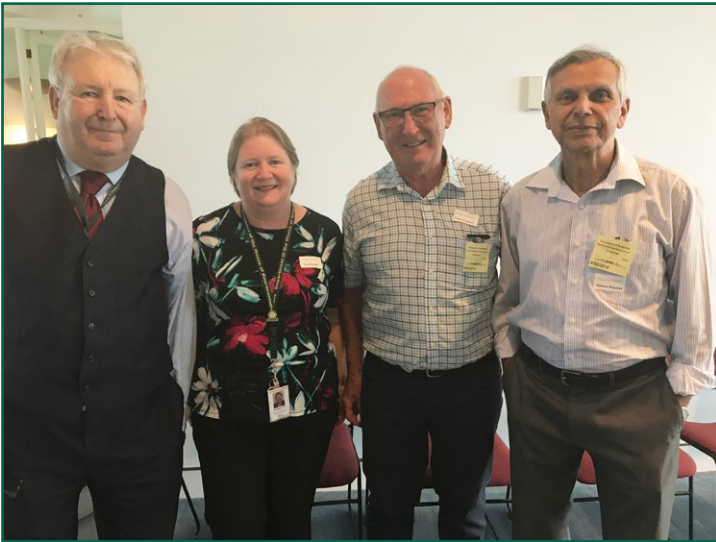
▲ Bronwyn Winter, Kay Mitchell, Dean Da Costa and Dianne Laycock.



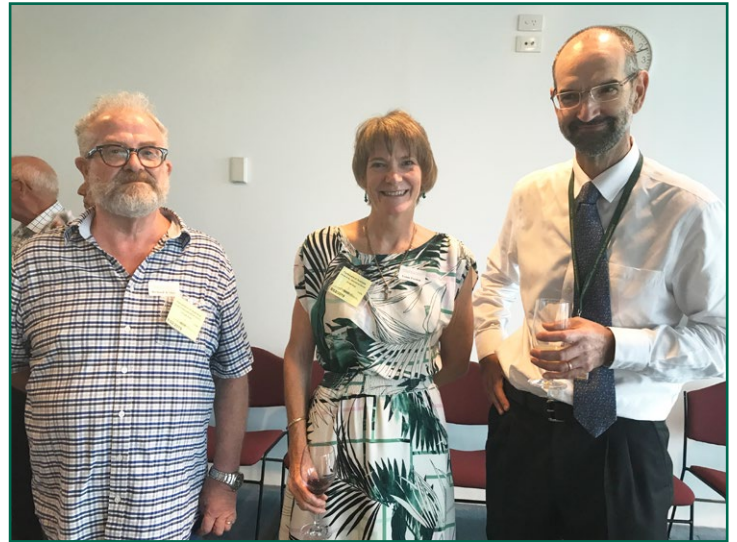
▲ Gillian Gould, Peter Banson and Bronwyn Notzon-Glenn.



▲ Robyn Webber and Robyn McClelland.



▲ Colin Christian, Sue Briguglio, Garry Cosgrove and Maurice Hopman.



▲ Richard Arthur, Lynne Eveston and James Catchpole.



▲ Maurice Hopman, Evelyn Kearns, Bernard Wright and Katherine Fox.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

In the last Newsletter there was an appeal for each alumnus to indicate if you would be willing to make your email address available to the secretary, presently Dean DaCosta. You were asked if you could please email a 'Yes' to Dean at the following address:

DHRalumnisec@gmail.com

The responses have been underwhelming so the Executive has asked if the Department can make the email addresses available to Dean with an opt out proviso. If any alumnus does not wish Dean to have their email address they should so indicate and their details will be deleted from the contact list.

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://dephouseofrepsalumni.blogspot.com.au/>