



Clerk's Message

Dear Alumni

Since my last message in March, the House has had only three weeks of sittings, one in the last Parliament and two in the 47th Parliament. You won't be surprised that departmental colleagues were busy regardless, and I feel I should fill you in on a few highlights.

In the final hours of the 46th Parliament, the video facility put in place for members to make remote contributions in the House during the COVID-19 pandemic, was used by the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to address members and senators in the Chamber from a war zone. It was an historic and moving occasion.

During the period of dissolution, our staff, completed work on records for the last Parliament, worked on longer projects for the department and mobility placements with other organisations, farewelled departing and welcomed new members, prepared for the new Parliament and even took overdue leave.

It has been a time of much parliamentary ceremony, commencing with the dissolution on 11 April, when the end of the Parliament was marked with an artillery salute after the Official Secretary read the Governor-General's proclamation. The opening of the new Parliament on 26 July commenced early with

Indigenous leaders and a Welcome to Country ceremony in the Great Hall followed by a smoking ceremony on the Forecourt mosaic.

Members joined two processions to the Senate Chamber and one to Members' Hall, and they received the Hon Stephen Gageler to be sworn in. After, they voted in ballots for elections of Speaker (Mr Milton Dick, Oxley: 2016), Deputy Speaker (Ms Sharon Claydon, Newcastle: 2013) and Second Deputy Speaker (Mr Goodenough, Moore: 2013). Formalities rounded out with an artillery salute on Federation Mall, and afternoon tea in Members' Hall with the Governor-General replete with fanfare. There were fewer visitors because of COVID safety measures, but it was still quite a day.

There have been changes in the composition in the Chamber, and some constants. I think many of you will recall the now Father of the House, the Hon Bob Katter (Kennedy: 1993). Joining me in the Executive team as the Parliament commences are: Peter Banson, Deputy Clerk; Peggy Danaee, Serjeant-at-Arms; James Catchpole, Clerk Assistant (Table); Glenn Worthington, Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and Russell Chafer, Clerk Assistant (Committees).

In relation to the Jenkins Report of the Human Rights Commission's *Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*, work continues on implementing its recommendations. Our staff are busy on the numerous working groups progressing responses and developing enhanced data reporting for the department. You can follow progress with implementation on the Parliament's website, [Progress of recommendations – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://www.progressofrecommendations-parliamentofaustralia.gov.au).



We look forward to welcoming alumni at an evening reception on 17 November following your AGM. We are hoping a balmy and dry evening awaits us in the gardens. We also look forward to 2023 with an Open Day for Parliament House and all the fun that entails!

For now, take care, with best wishes.

Claressa Surtees

Clerk of the House



A message from the co-chairs

We hope this newsletter finds you all well and adapting to the new normal that is living with Covid.

As you all will have noticed, Covid numbers again were on the increase during winter and Canberra had the highest number of hospitalisations since the start of the Pandemic. Thankfully things look like they are on the improve, and with the warmer weather we hope further improvements are on the way.

We have finally been able to identify some dates to see everyone in person. Following consultation with the Clerk, we have scheduled a combined AGM and function for **Thursday 17 November 2022**. More details will be sent out closer to the date. The last AGM was held in November 2019 and the last get together in February 2020, and both seem such

...continues on page 2 ▶

CONTENTS

Where are they now?	2
Rex Boate	2
Further information	2
Robyn McClelland	3
The people of Parliament 1972-2022	4
An old man's lament	8

...continues from page 1 ▶

a long time ago. We are looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the event, and no doubt there will be lots of catching up to do.

It has been a fascinating year politically, with the election, change of government and a record number of independents in the House. As you will all remember well, it is a very busy time for departmental staff

as the settling in process happens, and we are very grateful for the continued support provided to the Alumni by the Clerk and staff.

Thanks to Jim Pender again for getting a newsletter together. Jim would be very happy to receive contributions from Alumni, and if you have any suggestions of people that might be approached to contribute something for future editions, please let Jim know. Similarly, we

would welcome suggestions for nominations for various Alumni committee positions, or ideas for activities you might be interested in.

We look forward to seeing you all in person in November, finding out how you spent the last two years, and what plans you all have for the year ahead.

Until then, take care and stay well.

Joanne Towner and Mike Salkeld

Where are they now?

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

REX BOATE

I have been retired for over thirty years – a third of my life. We moved to Canberra in 1973 after selling my rural property so we could get the best education for our children. I started work at Parliament House when Gough Whitlam was Prime Minister joining the Department of the House of Representatives as an attendant and retired when I was 60 at the end of 1990.

Being retired left me with time to finish restoring my third 1929 Chevrolet, a sedan, having previously restored a roadster and a tourer. There was plenty of garage space in our new home so having all 3 vintage cars in A1 condition was an achievement. There was also plenty of landscaping to do.

I received a phone call from the Headmaster of Holy Family School at Gowrie asking me to come and work on school maintenance. My grandchildren attended the school and their mothers were active in support. The grandkids called me ‘Pop’ and after a while so did all the other kids – very satisfying.

I worked at the school for 3 ½ years and then later I bought a small property near Bredbo. It consisted of 100 acres with 300 sheep, tractor and implements. The shearing shed needed an urgent update which I did myself. The family helped plan a small cottage with all modern conveniences which the council approved and my son and I built. I had long term friends in the

area who urged me to grow oats. The first crop yielded 12 tons of oats.

I also enjoyed my time as a member of the Canberra Lapidary Club, going prospecting for gold and gems, and learning from other very interesting member how stones were cut.

Then my son acquired a steep hillside site in Mount Campbell Estate near the Burra church. Over the next few years came first a huge shed (he was rebuilding a World War 2 jeep), then a magnificent 2 storey home. All the stone and woodwork was done by my son with me as builder’s labourer, safety officer and adviser.

We have travelled as well. Our first overseas trip was to Singapore, Bangkok and Hong Kong. We have seen most of Australia touring with John and Jenny Evans of Snowliner Travel to Cape York, Adelaide, the Grampians as well as a great trip to Bourke, up the Matilda Highway to Mt Isa, Darwin, Kakadu, through the Red Centre to Adelaide and then home through the Riverina. After we sold the farm, we went to Western Canada and Alaska, then to Europe and the British Isles, toured New Zealand and took several cruises.

We moved to a smaller house in 2012. After 2018 our world became much smaller. My wife has health problems, and I became her carer and housekeeper, so at 92 I am as busy as ever.

I have fond memories of my time at Parliament House, of the staff and



▲ Rex with great granddaughter Harriet

the big occasions we saw. In 1975 I remember standing on the steps behind Gough Whitlam when he made his famous speech “nothing can save the Governor-General....”. On another occasion, along with three other attendants, I was selected to escort The Queen in Kings Hall while she met some preselected people. We had to stand in a square perimeter around the Queen and ensure she was guided to “the lady in the blue dress then the lady in the white dress”. I also remember the move from the Old Parliament House to the new one and the many kilometres I had to walk each day to get from one part of the new building to the next. 🌿

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/>.

Where are they now?

ROBYN MCCLELLAND

I was promoted to the Department of the House of Representatives (DHR) in October 1991 as Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services. I was a career public servant, who to that point had worked in several agencies and for the longest period as an efficiency, performance and financial auditor with the Australian National Audit Office. I enjoyed the investigative work of auditing and the variety of assignments in different agencies. At that early period in efficiency and performance auditing in Australia, performance was assessed against a plan, act, and review framework. In essence, management by objectives (MBO), with clear specification of targets, resources to achieve them, and performance indicators. Agencies largely did not manage like this.

For the two years before joining DHR, I was Director, Resource Management, in the National Library of Australia (NLA) with responsibilities for people and finance, and 36 staff. It was a busy job. The NLA then had 600 staff. I suspect my experience at the NLA in implementing the public sector MBO-type reforms was thought to be useful for DHR.

During 25 years with DHR, I worked in all the Band 1 roles, enjoying them all and particularly those with a large management component. In all roles, I sought to improve departmental capability and performance, with a particular interest in good governance, technology, and getting sensible things done.

Aspects of my life since leaving the Department in February 2017

Family

My husband and I are fortunate in having three wonderful daughters and five young grandchildren. The grandchildren are in Melbourne with busy parents, and during the past two years we have largely been living in Melbourne to assist. Life with Covid has been especially difficult because our daughters work in health and medical fields.

Public Health Study

I began a Master of Public Health degree at the Australian National University in February 2017 and before exiting in



▲ Enjoying the 2019 Triathlon World Championships

March 2019 with a Graduate Diploma in Public Health, was successful in obtaining high distinctions in all nine units studied. The public health study involved a very different work environment from DHR. Classes were small, nearly all my fellow students were international students (mostly Chinese), and most were in their early twenties. One of the first things I noticed was how complex and nuanced scientific articles were, compared to the directness and simplicity of bureaucratic writing. I could see how difficult it could be for academia and government to converse.

The study was excellent with all units, particularly those in epidemiology and biostatistics, giving me a much better ability to evaluate public health research and a much broader perspective on public health issues. This has been of value in the current Covid pandemic.

Fitness

To keep fit, despite no talent as a runner or swimmer, I participate in triathlons, as well as doing other physical exercise.

Since leaving DHR I have competed in two Triathlon Age Group World Championships, at the Gold Coast in 2018 and Lausanne, Switzerland, in 2019. I was thrilled by my Gold Coast performance, coming 9th of 35 in the Sprint distance and 14th of 29 in the Standard distance (1.5 km swim, 40 km cycle, and 10 km run). What pleased me most was that I broke three hours for the Standard distance event, in a time that was less than seven minutes slower than when I did the same event in 2009, on the same course. I was fitter and had a better bike in 2018.

Although my Lausanne performance was not as successful, coming 22nd of 32 on a challenging Standard distance course, I was delighted, having overcome acclimatization and bike issues. And after the event, my husband and I had a superb holiday in Scandinavia, including cycling in Sweden and trekking in Norway. Little did we know then that we would not travel again for several years.

I would like to qualify for the 2023 Triathlon World Championships in Hamburg, Germany, (Sprint distance) or Spain (Standard distance) but will need to do some cycling first. This is unlikely as my bike is not with me in Melbourne and I must now first fully recover from Covid.

Committees

It has been a privilege to serve on the Museum of Australian Democracy Audit, Finance and Risk Committee since 2017.

In 2020, I joined two running committees, the YMCA Canberra Runners Club (YCRC) and Females in Training Inc. (FIT). I also worked on a sub-committee of the ACT Masters Athletics club to host the Australian Masters Athletics Track and Field Championships 2021 in Canberra in March 2021. Regrettably, Covid forced the cancellation of these Championships only just before they were due to be held, when everything was ready to go.

The running committee work has included assisting in the establishment and operation of a new club, the Canberra Runners Inc., which has taken over from the YCRC. It has also involved policy development, work on a publication on FIT's 25-year history and ensuring insurance cover. I have recently been elected as Vice-President of Canberra Runners for 2022/23 and continue as the Policy and Insurance officer for FIT.

I enjoy the committee work. As a Graduate Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and with my background and experience, I am well equipped to contribute, particularly on governance, compliance, and risk matters.

In brief, there has been a good deal of continuity in my life since leaving DHR. The increased time for family and friends, including catching up with former colleagues occasionally, has been welcome.

The people of Parliament 1972-2022

BY BERNARD WRIGHT

Alumni have probably noted the release of successive survey results showing a further decline in confidence in our political leaders. There is a high degree of consistency between such findings and the views we hear expressed so often.

There is certainly no shortage of those wishing to highlight members' failings. The 'members are hopeless', 'the Parliament is hopeless' themes seem to be well on the way to becoming accepted wisdom.

Happily, there is a degree of inconsistency between such views and those many of us formed as parliamentary staff: we saw plenty of division and conflict - but we also saw goodwill, civility and commonsense.

When we look back on our working lives we often find that some of our strongest memories are of the people we have worked with. This has been my experience, and like many colleagues I always welcome Jim Pender's regular inclusion in our newsletter of contributions by former colleagues.

It is interesting to look back to 1972, the year I joined the department, and to consider how things have - or have not - changed over the years.

Members

In 1972 Sir William McMahon, was the Prime Minister, Doug Anthony, leader of what was then called the Country Party, was Deputy Prime Minister and Billy Snedden was the Treasurer. Malcolm Fraser was Minister for Education and Science and Ian Sinclair, Deputy Leader of the Country Party, was Minister for Primary Industry.

Ministerial reshuffles over the summer break are not unknown in Australian politics. So it had been in 1972. Bob Katter (snr) had been appointed Minister for the Army over the break. He was a well-liked member; he had come from humble beginnings and was understandably very proud to have been appointed

to the Ministry. As the most junior minister he was seated at the very end of the ministerial bench. He got his first question when the sittings resumed. It came from a government backbencher. Unfortunately, his long and dignified walk to the despatch box was interrupted by a friendly but very audible interjection from Jim Cope, then an Opposition backbencher: "step forward Dorothy!".

Leading members on the Opposition side were Gough Whitlam, Leader of the Opposition; the Deputy Leader, Lance Barnard, and Frank Crean, the Shadow Treasurer. Other leading frontbenchers included Jim Cairns and Kim Beazley (snr)

Two former leaders sat on the backbenches: former Prime Minister, John Gorton, and Arthur Calwell, former Leader of the Opposition. Whatever feelings there may have been between party members, the impression I gained was that each of them was accorded a good deal of respect.

The youngest member was Paul Keating - he had been elected in 1969 at the age of 25 - not quite in Wyatt Roy territory, but a dead heat with Malcolm Fraser, who was also 25 when first elected in 1955.

Although three women had served in earlier years, there were none in the House of Representatives in 1972, Joan Child was to be elected in 1974. Like many women of her generation Mrs Child had learnt the virtue of patience.

Years after her retirement she revealed that she had had been allocated a seat next to a particularly unwelcoming member. As a new member she often needed to ask him to explain something that was happening. Unfortunately her polite and whispered questions were met consistently with quite unfriendly body language and few, if any, words. After a few weeks one day she found herself sitting in the House when the bells were rung and her neighbour, who had been absent, rushed back

into the Chamber and, naturally enough, asked her what was going on. She said she enjoyed responding in exactly the way he had treated her.

There were no independents and no indigenous members in 1972 although Neville Bonner had joined the Senate in 1971.

By my estimate at least 30 members had served in the forces during the Second World War. At least three had been prisoners of war - Sir Reginald Swartz, Tom Uren and Winton Turnbull, as had Senators John Carrick and Justin O'Byrne. Tom Uren said that he had seen the sky lighten after the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

It was also common for members to have served in local government - surely a good background for service as a member of parliament.

Quite a few members played tennis at lunchtime. There were some good friendships across the political divide - one was between Fred Daly and Jim Killen.

It is interesting that at least seven members of the House in 1972 had children who would go on to win election themselves - Charles Adermann, Doug Anthony, Kim Beazley, Frank Crean, Harry Jenkins, Bob Katter and Gough Whitlam. Senator Douglas McClelland's son Robert also became a member of the House. People concerned about elites and 'insiders' might see this very negatively; others would say that some of these second generation Members made distinguished contributions.

In those days very limited use was made of committees - perhaps this was fortunate, given the very limited facilities of the old building.

Opportunities for private members to sponsor subjects for debate were extremely limited.

Instead of electorate offices most members had what were called 'state offices' in Commonwealth Offices in the relevant state capital. The seat

of Darling covered about one third of New South Wales and reached right across to Broken Hill, yet the Member's 'state office' was in Martin Place, Sydney! (Thanks to Ian Cochran for his help on this matter).

By the time members moved to the new building in 1988 many changes had occurred. Many more were to occur in the years from 1988.

The most noticeable change was in the gender balance. By the time of the move in 1988 Joan Child had become the Speaker, and eight other women had been elected.

In the years that followed we saw our first female Prime Minister and two more female Speakers. The May 2022 elections saw women win 38% of the seats.

One clear memory of 1972 was that most members seemed to be quite old. By the time I retired at the end of 2013, like policemen, many members seemed to be very young. I have checked the details. The median age of members in 1972 was 51. By 2015 the median age was - you guessed it....51 - talk about the eye of the beholder! (Thanks to Justin Baker for his help with access to old records).

As you might expect the range and the level of tertiary qualifications has increased and many members now hold multiple qualifications. I do not suggest for a moment that the current members are wiser, more able or harder working than those who served in the early 1970s. What we can say though is that the great majority are diligent and hard working - and they have a good measure of idealism. They work hard to look after their electorates. Certainly there is self-interest in this - political survival - but there is more. There is, I suggest, also an element of loyalty and traditional community service.

Idealistic members have worked patiently and successfully to improve the operations of the House. Departmental staff have long welcomed opportunities to support proposals for reform. The Procedure Committee has a good record of working very carefully to balance competing interests and to recommend practical reforms.

Before the establishment of the Committee proposals for reform came more informally from keen individuals and informal groups and channeled through the Standing Orders Committee. There was experimentation with the sitting day pattern and hours, and well run trials of House Estimates Committees and Bills Committees but the Procedure Committee put much more rigour into these matters. Several alumni worked to support the committee and others have been involved in preparing submissions or giving evidence. Modernisation, while gradual, has given members many additional opportunities, additional responsibilities and they have also been given many additional resources.

Private members business

Backbench Members have long enjoyed opportunities their predecessors could hardly have imagined; to introduce private members' bills, to sponsor subjects for debate, and to raise matters of interest or concern.

This has been a good thing for members; more importantly, it has been a very good thing for constituents who hope to see matters raised in the House. Each week private members are able to initiate debates and make statements on matters of local, national or international significance.

Committees

In the years from 1987 the House developed a substantial committee system. A former member for Fraser, John Langmore, was one of those members responsible for this reform. Members worked cooperatively on numerous inquiries into matters of economic, legal, social and environmental importance. Their experience has continued to show them that the topics which offered the best prospects of useful and constructive study were those which, even if they were very difficult, were not highly divisive politically.

Happily, cross-party friendships are still to be seen. Often now they are nourished by shared experiences on committees - members working together on issues no doubt find just

how much they have in common and are reminded that no side has a monopoly on wisdom. It was interesting to note that by the end of the Howard government apart from the Prime Minister and two other Ministers all but two House Ministers had served as Committee Chairs in earlier times.

Electorate support

Although a matter of recent contention there has been a significant improvement in the capacity of members to service their constituents. This is the result of additional staff positions, the provision of well appointed and well located electorate offices, and access to high quality IT equipment and facilities.

Such developments would be almost beyond the imagination of the members of the 1970s.

Despite the improvements in the House's procedures and despite the hard work, abilities and idealism of so many members, as a group they are subject to so much criticism.

Unfortunately, of course it is all too common to find members, individually and collectively, giving ammunition to their critics.

Question Time, while taking a relatively small proportion of House time, receives great attention. Despite some reforms, it has remained a source of much criticism. It seems to me that the media focus on Question Time has contributed to the negative perceptions that are so widespread and so deeply entrenched.

Members work constructively and cooperatively on committee inquiries, most bills are passed with either the full or substantial support of members on both sides, friendliness and civility are to be seen, and members work very well together in helping host visitors and in supporting emerging democracies by serving as election observers or taking part in training seminars.

Of course none of this is likely to counter the negative and lasting impression left by reports of the misuse of entitlements, and the unimpressive behaviour sometimes seen in the House.

Parliamentary staff

The largest group of people who toil in the vineyard are the parliamentary staff. The Department of the House of Representatives (DHR) has provided support and advice to the House itself since 1901. In 1972 Norman Parkes, the son of a previous Clerk, was the Clerk. He was liked and respected by members and by staff.

Norman was highly professional and a model of personal integrity. He knew, and we knew, that the credibility of the department rested not only on professional competence, but also on the impartiality of staff.

Like so many alumni, I felt it a great privilege to join the parliamentary service. It was good, we felt, to work supporting the parliament, yet be detached from the political contest.

There was nothing like an induction program or a formal training program in those days, but great emphasis was placed on learning about the House and about parliamentary law and practice. The department also welcomed opportunities to put forward options for improvement in procedures and practice.

After the elections in 1980 the department arranged the first Orientation Seminar for new members. This was the year Bob Hawke was first elected. At the seminar after the next election, in 1983, the crop of new Members was advised that the seminar was a great opportunity and they should pay careful attention because one of the graduates from the first seminar had gone on to become Prime Minister within three years.

We can apply to parliamentary officers words used by Justice Stephen Gageler about judges and others involved in constitutional law:

“we are custodians for the present of traditions which we must help interpret, the issues with which we deal should be put in a long-term perspective....this work is not a matter of science, it is a matter of responsibility: to the past, and for the future.”

There were good relationships across the parliamentary departments. Hansard colleagues were seen as

friendly allies, as were staff of the Senate and the Parliamentary Library. Jim Odgers, who had written the original Australian Senate Practice, was by then Clerk of the Senate. He was a courteous and genial person and had been able to champion the cause of the Senate yet maintain very good relationships with others.

Changes- staff

There were to be many changes in DHR in the years since 1972. The gender balance has changed significantly, and women have outnumbered men for several years now.

For at least twenty years the biggest area of the department has been the Committee Office. Many colleagues found this work very rewarding. The old informal training in parliamentary practice has been gradually replaced by carefully prepared briefings and structured activities. As might be expected, extensive training has also been provided in leadership, communication and IT.

The staff of the department were tested during the years of minority government 2010-13. There were many new challenges and difficult issues. Members, especially the leaders, were under great and constant pressure. It was pleasing that, despite the very high stakes every sitting day and the pressures they were under, the leaders never hinted at positions they hoped we might take. Obviously pleasing, but more importantly a tribute to the ultimate strength of our system and to the standing of the small department. The years since 2014 have also required the Clerks to meet and lead their colleagues in the department in meeting many new and difficult challenges, such as members' compliance with the qualification requirements of the constitution, and the massive disruption caused by COVID. In such matters of course the Clerks and the department have added to the standing of the department, not to mention the rich lode of precedents to be worked into *House of Representatives Practice*!

Both the House of Representatives and the Senate departments have remained modest in size and budget. Admittedly I cannot claim to be

unbiased, but I think the taxpayers get fair value from them. The biggest office in each department is its Committee Office - small teams of staff support the many inquiries conducted by House and Senate Committees. A few years ago it was revealed that a certain Royal Commission had cost about \$8m for one year. We calculated that the cost of the whole Department of the House of Representatives Committee Office for a year had been less than the Royal Commission - and the staff had supported about 100 inquiries.

Since 1999 the parliamentary service has been separate by law from the wider Australian Public Service. This is important. Symbolically it recognises that the staff are not accountable to government. In a practical sense it places all decisions about staffing management where they belong - within the Parliament itself; it may also encourage loyalty.

DHR and Senate staff have also worked hard to provide educational and explanatory material about the work of the Parliament.

House staff have won the respect of peers in other Parliaments and have made distinguished contributions to training and development programs for members and staff in developing countries. These colleagues have brought credit to the Department, the Australian Parliament and the nation. In 2003 Ian Harris became the first Australian to lead the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments. Doug Blake and Jim Pender made significant contributions to establishing the first self-governing Papua New Guinea National Assembly in 1972 and later Alan Browning, Jim Pender and Marion Lambert's series of visits to Norfolk Island, in 1979-80, to help prepare them to run their assembly might have continued the corporate appetite for such work!

The press gallery

A third group of the people of Parliament are those working in the press gallery. While none of the accommodation in the old House could have been called generous, the rooms of the press were particularly notable - for all the wrong reasons.

They have often been described as a rabbit warren. It is hard to think of a more fitting label.

During the 1970s newspapers and magazines were well represented. All the main newspapers, and some smaller operations, employed full-time journalists.

They were a good number of radio journalists, some working for commercial stations and others for the ABC. Television reporters were still relative newcomers. They had no access to footage of proceedings and were limited to the use of interviews, press conferences and so on.

The gallery was overwhelmingly male.

The non-members bar was well patronised by journalists, ministerial staff and some members, even though it was known as the non-members bar. It is interesting that although provision was made for a non-members' bar in the new building it closed after a short time for want of patronage. Most recently the area has become home to a childcare facility.

Changes - Media

The years from 1972 saw great changes in the reporting of Parliament. The gender balance of the gallery has changed significantly.

We are all familiar with the decline of the print media and the expansion of television news and current affairs.

As well as being of great use to the press gallery, the televising of proceedings has had a significant impact. It allows widespread access to chamber and committee proceedings; it also means that unruly behaviour in the chamber is captured. If it is sufficiently newsworthy it can be used by the media, and by political rivals. Televising has also probably increased pressures on members to be more coordinated and to simplify their expression.

An interesting development has been the advent of on-line access to parliamentary proceedings and the use of social media. These technologies allow direct communication from the Parliament and from members to the community, by-passing traditional

media. To those concerned about media bias or interest this might be a good thing; to those who see media personnel as useful interpreters, analysts or filters it could be a bad thing. I am particularly ill qualified to talk about these matters, and I commend to you a recent book by Dr Peter Chen *Australian politics in a digital age* (2013).

Lobbyists

Lobbyists have long been a presence in Canberra. In the 1970s CRA Limited owned a house in south Canberra. It was used for visiting staff and for receptions. This earned it the label the Zinc Embassy.

It seems to me that the number of lobbyists and the sophistication of their work has increased considerably. Of all the groups associated with the Parliament my sense is that this has been the fastest growing. If nothing else this has been good for the local economy.

Organisations and groups represent dozens of industries, traditional and newer industries, but also many other fields of endeavour, professions and causes. There are also freelance individuals and firms. Of course lobbyists' work goes well beyond members and involves departments and agencies, other groups, the media and embassies. I do not mean to imply that this is sinister, but I do see it as significant. Lobbyists can be important sources of information; at times they can also be a constraint on members and on government.

Among many other things the APH website has long included a great deal of information on current bills. Of particular interest are Bills Digests - detailed and independent analyses of bills compiled by the Parliamentary Library. These digests were intended to help members and Senators to come to grips with the detail of bills. Now they are all loaded onto the APH website - and they are available to the world. Anybody, or any group, with an interest in a bill now has access to the very same detail as the parliamentarians they may be hoping to lobby or influence.

Conclusions

The profiles, and the work, of members, parliamentary staff and media personnel have changed greatly since the 1970s.

The range of matters dealt with by the Federal Government has grown. The volume, and the range, of information and representations directed to members has increased substantially.


While the number of sitting days has not changed very much, much more is packed into each sitting week.

Members, especially leaders, are subject to extensive and intense media scrutiny and to the increasing pressures of the news cycle. It also seems that parliamentary politics is sometimes used as a source of entertainment

Historians might say that in fact there is not so much in this that is really new. There may be some truth in that, although it is hard to deny that the intensity of scrutiny and media coverage has increased and that the pace and demands of the news cycle have quickened.

To me, large as some of the members who served in earlier times may loom, as a group members of the past should not be held to be more capable, wiser or more dedicated than those who serve now.

It is not to deny the shortcoming of the House, or to underestimate the disappointment and frustration felt by so many about its performance, to say that the House can also claim its share of achievements. It is to be hoped that the 'Parliament is hopeless' mantra does not become a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is also to be hoped that the process of reform will continue and that community concerns do not see us abandon all confidence in our system.

It is reassuring that, despite the negatives and the opprobrium routinely heaped on Members, so many talented and idealistic people still seek election to the House. 

An old man's lament

BY MARK MCRAE

As one advances in age, one gets to a stage
When one's not quite on the ball as he could be.
You're making a good fist of it, and doing your bit -
yet things are not quite as good as they should be.
The boys have left home and have families of their own,
but they each keep a watchful eye on me,
so, I'm not in complete charge, of my modest menage,
and will soon cease to be unshackled, and truly free.
It's come to my attention, I'm embarrassed to mention,
that my sons are colluding to curtail me.
The ungrateful so and so's, have truly hit low -
And are proposing, that I be barred from ALDI.
It's neither the food nor the drink that's precipitated this stink,
(and this makes their proposal so vile).
I'm to be kept at bay, particularly of a Saturday,
from the treasures in "Aladdin's" middle aisle.
It's the camping gear and spanners and the drills and the hammers,
and the meters and scanners, that enthrall me,
but I must admit, I may have overdone it a bit,
(so - perhaps I should add to my story).
You see the three pressure cookers (though really good lookers),
may be a tad surplus to needs.
And the two upright smokers and six herb garden soakers
stretch matters a bit, I'll concede.
I hear the parish is talking, the neighbours are gawking,
and counselling has even been suggested,
and Keith Patrick, I sense, (as I'm not at all dense)
believes it is I, that should be sent away to be tested.
I refuse to be cowed (I needed that torch - solar powered),
so, I will be crafty and cunning,
when the tumult subsides, I will recover my pride,
and quietly slip over to Bunnings.