



Clerk's Message

Dear Alumni

I am pleased to tell you that the department has seen the return to a more familiar rhythm, with some change.

We have transitioned away from the restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and at this stage of the parliamentary cycle, staff of the department are fully occupied with services for Members, the House and committees, and parliamentary administration. One significant matter of administration is giving priority to implementation of the Human Rights Commission report on workplace culture, *Set the Standard*. Most of the recommendations have been finalised, and the remainder are expected to be finalised early next year, notably, establishment of an Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission. You can follow progress on the Parliament's website [Set the Standard—reporting on progress](#).

As some of you know firsthand, we have resumed all community engagement activities, with several in October. Thank you to alumni for

joining staff for one or more shifts at the Parliament House Open Day on 8 October. It was lovely to see and chat with you again, and our newer staff told me it was special to meet the people belonging to the familiar names. Some tallies from Open Day are—more than 7,000 visitors, and the 3,000 Repls calico bags with mementos were 'sold out'! I trust you enjoyed participating.

On 17 October, the 11th 'My First Speech' competition concluded. The competition is open to senior students from across Australia, with students invited to imagine themselves as newly elected Members, and to compose and record a first speech. The three winning students attended for the day, made their speeches in the building, and were acknowledged in the Chamber gallery at question time. This year's entries are posted to the Parliament's website www.aph.gov.au/myfirstspeech. Be prepared to be impressed! On 30 October, a non-sitting day, I accompanied Speaker Dick for the third Speaker's Lecture, delivered by long serving member of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, Michelle Grattan.

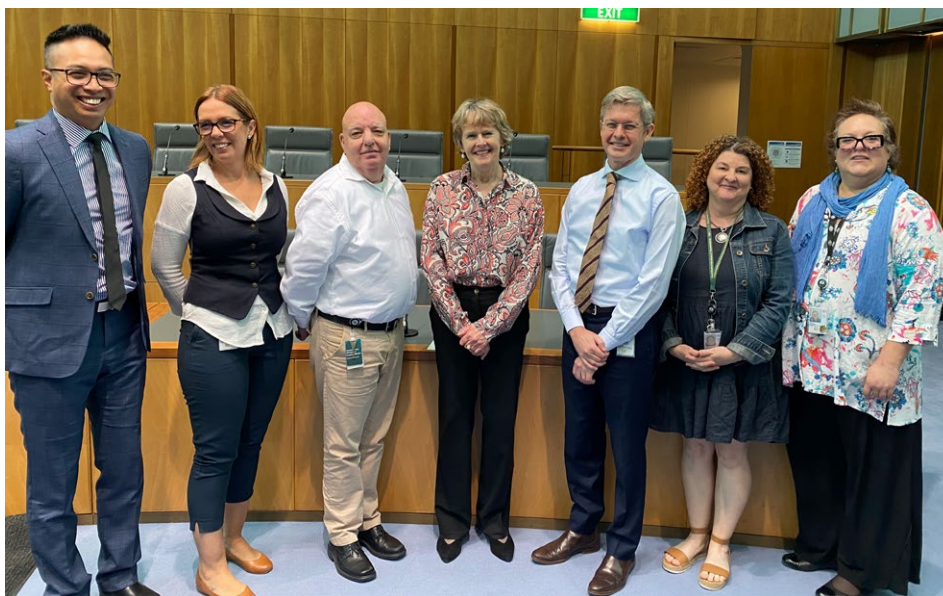


The title of her lecture was 'Is the political system letting down the Australian public?' I was pleased to see some of you attending; thanks for coming. If you weren't able to attend and would like to listen, we have published a recording and text of the event on the website [Speaker Lecture 2023 - Michelle Grattan AO - Parliament of Australia](#).

The resumption of delegations is building, keeping staff busy, and enabling the Parliament to engage with parliaments around the world. Next year, we are aiming to recommence the parliamentary staff Inter-Parliamentary Study Program. However, NSW colleagues are looking to bigger challenges! The NSW Parliament is to host next year's annual CPA conference in November, to mark the bicentenary of the Legislative Council.

The department held annual conversations (formerly planning day) on 1 November, concluding with me presenting staff service pins: 30 years—Russell Chafer; 25 years—Julia Morris; 20 years—Kerry

...continues on page 2 ▶



▲ Service pin recipients with the Clerk: Raymond Knight, Rebeka Mills, Robert Little, Russell Chafer, Kerry Warner and Julia Morris

CONTENTS

Where are they now? - Laura Gillies	2
Old Parliament House	2
<i>Order, Order!</i>	3
For the diary	4
Further information	4

...continues from page 1 ▶

Warner, Raymond Knight, Robert Little; 15 years—Naomi Swann, Paul Zinkel; and 10 years—Jessica Jonceski and Rebeka Mills.

I also mention that alumni ranks are due for some renewal, including from Susan Cardell and Naomi Swann, both of whom have announced they will be leaving the department soon.

On a final note, I look forward to welcoming alumni at a reception on 23 November following your AGM. We hope the weather is kind enough to permit a fine evening event. 🌿

Take care, for now.

Claressa Surtees
Clerk of the House

Old Parliament House

Some Alumni colleagues worked in the Old Parliament House before the big move; while many others have enjoyed visiting it and some have served there as volunteers.

All will be pleased to know that after the disruptions caused by the hailstorm of January 2020, COVID and the terrible fire of 30 December 2021 MOAD/Old Parliament House is now well and truly up and running.

MOAD/OPH has an excellent website with loads of interesting information. Events and activities there can be accessed at

<https://www.moadoph.gov.au/visit/whats-on>

Of course there is nothing like a visit! Those who enjoy a coffee and a chat or a pleasant lunch will be interested to learn that a new catering contract has been let and positive feedback has been received about its work. 🌿



Where are they now?

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

LAURA GILLIES

In June 1975 I got my first job at BP Australia in their Adelaide State Office as a typist and worked there until September 1985 at which time I moved back to Canberra. Upon arriving in Canberra I started applying for jobs at various government departments and after an interview I was offered a position in the Department of the House of Representatives (DHR). I was also offered two other positions that week at other government departments but chose the DHR job. All these positions were advertised in *The Canberra Times*.

I started on 16 December 1985 in the Procedure Office/Procedure Committee located in East Block and then worked in the Committee Office until July 1999. During this time I worked on various Committees: Joint Committee of Public Accounts, Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration (which became Banking, Finance and Public Administration), Joint ASIO Committee, Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs/Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and then back to Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (for the 3rd time).

In May 1988 we moved up the hill to the 'New' Parliament House.

Mid 1999 I moved to the role of Executive Assistant to the Clerk Assistant (Corporate). In early 2001 the Clerk Assistant (Corporate) and I were relocated down to the Clerk's Office and in 2002 the position was re-named Serjeant-at-Arms and I worked for five Serjeants until I retired in February 2019. During this time I also provided support for the Clerk and Deputy Clerk.

From 2002 I also worked on the Standing Committee of Privileges (later this became the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests) and in 2010 when the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration was established, I worked on this. Both of which continued until I retired in 2019.

During my 34 years at the DHR I also worked on many information desks at hotels, motels and Member's Hall, Parliament House for various conferences we were hosting/joint hosting. I occasionally also assisted the conference secretariat with administrative tasks.

The photographs below are from January 2000 when we hosted the CSPOC Conference 5-8 January followed by an APPF Conference 10-13 January.



▲ Conference Secretariat (left to right) - Carol Richardson, Margaret Atkin, Trevor Rowe, Celeste Italiano, Audrey O'Brien and myself

...continues on page 3 ▶



Since retiring I have been enjoying the freedom of not working. I have joined the library and spend time, probably way too much, reading. I aim to go to the gym on a regular basis each week, and also enjoy catching up with friends for coffee during the week.

I travel to Adelaide regularly during the year to catch up with my family and try to get to Melbourne for an AFL game and also to catch up with my friends down there.

So, a happy and quiet retirement life for me. 🌿

◀ Staff on the Information Desk in the Member's Hall, Parliament House

Order, Order!

Biographical Dictionary launched

On 19 June 2023 at a well attended function in Parliament House Speaker Milton Dick launched *Order, Order!*, a compilation of short biographies of Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks of the House.

The launch marked the culmination of a collaborative project between House staff and staff of the ANU based National Centre of Biography. The objective of the project was to add to the extensive body of work recording the procedures and history of the House by telling the personal stories of the holders of these key offices.

Former Speakers Stephen Martin, David Hawker, Anna Burke, Bronwyn Bishop and Andrew Wallace attended, as did former Deputy Speaker Bruce Scott and former Clerk Bernard Wright. A considerable number of current members attended, as did Gail Tregear, daughter of Clerk Allan Tregear, and members of Clerk Jack Pettifer's family.

The 65 biographies are introduced by a foreword from David Elder, who had sponsored the project during his term as Clerk, an introduction by Dr Stephen Wilks of the ANU and essays

on the three offices by Justin Baker, Catherine Cornish and Natalie Cook.

Order, Order! is primarily an electronic publication –

<https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/anu-lives-series-biography/order-order>

A small number of printed copies have been produced - these can be purchased through ANU Press - details are set out on the same site as the electronic version.

Bernard Wright spoke at the function, and says he sought to bring a staff perspective. These are his notes.

Launch of *Order, Order!*

Order Order! is welcome because its stories of 65 key office holders are so informative and so interesting. It is also welcome in another way - Members' responsibilities for the nation's present and for its future have always, I suggest, allowed little time for public reflection on the House's own history. So, *Order Order!* is doubly welcome because it should encourage what we might call institutional reflection.

Before returning to *Order Order!* I would like to reflect—in a parliamentary way of course—on the roles of Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks. Their work matters because the work of

the House matters—and they are at the heart of that work. They are not political leaders but they are leaders within the institution - they help shape its framework - and in a sense they are also followers. These perspectives can be seen repeatedly from 1901 to the present.

In the first Parliaments, the Speakers, the Chairmen of Committees, and the Clerk played leading roles in the development of standing orders and in the application of constitutional provisions to the House. They laid solid foundations.

In the decades that followed the expanding role of the national government saw the holders of these offices involved in the necessary evolution and adaptation of House practice.

So it has been in our own time—changing needs, responses, and adaptation.

The introduction of televising in 1991 took Parliament into the homes of the nation. This was intended. What was not foreseen was the full impact televising was to have on the dynamic of the House and therefore on the work of its Speakers.

Televised Question Time attracted quite a following. This was long before the

...continues on page 4 ▶

Order, Order! ...continues from page 3 ▶

rise of social media—people wrote in. Few did so to express their admiration and drafting responses to these letters became something of a minor industry.

Successive Speakers felt criticism of the House keenly because, although they were acutely aware of its shortcomings, they also knew that goodwill and cooperation characterised the majority of its work - around 60% of bills used to be passed with the support of both sides, and it is probably similar now. And they knew that public recognition of that work mattered.

Successive Speakers and Clerks encouraged reform, for example in the consideration of legislation, in the development of a committee system, and in the provision of better opportunities for private Members. Great improvements have been made in these areas.

In other matters existing practice has been strengthened. For example, during minority government in 2010-13 early precedents on the casting vote were dusted off, studied, explained to Members, and applied with absolute consistency: welcome certainty in uncertain times. In fact during those years the casting vote was not given as often as might have been expected. This was precisely because if calculations showed a vote would be tied, measures could be adjourned, rather than being lost on a (predictable) casting vote. These were technical matters, but they were first order matters with regard to the integrity of the Speakership and of House procedures.

In our time practice on the financial initiative has also been affirmed and developed. Speakers have been vigilant in safeguarding the rights of the House in relation to the Senate in respect of section 53 of the Constitution. These matters can also be very technical, but they too are critical in our system of government, of compliance with the terms of our constitution. Edmund Barton's statement during the Convention debates remains

relevant: 'If government is finance and finance is government, these clauses are amongst the most important'.

Speakers have been thoughtful students of House of Representatives Practice. One confessed to taking a copy to the beach during the summer break. I must be discreet so I will just note that she did not tell me whether she had enjoyed it!

The work of Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks has long extended beyond procedural and management matters, for example in helping strengthen democratic institutions in developing countries. In 2016 the Clerk's Office arranged a program for Deputy Speakers from the Pacific. Dates had long been agreed when the election was called. Nevertheless, as you would expect, the show went on—in fact two former Speakers joined the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker as presenters—not the only time such welcome help has been given.

Our Speakers, their Deputies and House staff are highly regarded by their international peers for their support of such initiatives - they are valued as respectful and constructive contributors.

Speakers have often been generous in thanking staff for their efforts. May I express my warm thanks, and the thanks of all Clerks and staff, for the support of the Speakers and Deputy Speakers with whom we have had the pleasure of working. We also acknowledge the great work of their spouses.

May I also express my gratitude to the former Clerks with whom my contemporaries and I had the privilege of working. We saw in them the personal and professional qualities that earned them such widespread respect and even affection.

This project has been a collaboration between our national Parliament and our national University.

We are indebted to David Elder for initiating it, to Catherine Cornish and her colleagues for carrying it forward so successfully, and to Claressa Surtees and her team for managing these later stages.


We thank Dr Stephen Wilks of the ANU for his leadership and his personal contributions. We thank our 36 biographers. Speakers are accustomed to being in the spotlight but the light shone by our volunteers has been of a more considered kind. Most of them are also volunteers for the Australian Dictionary of Biography, where the strict rule is that only the dead can be included. It is comforting that nobody has had to die to win entry into this volume, is that not so?

Our Parliaments, whatever may be said about them, are worthy of serious study. *Order Order!* will reward all who invest a little time studying it. Its stories of 65 people remind us that in essence our Parliaments are not buildings, but groups of people, each with their share of strengths and weaknesses, idealism and pragmatism, and so on. It also reminds us of two cases where a son has followed his father. Might we look forward to a daughter following her mother in one of these offices?

Order Order! will help Speakers of the future, and their Deputies, see their work in a wider context. They will see that they too will have opportunities to earn the confidence of Members and respect more widely.

Clerks of the future will also see their work in a wider context. They too will have their opportunities, not the least being the opportunity to work with and lead committed, professional and enthusiastic colleagues.

Our warm congratulations to all who have worked so successfully to bring us *Order Order!*

It may even go on to join the exclusive ranks of books about Parliament honoured by a visit to the beach during a summer break. 

FOR THE DIARY

The annual reception is to be held on **Thursday, 23 November 2023, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Formal Gardens** opposite the House of Representatives Entrance, Parliament House. The Annual General Meeting will be held in the Formal Gardens before the Reception formally commences once a quorum has been achieved.

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/>.