



Part 3

Management and accountability

Corporate governance	58
External scrutiny	63
Management of people	65
Management of financial resources	71
Outlook	74

*David Elder, Clerk of the House,
Mark Fraser LVO OAM, Official Secretary to
the Governor-General, and Dr Rosemary Laing,
Clerk of the Senate, certifying copies of the
Governor-General's proclamation dissolving
the parliament, 9 May 2016.*

Photo: Penny Bradfield, Auspic/DPS

Corporate governance

The Speaker of the House of Representatives is accountable to the House of Representatives for the department. The Clerk of the House of Representatives, who is responsible for leading the department, reports to the Speaker.

Legislation

During 2015–16, the department's operations were governed by the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). Other legislation, including the *Fair Work Act 2009*, also applies to the operations of the department. These Acts set out the Clerk's responsibilities for managing the department.

Executive and senior management

The department's Executive comprises the Clerk of the House, the Deputy Clerk and three Senior Executive Service Band 1 staff—the Clerk Assistant (Committees), the Clerk Assistant (Table) and the Serjeant-at-Arms—each of whom is responsible for one or more of the department's offices (see Figure 1 on page 5). The senior managers of the department are the Executive and staff at the Executive Band 2 Level.

Management committees

Executive

The Executive held 11 formal meetings during the year. As well as standing items on finance and people strategies, the Executive discussed:

- » corporate and business planning matters
- » the department's organisational structure
- » the department's guidelines for staff on making public comment and contact with the media
- » matters relating to the negotiation of a new enterprise agreement
- » recommendations made by the internal auditor
- » security matters
- » the development of a strategic workforce plan for the department
- » the outcomes of the 2015 staff survey.

Audit Committee

The department's Audit Committee met five times in 2015–16 (9 July, 23 September, 9 December, 17 February and 18 May). The committee comprised the Clerk Assistant (Table) as chair, the Clerk Assistant (Committees) and three independent members. At 30 June 2016, the independent members were Tim Courtney, of the Australian Electoral Commission; Susan McNeilly, of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel; and Dermot Walsh, of the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Serjeant-at-Arms attends committee meetings as an adviser, together with representatives of the Australian National Audit Office, the department's internal audit team and the Chief Financial Officer.

At the meeting on 23 September 2015, the Chief Financial Officer presented the Audit Committee with the department's financial statements for 2014–15, the outcome of the final audit undertaken by the Australian National Audit Office and a 2014–15 certificate of compliance. The committee agreed that the chair, on behalf of the committee, provide assurance to the Clerk that the financial statements and audit were in order and recommended as appropriate for sign-off.

The department's internal auditor, appointed in May 2015 for a term of three years, is Bellchambers Barrett Pty Ltd. During the reporting year, the auditor developed annual and three-year strategic audit plans, and completed a follow-up review of previous audit recommendations and a review of compliance with Australian Government better practice guidance on credit card usage. At 30 June 2016, two further audits were underway and an annual audit plan for 2016–17 had been developed.

Consultative Committee

The Consultative Committee is an important mechanism for communicating and consulting with staff on workplace issues. Chaired by the Deputy Clerk, the committee has four departmental representatives, two elected staff representatives and two union-nominated representatives.

The committee met six times during 2015–16. Standing agenda items for the meetings are:

- » implementation and monitoring of the enterprise agreement
- » proposals for change and developments affecting staff
- » review of implemented changes
- » reports on departmental activities.

Additional matters discussed during the year included:

- » car parking shortages at Parliament House
- » the departmental staff survey
- » office accommodation and equipment
- » election period arrangements.

Corporate plan

The department's corporate plan for 2015–16 was published in August 2015, as required under the PGPA Act. In accordance with the Act, the corporate plan covers the reporting period and out years to 2018–19. It sets out the purpose of the department, the activities undertaken to achieve that purpose, and measures used by the department to assess its performance. The plan describes the environment in which the department operates and the key strategies it has for achieving its purpose. It also summarises the department's risk management and oversight systems.

The department's corporate plan is available on the Parliament of Australia website. A report on the department's performance against the measures set out in the 2015–16 corporate plan is in Appendix 1. At 30 June 2016, a corporate plan for 2016–17 was in preparation and will be published by the statutory deadline.

A departmental business plan, an operational complement to the corporate plan, was issued in late 2015 and remained in force for the rest of the reporting year.

Members' survey

An annual survey of members is undertaken by the department in May–June each year. It surveys a sample of 30 randomly selected members on the quality of all services provided by the department.

The 2016 survey was not held as the 2016 election period coincided with the usual time for the survey to take place. Before it conducts a survey in 2017, the department plans to evaluate the ways in which parliamentary departments in other jurisdictions seek feedback from their members—with a view to refreshing the approach the department takes to obtaining feedback from members, including the conduct of a survey. Obtaining feedback from members remains one of the department's key accountability requirements, as it provides a direct assessment of the quality of services being offered to members by the department.

Accountability mechanisms

The department's main formal external accountability mechanisms are the Portfolio Budget Statements and the annual report, prepared pursuant to section 65 of the Parliamentary Service Act. The annual report for 2014–15 assessed performance against the targets set in the Portfolio Budget Statements 2014–15 and presented the department's financial statements. The department's annual report and Portfolio Budget Statements were provided to all members and published on the Parliament of Australia website.

The department has not identified any instances of significant non-compliance with the finance law during 2015–16. The finance law incorporates the PGPA Act, any rules and instruments created under the PGPA Act, and appropriation and supply acts.

Risk management and fraud control

The department's risk management policy, fraud control plan and accompanying risk assessments were in place during 2015–16. As in previous years, new staff were informed at regular induction programs of their financial management responsibilities and the department's fraud risk assessment and fraud control.

No losses of public money and no instances of fraud were identified during the year.

Business continuity

A departmental business continuity plan was in force throughout the reporting year, complemented by office-level business resumption plans. The department's business continuity network, which assists staff to manage the risk of business interruptions, met twice in 2015–16. The network oversees the department's program of business continuity exercises. An exercise involving business-critical units of the department was conducted during the reporting year, and a further exercise is planned for later in 2016.

Ethical standards

The Parliamentary Service Values and Code of Conduct in the Parliamentary Service Act provide staff with a framework for ethical conduct. The department promotes sound ethical behaviour. All staff who are new to the department are advised about what it

means to work in a values-based environment and how ethical standards apply to their day-to-day work.

Service charter

The department's service charter for members and the community continued to provide the basis for the standards of service that members and the public can expect from the department. The charter is available on the Parliament of Australia website.

Social justice and equity

The department's role is to support the House of Representatives rather than to deliver services directly to the public. Accordingly, contributing to social justice within the broader community is not a direct responsibility of the department. However, the department works indirectly towards achieving social justice through the work of the House of Representatives itself, its members and its committees and in enabling community access to them.

Inter-parliamentary departmental collaboration

Meetings of heads of parliamentary departments

Formal quarterly meetings between the Clerk, the Clerk of the Senate, the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Parliamentary Budget Officer continued during the reporting year. Meetings were held on 26 August 2015, 18 November 2015, 17 February 2016 and 18 May 2016. Responsibility for chairing the meetings rotates between the departments on an annual calendar basis. The Clerk of the House is the chair for 2016.

Matters discussed in 2015–16 included:

- » a strategic plan for parliamentary administration
- » the Reconciliation Action Plan
- » award modernisation
- » Parliament House Open Day 2015
- » capital projects relating to the chambers
- » client surveys
- » parliamentary pass policy
- » amendments to the Parliamentary Service Act
- » accommodation review
- » enterprise bargaining.

Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group

The Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group supports the parliamentary departmental heads by overseeing and advising on the implementation of corporate services matters and on initiatives of common interest across the parliamentary departments.

The group's members are the Serjeant-at-Arms, the Usher of the Black Rod, the Chief Operating Officer of the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Assistant Parliamentary Budget Officer of the Corporate Strategy Branch of the Parliamentary Budget Office. Responsibility for chairing the group rotates annually in line with the chairing of the departmental heads meeting. In 2015–16, the group held four formal meetings and discussed:

- » work health and safety policies in the four parliamentary departments
- » proposed amendments to the Parliamentary Service Determination 2013
- » the monitoring of proposed amendments to the *Public Service Act 1999*, including for their potential impact on the Parliamentary Service Act
- » modernisation of the Parliamentary Departments Staff Award 1998.

Other forums

The department's Executive played an active role in a number of forums across the parliamentary departments throughout the reporting year—in particular, in relation to ICT and redesign of the Parliament of Australia website.

Reconciliation Action Plan

The department convened a committee to develop a second Reconciliation Action Plan for the Australian Parliamentary Service for 2016–18. The plan was approved by Reconciliation Australia on 11 June 2016 and is scheduled to be launched by the heads of the four parliamentary departments on 8 July 2016.

Purchaser–provider arrangements

The department does not have any purchaser–provider arrangements for selling services to, or buying services from, an Australian Government agency.

The department receives certain building and ICT services from the Department of Parliamentary Services, and audit services from the Australian National Audit Office. These services are accounted for in the department's financial statements as resources received free of charge.

The department has agreements in place with the Department of the Senate for the provision of inter-parliamentary services (by this department) and parliamentary education services (by the Department of the Senate). The department runs parliamentary education seminars on a fee-for-service basis for government agencies.

Ecologically sustainable development and environmental reporting

The Department of Parliamentary Services is responsible for managing Parliament House and the parliamentary precincts. The Department of Parliamentary Services reports in accordance with section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* in its annual report, which is available from the Parliament of Australia website.

External scrutiny

The department's operations are primarily administrative and are therefore not usually subject to formal external scrutiny.

Freedom of information

The department is excluded from the application of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, under section 68A of the Parliamentary Service Act.

Public interest disclosure

The Clerk, as the principal officer of the department for the purposes of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*, has established procedures and appointed authorised officers for facilitating and dealing with public interest disclosures relating to the department in accordance with that Act.

Judicial and administrative decisions

No judicial decisions or decisions of administrative tribunals or the Australian Information Commissioner during 2015–16 had, or are anticipated to have, a significant effect on the operations of the department.

Reports by the Auditor-General, parliamentary committees or the Commonwealth Ombudsman

The Australian National Audit Office audited the department's 2014–15 financial statements and provided an unqualified audit report.

During the reporting year, the Clerk made submissions and/or provided evidence to the:

- » House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure's inquiry into the consideration in detail of the main appropriation bills
- » House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure's inquiry into the provisions for nursing mothers
- » House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure's inquiry into the conduct of question time
- » Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' inquiry into the delivery of electoral education
- » Human Rights Sub-Committee, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's inquiry into human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean – Asia–Pacific region
- » New South Wales Legislative Council's Select Committee on the Legislative Committee System—preparing for the next 25 years
- » Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs' inquiry into initiatives towards a family-friendly House of Commons
- » House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure's inquiry into procedures for counting and reporting the vote in a division
- » New South Wales Legislative Council's Procedure Committee's inquiry into young children accompanying members into the House.

The department continued to support the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration's consideration of the department's funding requirements. The Clerk and other departmental staff provided the committee with information on the department's budget position and attended the committee's meetings to enable the committee to discharge its responsibilities under Standing Order 222A. On 5 May 2016, the committee tabled *Report No. 10: Annual report 2014–15* and *Report No. 11: Budget estimates 2016–17*.

In the annual report, the committee noted that it had met four times during the period covered and concluded that it had played a positive and responsible role in assessing the department's funding requirements and bringing them to the attention of the government. In the budget estimates report, the committee noted that it had considered an alternative funding model for the department based on the concept of a base-line budget and a number of funding proposals. As in previous reports, the committee commended the department's careful financial management over many years and indicated that it would continue to monitor closely the department's financial position.

No investigations by the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2015–16 involved the department.

Privacy

While not an agency to which the *Privacy Act 1988* applies, the department abides by the principles of the legislation in its dealings with employees and the handling of their records.

Disability reporting mechanisms

The National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 sets out a 10-year national policy framework to improve the lives of people with disability, promote participation and create a more inclusive society. A high-level two-yearly report will track progress against each of the six outcome areas of the strategy and present a picture of how people with disability are faring. The first of these reports was published in 2014 on the Department of Social Services website (www.dss.gov.au).

Management of people

Staffing numbers

At 30 June 2016, the department had 147 employees—129 ongoing and 18 non-ongoing. As at 30 June 2015, the number of staff was 151, comprising 125 ongoing and 26 non-ongoing. Further information on staffing levels can be found in Appendix 2.

Investors in People Standard

The department has held accreditation against the Investors in People Standard since 2002. The standard is an international quality framework with 10 indicators that set a level of good practice and a basis for the continuous improvement of an agency's performance through the management of its people.

Investors in People has additional evidence requirements that agencies may elect to be assessed against. In 2015 the department met more than 90 of the additional evidence requirements and was awarded 'Investors in People Silver'. The department's next accreditation in 2018 will be against the new Investors in People standard: Leading-Supporting-Improving.

Staff survey

In June 2016, the department conducted its eleventh annual staff survey. As in previous years, most staff participated in the survey. The survey measures the quality of the department's leadership, the level of staff satisfaction with pay and conditions of service, and the strengths of the department.

The results are taken into account in the department's ongoing development of its strategy for attracting and retaining staff.

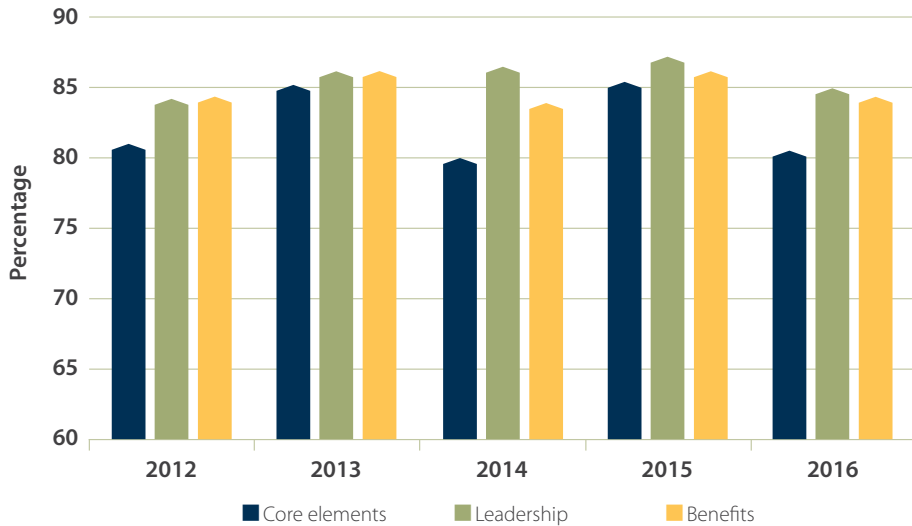
The department has established three internal benchmarks based on the results of the survey. These benchmarks, or index scores, correspond to the total percentage of staff selecting 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' in response to specific sets of questions. The three benchmarks are as follows:

- » The 'core elements' satisfaction index measures the extent to which the department provided the core elements needed to attract, focus and keep the most talented staff (satisfaction rate of 81 per cent in 2016 and an average 84 per cent over the last five years).
- » The 'leadership' satisfaction index measures the level of satisfaction of staff with their managers against the department's leadership statement (satisfaction rate of 86 per cent in 2016 and an average of 87 per cent over the last five years).
- » The 'benefits' satisfaction index measures the level of staff satisfaction with pay and working conditions (satisfaction rate of 85 per cent in 2016 and an average of 86 per cent over the last five years).

The department will be reviewing and benchmarking the survey against other similar surveys before the next one is conducted.

Figure 7 shows the performance of the satisfaction elements in the last five years. A satisfaction rating of 80 per cent or above is considered high.

Figure 7 Staff survey satisfaction elements, 2012 to 2016



People strategies: planning and delivery

Organisational reviews

The department conducts organisational reviews, as required, to ensure that workloads in all areas are matched with the number of staff required to perform the work and that the classification levels or work value requirements of individual jobs are appropriate to the work being conducted.

Recruitment of staff

The department advertised to fill four ongoing vacancies during 2015–16 (compared with seven in 2014–15), of which one was filled by an external applicant.

Retention of staff

Fourteen ongoing and 17 non-ongoing staff left the department in 2015–16. The turnover rate was 9.8 per cent for ongoing staff (8.8 per cent in 2014–15). Appendix 2 includes details of separations.

Exit interviews with staff leaving the department continued to be conducted by senior executive service (SES) managers. Three such interviews were conducted during the year.

Graduate placement program

The department, in conjunction with the Department of the Senate, the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Parliamentary Budget Office, conducts the annual Parliament of Australia Graduate Program. The program involves three-month placements of people from the graduate programs of Australian Government agencies. It allows the department to have the services of enthusiastic new recruits and enables participants to return to their home departments with valuable experiences of parliamentary operations.

The program continued to draw a high level of interest from individual graduates and a range of agencies. Seven graduates undertook three-month placements in the department in 2015–16.

Feedback from graduates confirmed that the program is highly successful and that the objectives of the placements were met.

Alumni

The department formed an alumni association of former staff in 2008. On 30 June 2016, there were 206 members. The association issued two newsletters during the year. Some members of the association assisted with the Parliament House Open Day on 19 September 2015.

On 8 October 2015, the annual general meeting of the association was held, attended by 15 association members. At the meeting, two co-chairs were elected and the membership of the alumni board was increased by self-nomination of attendees. The board met once in 2015–16. A reception for members of the association and staff was held on 27 November 2015.

Training and development

Table 9 shows the department's training and development expenditure as a percentage of expenditure on salaries in 2014–15 and 2015–16. It also shows the average number of person-days spent on training and the average staffing level in both years. The average number of training days for staff remained at 3.1 days of off-the-job training per person per year. The fluctuation in staff training days generally reflects the stages of the parliamentary cycle.

Table 9 Expenditure on training and development programs, 2014–15 and 2015–16

	2014–15	2015–16
Expenditure as a percentage of annual payroll	1.14%	0.8%
Average training days per person	3.1	3.1
Average staffing level	155.6	153

Table 10 compares the average attendance of staff at training courses in 2014–15 and 2015–16. It also shows the average staffing level and total number of training days attended in 2015–16 for each classification.

Table 10 Average staff attendance at training courses, 2014–15 and 2015–16

Classification	Average staffing level	Total number of training days attended	Average number of training days attended	
	2015–16	2015–16	2014–15	2015–16
Senior Executive Service	5.9	16.3	3.9	2.8
Executive Band 2	21.7	46.1	1.8	2.1
Executive Band 1	39.9	84.9	2.1	2.1
Parliamentary Service Level 6	26.2	62.8	2.7	2.4
Parliamentary Service Level 5	6.0	12.4	3.4	2.1
Parliamentary Service Level 4	28.7	89.6	4.3	3.1
Parliamentary Service Level 3	9.6	9.3	2.2	1.0
Parliamentary Service Level 2	15	9.3	0.8	2.6
Not specified	120	–	–	–
Total	153	480.6	3.1	3.1

Leadership development

The department has invested in leadership development with a range of external providers for over a decade and has trend data from staff surveys on leadership for the entire period. In 2015–16, staff participated in leadership programs designed for specific parliamentary service levels. Programs were conducted for Executive Band 1, Parliamentary Service Level 6 and Parliamentary Service Level 4 and 5 staff.

Workplace diversity

The workplace diversity program aligns the department's workplace diversity strategies and actions with the Parliamentary Service Values.

New staff continued to receive training, as soon as practicable after their commencement, in the prevention of discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Knowledge management

The Knowledge Management Steering Committee met three times during 2015–16. The committee comprised staff from all areas of the department and was chaired by the Clerk Assistant (Table), supported by the Parliamentary and Business Information Services Office. The committee continued to oversee the department's commitment to knowledge management processes.

The committee monitored the department's ICT activities, including key business systems and web portals, and the department's progress on the National Archives of Australia Digital Continuity 2020 Policy. In addition, the committee commenced work to implement a new project management framework for the department.

Studybank

Thirteen staff participated in the department's Studybank program during the year (compared with 12 staff in 2014–15). Collectively, they received financial assistance of \$25,389 (compared with \$13,969 in 2015), along with a total of 70.1 days of study leave on full pay.

Performance assessment

All eligible staff participated in the annual work performance assessment cycle, which was completed on 31 October 2015. The cycle consists of setting individual work objectives, conducting performance assessments, preparing individual development plans and providing feedback to supervisors. The individual development plans are compiled and the development requirements of staff are reviewed. These plans and requirements form the basis for the training program for the next calendar year.

Employment framework

The Department of the House of Representatives Enterprise Agreement 2012–2015 covers all staff except SES. The department's SES staff are covered by determinations made under section 24(1) of the Parliamentary Service Act.

In April 2015, a notice of employee representational rights was issued to staff, commencing the bargaining process for a new enterprise agreement.

Staff salary scales under the agreement are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11 Salary scales of staff covered by the 2012–2015 enterprise agreement, at 1 December 2014

Classification	Salary scale (\$)
Executive Band 2	132,608–140,509
Executive Band 1	102,457–114,286
Parliamentary Service Level 6	82,570–93,709
Parliamentary Service Level 5	76,320–80,758
Parliamentary Service Level 4	67,474–73,001
Parliamentary Service Level 3	61,044–65,576
Parliamentary Service Level 2	54,250–59,235
Parliamentary Service Level 1	47,955–52,473

Salaries expenditure

In 2015–16, departmental salaries and allowances totalled \$19.208 million (\$18.04 million in 2014–15).

Work health and safety

The department's aim under the health and safety management arrangements is to create and maintain a safe and healthy working environment. During 2015–16 work was undertaken on producing a work health and safety management system.

Workstation assessments are conducted for staff on request. These include education on the correct set-up of workstations—for example, the height of the desk at both sitting and standing positions. Workstation information is provided in orientation sessions for new staff.

In October 2015 the Presiding Officers wrote to the heads of the parliamentary departments requesting that a working group be established to review:

- » the approach taken by each parliamentary department to work health and safety issues
- » whether each agency's approach is at best practice levels
- » any benefits to be gained from a joint consideration of work health and safety issues at Parliament House.

A report on these matters was provided through the Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group to the parliamentary departmental heads confirming the appropriateness of the approaches of each department to work health and safety. The working group also provided a whole-of-parliament work health and safety risk assessment and has made recommendations to further support work health and safety risk practices across the parliament.

The working group will continue to meet quarterly to ensure its recommendations are implemented.

The department's Comcare premium rate for 2015–16 was 0.45 per cent of payroll, a decrease from the 2014–15 rate of 0.6 per cent.

During the year, no dangerous occurrences required notification under section 37 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, no investigations were carried out, and no directions or notices were received by the department under section 191 of the Act.

No compensation claims were received from staff in 2015–16.

Management of financial resources

Asset management

The department's asset management strategy focuses on efficient asset utilisation and allows the department to identify underperforming assets. The department operates within a controlled environment at Parliament House and the risk of loss for the majority of assets is minimal.

A stocktake of furniture and fittings and portable and attractive assets was completed during 2015–16. During the stocktake process, Finance Office staff conducted a visual assessment for impairment. A verification of impairment testing was performed in conjunction with asset counting. The department undertook a full revaluation of plant and equipment and heritage and cultural assets, which resulted in a revaluation surplus of \$0.772 million.

The furniture replacement project continued during 2015–16. The first phase of the project (encompassing departmental offices and certain parliamentary office holders' suites) was completed. A combination of cash reserves and departmental capital budget funding was used to replace these furniture items. The second phase of the project (involving staff areas of members' offices) commenced in late 2015. The estimated cost for this phase is \$4.031 million. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2017–18.

During 2015–16, the department redeveloped its intranet (RepsNet) and other bespoke systems. The department started developing an electronic petitions system and, in partnership with the Department of the Senate, continued to enhance the Shared Committee Information Database.

A review of the intangible assets category was conducted to verify assets in use by the following offices:

- » Committee Office
- » Finance Office
- » International and Parliamentary Relations Office
- » Parliamentary and Business Information Services Office
- » People Strategies Office.

There was no indication that any departmental assets were impaired to any extent approaching materiality.

Purchasing

Contracts were entered into for the provision of editing services for the department's annual report and an upgrade of the department's records management system. Other arrangements were entered into to provide expertise associated with the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program and Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project activities. The department accessed existing panel arrangements for the procurement of training and leadership development programs.

The department continued to access whole-of-government contracts for the provision of travel and related services. The purchase of stationery and office supplies was made through the whole-of-government contract with Staples.

The department initiated a request for quote during the reporting period for the provision of a guillotine for its in-house print services. The current machine is beyond its useful life and requires replacement.

Consultants

The department engages consultants when it lacks specialist expertise or when independent research, review or assessment is required. Consultants are typically engaged to investigate or diagnose a defined issue or problem; carry out defined reviews or evaluations; or provide independent advice, information or creative solutions to assist in the department's decision-making.

Before engaging consultants, the department takes into account the skills and resources required for the task, the skills available internally, and the cost-effectiveness of engaging external expertise. The decision to engage a consultant is made in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 and associated instruments, including the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and relevant internal policies.

During 2015–16, nine new consultancy contracts were entered into involving total actual expenditure of \$0.042 million. In addition, eight ongoing consultancy contracts were active in 2015–16, involving total actual expenditure of \$0.164 million.

Annual reports contain information about actual expenditure on contracts for consultancies. Information on the value of contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website (www.tenders.gov.au).

Competitive tendering and contracting

The department's contracting activities were disclosed through the government's AusTender system, as required. There were no instances during 2015–16 where contracts were let that did not provide for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor's premises, or where the Clerk exempted a contract from being published on AusTender.

Procurement initiatives to support small business

The department supports small business participation in the Commonwealth Government procurement market. Participation statistics for small and medium enterprises and small enterprises are available on the Department of Finance's website at www.finance.gov.au/procurement/statistics-on-commonwealth-purchasing-contracts.

Consistent with paragraph 5.4 of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, the department's procurement practices to support small and medium enterprises include:

- » using the Commonwealth contracting suite for low-risk procurements valued under \$200,000
- » facilitating on-time payments by using electronic funds transfers or payment cards.

Advertising and market research

Section 311A of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* requires the department to detail amounts paid to advertising agencies, market research organisations, polling organisations, direct mail organisations and media advertising organisations during the financial year.

The department did not conduct any advertising campaigns during 2015–16. Amounts paid to media advertising organisations or advertising agencies were under the reporting threshold of \$12,700.

Grants

The department did not administer any grant programs in 2015–16. Information on grants awarded in prior years is available at www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Department_of_the_House_of_Representatives/Grants.

Outlook

In 2016–17, the department will continue to support the House, committees and members and deliver services to its stakeholders and parliamentary partners. The department must continue to be capable of delivering advice and support of a high standard, and of anticipating and responding quickly to developments and changing requirements.

The department will continue to seek efficiencies, and to innovate, with an emphasis on ICT improvements. To ensure resilience, the department will test its business continuity and resumption plans, and will work in collaboration with the other parliamentary departments to ensure capability at a whole-of-parliament level. It will continue to monitor compliance with the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act, the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule and other legislative instruments.

In 2016–17 the department will negotiate a new enterprise agreement with staff. The agreement-making process will be undertaken based on the government's bargaining framework.

The department will also continue to give priority to supporting and enhancing whole-of-parliament governance arrangements. These processes are important in ensuring that strategic priorities are addressed effectively and that the parliamentary departments work collegially to support the institution.