



Part 2

Performance

Annual performance statement	12
Financial performance	25
Chamber and Federation Chamber	27
Committee support	40
Interparliamentary relations	46
Community relations and awareness	49
Members' and corporate support	53
Schools hospitality	60

Annual performance statement

Introductory statement

I, as the accountable authority of the Department of the House of Representatives, present the department's 2022–23 annual performance statement, as required under section 39(1) (a) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). In my opinion, this annual performance statement accurately reflects the performance of the department and complies with section 39(2) of the PGPA Act.

Claressa Surtees, Clerk of the House

Purpose

The department's purpose, as set out in its *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, is:

to support the House of Representatives, and the wider parliament, in the role of a representative and legislative body primarily by providing advice and services, and through engaging with the community and other parliaments.

Data sources

The results and analysis presented in this annual performance statement are based on data from several sources. These include an annual survey of members of the House of Representatives, analytics relating to departmental social media and publications, evaluations from external stakeholders, and internal records and reporting.

Members' survey

In May 2023 all members were invited to complete a survey, intended to gauge their views on, and satisfaction with, the services provided by the department. Members were advised that their responses could be anonymous, and would be de-identified before publication. The survey was available online and in hard copy, and responses were collected until 30 June.

The survey asked members to indicate whether they were satisfied with each of the following:

- » the quality and timeliness of chamber procedural support and advisory services
- » the quality and timeliness of advice, and the standard of report drafting for parliamentary committees
- » support for participation in official parliamentary delegations
- » support for their House of Representatives office accommodation
- » support for their salary payments
- » support for transport coordination in Canberra during sitting weeks.

Members were able to provide comments in response to each question.

During the reporting period, the official parliamentary delegation program fully resumed following the relaxation of COVID-19 travel restrictions. The survey this year therefore included questions about international relations activities for the first time since 2019–20.

Twenty-three members completed the survey. This represents a response rate of 15%. The response rate in previous years has been 14% (2021–22), 28% (2020–21), and 19% (2019–20). Members were invited to add their name to the survey, and the majority of those who responded did so. The department notes that the 15% response rate, while a slight increase from 2021–22, remains lower than in recent years.

Other data sources

In addition to the members' survey, feedback on the services provided by the department is sought from the Presiding Officers through interviews with their staff. Formal feedback is also received from participants in the department's seminar programs. A further data source is analytics relating to contact with the department's social media and publications. Internal chamber support service standards, internal records and exception reporting are also drawn on for reporting on the department's performance.

Activity information

The department monitors its work output by collecting information on specific activities throughout the year. No targets are set for outputs, as most are dependent on factors outside the direct control of the department, particularly the parliamentary cycle.

Comparisons with data from previous years provide a longitudinal perspective and an indication of the extent to which various outputs are affected by the parliamentary cycle.

Commentary

The department has a well-established performance framework that continues to mature. The department's purpose statement and performance measures are presented in summary in the department's *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, and in more detail in the department's *Corporate Plan 2022–23*.

The department is committed to considering its performance from the perspective of its key client groups. The department's purpose statement indicates that the department's support for the House of Representatives as a representative and legislative body is primarily delivered through the provision of advice and services. As recipients of the advice and services, members are the department's principal clients. Quantitative and qualitative data gathered from members via the members' survey provides crucial performance information. This data is supplemented by feedback provided by the Speaker's Office and President's Office.

Results and analysis

Activity 1: Chamber and Federation Chamber

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Level of satisfaction among surveyed members with the quality and timeliness of chamber support, procedural and statistical publications, analysis and advisory services.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 14; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, page 15.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

All but one of the members responding to the survey (95%) indicated satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of chamber procedural support and advisory services. Similarly, 95% of respondents indicated satisfaction with the quality and availability of procedural and statistical publications, and the support available to obtain these. Comments made about chamber procedural support and advisory services were positive and included ‘as a new member I feel very supported by the staff’.

Several comments related to difficulties for those outside the Chamber to access electronic copies of second reading amendments to bills circulated in the Chamber. The department now publishes circulated second reading amendments on the webpage for the relevant bill on the Australian Parliament’s website. Another comment requested that copies of procedures for proposed detail amendments be provided earlier. However, confidentiality requirements restrict early circulation, and the procedures are often subject to change at short notice.

Criterion 2

Chamber support service standards met for sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber and processing of bills, votes, messages and other chamber documents with a high degree of accuracy and within timeframes.

Target: 100%.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 15; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, page 15.

Result against the performance criterion: Target not met.

The chamber support service standards for the Chamber and the Federation Chamber relate to the timeliness and accuracy of chamber procedures and the publication of chamber documents. Eight documents were not produced or finalised within expected timelines, as a result of external ICT issues or the late receipt of advice or authorisations. One error in a procedure was recorded and one error in a message to the Senate was also identified.

Breakdowns of the House Division Recording System, following its migration from on-premise servers to a cloud environment, also caused delays in the publication of several divisions.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 14.

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Number of sittings of the House	62	67	41	68
Number of meetings of the Federation Chamber	54	63	25	62
Number of bills introduced	248	184	141	186

a. Election year.

Analysis

The department continued to provide a high standard of support to the Chamber and Federation Chamber in 2022–23. Following the opening of the 47th Parliament on 26 July 2022, the Parliament quickly returned to activity levels consistent with the first year of a parliamentary cycle.

The House sat for 68 days in the period, which is the highest number of sitting days since 2014–15 (77 days). This is a substantial increase over the previous year (41 days), due to the dissolution of the House on 11 April 2022 in preparation for the federal election. The Federation Chamber likewise returned to a higher level of activity and met 62 times, which is comparable to 2020–21 (63 times). Legislative activity was also high, with 186 bills introduced in the period, which is 32% more than in 2021–22 (141 bills introduced).

Targets set against the performance measures for the House of Representatives Chamber and Federation Chamber support were met, with the exceptions mentioned above. The department will continue to work with the DPS to ensure that the bespoke ICT infrastructure supporting the work of the House remains reliable as systems are modernised or replaced.

The year has seen the measured return to pre-COVID-19 arrangements and processes for the two chambers. The House returned to 'business as usual' as have the department's chamber support services. The focus will now turn to ICT systems upgrades and staff consolidation in order to ensure that services for the new parliament evolve while still being provided in a high quality and timely way.

Activity 2: Committee support

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Level of satisfaction among surveyed committee members with the standard of administrative and procedural support provided.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 15; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, page 15.

Result against the performance criterion: Target not met.

All but four respondents to this question in the members' survey (79%) indicated satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of advice and services to their committees. Comments made by members in the survey reflected overall satisfaction with the quality of administrative and procedural support provided to committees, and included 'staff are great', 'really impressive' and 'assistance was very quick and helpful'. One comment stated that 'committees are under resourced' and another noted they can be 'overloaded'. A further comment suggested improvements to how committee activities are scheduled.

Criterion 2

Level of satisfaction among surveyed committee members with the standard of research and drafting support provided.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 15; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

All respondents (100%) indicated satisfaction with the standard of research and drafting support provided to committees.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 15.

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Number of committee meetings ^b	571	620	407	624
Hours of meetings ^{b,c}	790	1,177	663	1,194
Number of committee reports ^b	55	61	82	45

a. Election year.

b. Excludes internal committees.

c. To the nearest hour.

Analysis

The number and hours of committee meetings reflect the high tempo of activity following the opening of the 47th Parliament. Scrutiny committees supported by the department met 624 times and for 1,194 hours in 2022–23, which is the highest level of activity since 2017–18 (693 meetings and 1,285 hours).

Feedback gathered through the members' survey indicates members continue to be satisfied overall with committee support services. All members responding to the survey indicated satisfaction with the standard of research and drafting. The department acknowledges the drop in recorded satisfaction with the standard of administrative and procedural support provided, as well as the comments suggesting committee secretariats are under resourced.

Engagement with committee members, including chairs and deputy chairs, on their expectations will continue to be a focus for the department, as will strategies for staff recruitment and retention.

Activity 3: Interparliamentary relations and capacity-building

Performance measures and targets

Criteria 1, 2 and 3

Level of satisfaction of Presiding Officers and delegates with arrangements for official incoming delegations.

Level of satisfaction of Presiding Officers and delegates with arrangements for outgoing delegations.

Level of satisfaction among participants with capacity-building activities.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 16; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, page 16.

Result against the performance criteria: Target met.

Interviews with the Presiding Officers indicate high levels of satisfaction with support for delegations. Similarly, feedback provided by senior stakeholders involved in visits conducted by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO) indicates a high degree of satisfaction with visit conduct and outcomes. Notably, the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade wrote to the department to express her personal gratitude for the work of IPRO in successfully delivering a high-level visit.

Comments from the members survey indicated satisfaction with the support provided to outgoing parliamentary delegations. Comments included 'very professional and supportive' and 'the staff are great and excellent but they're very stretched'. One respondent, however, was concerned that their delegation schedule in one country had been too busy.

Capacity building activities in the year consisted of procuring and sending equipment to Pacific parliaments and staff attachments to assist with budget processes. It is expected that hosting of capacity building programs in Australia will resume in the forthcoming year.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 16.

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Number of delegations managed	32	Program suspended	2	22
Number and nature of parliamentary capacity-building activities	14	24	21	20
» Occasions equipment supplied to Pacific parliament	1	6	4	4
» Staff attachments and study visit	10	2 (virtual)	2 (virtual)	5
» Conferences, seminars and workshop	3	0	1	1
» Information-sharing requests facilitate	–	16	14	14
Number of virtual engagement activities	–	98	94	26
» Virtual meetings involving one or both Presiding Officer	–	29	9	1
» Virtual interparliamentary events/forums with Australian Parliament delegation	–	16	9	1
» Virtual events and webinars offered to parliamentarian	–	53	76	24

a. Election year.

Analysis

Following the easing of COVID-19 travel restrictions, the international delegation program resumed and in-person engagement activities recommenced. The department supported 14 outgoing delegations covering 17 different countries and eight incoming delegations. The incoming delegations included three Guest of Parliament delegations from New Zealand, Ukraine and Vietnam, hosted by the Presiding Officers.

In January 2023, the Australian Parliament hosted the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC). The biennial conference brings together the presiding officers of the Commonwealth nations to discuss parliamentary matters. CSPOC was attended by 110 representatives from 33 parliaments, and topics discussed included parliamentary engagement, security and e Parliament innovation.

The department continued to provide secretariat support to the Australian Parliament's membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, including Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. The department also continued to support the parliament's involvement in the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Feedback from the Presiding Officers and stakeholders involved in the parliament's international program indicate a high level of satisfaction with the support provided by the department.

Activity 4: Community awareness

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Community is aware of, and engages with, published information about legislative and other parliamentary processes.

Target: Interaction with published information about the work of the House increasing over time (percentage change on prior year).

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 17; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

Subscriber data for the department's social media platforms was as follows:

- » Facebook: 8,787 followers (increase of 0.1%)
- » Twitter/X: 51,739 followers (increase of 0.5%)
- » YouTube: 16,731 subscribers (increase of 31.4%)
- » LinkedIn: 362 (increase of 32.1%).

In 2022–23, the department saw subscriber growth across all social media platforms, though the number of followers on Facebook and Twitter/X remained largely stable.

During the reporting period, the department migrated most of its analytics reporting to the Hootsuite management tool to better track engagement data. This was due to the identified unreliability and inconsistency of reporting on certain social media platforms. The Hootsuite platform allows the department to standardise reporting data across Facebook, Twitter/X and LinkedIn. The department now draws YouTube subscriber data from YouTube Studio.

Criterion 2

Clients are satisfied with seminars.

Target: 90% of seminar participants are satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 17; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

The department continued to offer seminars in various formats: in person at Parliament House, virtually by webinar or in a hybrid delivery format. Two seminars were conducted in the reporting period, with the three seminars scheduled to take place from January to June 2023 (one administered by the Department of the Senate) cancelled due to low demand.

Feedback from participants was very positive overall and achieved the target level of client satisfaction. All but two attendees (98.8%) were satisfied with the seminar content, level of detail, presenter and audio-visual elements. All attendees (100%) stated the seminars met their objectives for attending.

Activity information

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Community contacts with the department's publications				
» @AboutTheHouse Twitter/X account impressions	Over 5 million	Over 4.4 million	2.1 million	Reporting discontinued ^c
» Website hits ^b	884,238	957,894	1.64 million	1.41 million ^d
Number of seminar participants	Not reported	55 in person 59 virtually	193 in person 320 virtually	54 in person 41 virtually

a. Election year.

b. Defined as unique page views on the Chamber Documents page (including subpages) and the Powers, Practice and Procedure page (including subpages, with access to formal procedural publications including *House of Representatives Practice, Guide to Procedures, House of Representatives Standing Orders* and *Infosheet* series, as well as *Live Minutes* providing draft minutes of Chamber and Federation Chamber proceedings in real time).

c. The department will no longer report on @AboutTheHouse Twitter/X account impressions due to unreliable and inconsistent data from the platform.

d. In August 2023, the department moved to the GA4 Google website analytics platform as the previous version is no longer supported. Website hits for 2022–23 are presented using GA4 data to ensure consistency with future reporting.

Analysis

Ensuring that the wider community has access to information on the work of the House, its committees and certain joint committees remains an important activity for the department.

Engagement with the department's publications can vary depending on public interest in the parliament, as well as content produced during a sitting period. The department conducted awareness and educational activities on its Facebook channel to engage new audiences.

This year saw steady growth across the department's community outreach channels, with particularly strong growth for the YouTube and LinkedIn channels. Growth of the department's Twitter/X account continued over the year but began to decline in the second half of the reporting period. This is likely due to a general downturn in subscribers to the platform and unreliable reporting data. The department's Facebook channel continued to grow, with a successful *Parliament Explained* campaign increasing followers and engagement. As mentioned above, the department migrated most of its analytics reporting to the Hootsuite management tool. This was due to the identified unreliability and inconsistency of reporting on certain social media platforms. Website analytics has also been moved to the newer GA4 Google platform. This should provide more consistent reporting into the future.

The two seminars conducted during the reporting period were attended by 95 participants. It is not clear why demand for seminars declined in comparison to the previous reporting period, resulting in the cancellation of some seminars. The department will continue to review its seminar content to ensure it remains relevant to those interested in the work of the parliament.

Activity 5: Members' and corporate support

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Speaker's level of satisfaction with the overall quality of non-chamber support services provided, including accommodation, office support, transport coordination, salary processing and other members' support services.

Target: Very satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 18; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

The data source is direct feedback from the Speaker and/or Speaker's Office on the overall quality of non-chamber support services provided to the Speaker, the Speaker's Office and other members.

The Speaker indicated he was very satisfied with the support services provided by the department to the Speaker, the Speaker's Office and members.

Criterion 2

Level of satisfaction among members with the overall quality of non-chamber support services provided, including accommodation, office support, transport coordination, salary processing and other members' support services.

Target: 90% satisfied.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 18; *Portfolio Budget Statements 2022–23*, page 16.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

The results of the members' survey indicate a high level of satisfaction for the non-chamber support services provided by the department. All respondents (100%) were satisfied with their accommodation, office support and transport coordination during sitting weeks. All but two respondents (90%) were satisfied with their salary payment services. Overall, 97% of responses indicated satisfaction with the quality of non-chamber support services provided by the department.

Some of the comments made by members relating to payroll services indicate there may be some confusion over the role of the department (which is responsible for members' payroll only) and that of other agencies. One member expressed dissatisfaction with a delay to salary payments for their staff, which is a responsibility of the Department of Finance. Another described 'convoluted and complicated payment systems', which again would seem to apply to more than the salary payments administered by the department. A third comment suggested members should be paid fortnightly, rather than monthly, which is a matter the department will review, but is not able to implement unilaterally.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 18.

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Number of Parliament House accommodation and office support services	1,139	1,949	1,744	1,198
Number of transport coordination services provided to members	17,811	8,153	6,556	8,347

a. Election year.

Analysis

All performance targets relating to the delivery of services to members were met or exceeded. Together, 97% of responses indicated satisfaction with the overall quality of non-chamber support services provided, including accommodation, office support, transport coordination, salary processing and other members' support services. Feedback received from members indicates very high levels of satisfaction with support services provided to members by this activity area. The Speaker reported that no concerns had been raised with him by members during the period.

The department continues to work closely with members to assist them to have any matters promptly resolved.

Activity 6: Schools hospitality

Performance measures and targets

Criterion 1

Timely and accurate provision of advice to the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) about hospitality required by visiting school groups, in accordance with bookings.

Target: 100%.

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 19.

Result against the performance criterion: Target met.

The data source is the number of students booked, combined with exception reporting from DPS and school groups. A total of 96,084 students toured Parliament House during the reporting period. Of those students, 65,198 (68%) requested and received hospitality. There were no reports during the year of hospitality not being provided to a school group that had requested it.

Activity information

Source: *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, page 19.

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Number of visiting school students booked	86,315	34,353	22,457	96,084

a. Election year.

Analysis

The delivery of hospitality to schools at their request is a combined effort between the parliamentary departments. The department provides a booking service for school groups, and liaises with the Department of the Senate (which administers the Parliamentary Education Office) and with DPS (which provides tours for school groups as well as hospitality where this has been requested). Data about hospitality provision relies on exception reporting from DPS or school groups. In 2022–23 there were no reports of schools not receiving the hospitality they had requested.

There was a 328% increase in the number of visiting students in 2022–23, largely due to the easing of COVID-19 travel restrictions. This is the highest number of students since before the pandemic (124,831 in 2018–19).

Summary of performance against purpose

The department's purpose is to support the House of Representatives, and the wider parliament, in the role of a representative and legislative body primarily by providing advice and services, and through engaging with the community and other parliaments.

The department is committed to the delivery of high standards of advice, service and support to the Speaker, members, parliamentary committees, other parliaments and the Australian community. Throughout the year, the department, along with the other parliamentary departments, continued to provide the support, services and advice that enabled the House of Representatives, and the wider parliament, to fulfil the role of a representative and legislative body.

The general election on 21 May 2022 resulted in the first change of government since 2013 and the election of 35 new members of parliament. A by-election generated by the resignation of the Member for Aston resulted in an additional new member commencing on 9 May 2023. As at 30 June 2023, the crossbench comprised 17 members, the largest in the history of the House of Representatives. The increased size of the crossbench, many of whom are without the support of a party, has affected the nature and frequency of the advice and services provided by the department.

Most of the COVID-19 arrangements in place in previous years returned to their pre-pandemic state during the reporting period. The House, parliamentary committees and the international program returned to 'business as usual' in many respects, and the department quickly adapted the nature of its support to meet these requirements.

Based on feedback received, as well as performance information from a range of data sources, the department has fully met all but two of the targets outlined in its corporate

plan. One target not met relates to chamber support service standards. On most occasions where the standards were not met, the cause was external ICT issues or the late receipt of advice or authorisations, though the department acknowledges the two errors within its responsibility. The other target that was not met relates to the standard of administrative and procedural support provided to committees. While the department notes that very positive comments were also received against this performance measure, it will seek to address the drop in recorded satisfaction through ongoing engagement with committee members on their expectations, as well as ongoing strategies to recruit, train and retain staff.

Activity information for 2022–23 reflects a busy first year of a parliamentary cycle. The sittings of the House, meetings of the Federation Chamber and the number and hours of committee meetings reflect the high tempo of activity since the opening of the 47th Parliament. The cessation of COVID-19 travel restrictions resulted in a sharp increase in committee travel, as well as the resumption of the parliament’s international delegation program. While welcoming the increased opportunities for in-person engagement, the department will also continue to leverage the virtual modes of work developed during the pandemic to provide the most appropriate form of support to the Speaker, members and committees, and for interparliamentary engagement.

Overall, the department assesses that it has fulfilled its purpose to support the House of Representatives, and the wider parliament, in the role of a representative and legislative body.

Financial performance

The work of the department is mainly funded by government appropriation, with a small amount of revenue generated from the sale of publications and from the department's seminar program. The department ended the 2022–23 financial year reporting total comprehensive income of \$1.281 million. The department incurred total employee benefits of \$21.262 million, \$1.003 million lower than the budget estimate reported in the October 2022–23 Portfolio Budget Statements. Employee benefits were \$0.741 million higher than those incurred in 2021–22 (\$20.521 million) due to a pay increase in November 2022 and lower staff vacancies than in 2021–22.

Supplier expenses decreased by \$0.618 million between 2021–22 (\$4.839 million) and 2022–23 (\$4.221 million). Expenditure in this area was in line with the October 2022–23 Portfolio Budget Statements estimates. The department's financial position has remained strong, with appropriations totalling \$23.632 million and cash and cash equivalents of \$2.716 million. In addition, the department has \$2.480 million on term deposit due to mature on 10 October 2023.

During the year, the department engaged a valuation specialist to perform a materiality assessment of its property, plant and equipment class. The independent valuer's report concluded that there was no material difference between fair value and the carrying value of the assets. Asset additions during the year related to a further two surface hubs purchased to support videoconferencing remote meetings. Several televisions and refrigerators were replaced during 2022–23 at the end of their useful life.

The department has chosen to no longer receive a contribution through equity for its capital budget, and for these amounts to instead be received as departmental appropriations. This is primarily due to traditionally on-premises IT systems transitioning to the cloud environment, and the different accounting treatment to recognise these expenses.

The department's overall financial position continued to remain sound in 2022–23:

- » total assets increased by \$0.720 million from the prior year, to \$32.730 million
- » total liabilities decreased by \$0.647 million, to \$7.439 million.

Estimates for 2023–24 indicate that the department has sufficient resources to continue to support members, the House and committees.

Table 1 below is the department's entity resource statement for 2022–23. Table 2 shows third-party drawdowns from and on behalf of other entities.

Entity resource statement 2022–23

Table 1: Entity resource statement 2022–23

	Actual available appropriations 2022–23 \$'000	Payments made 2022–23 \$'000	Balance remaining 2022–23 \$'000
	(a)	(b)	(a) - (b)
Departmental¹			
Annual appropriation ²	51,679	24,770	26,909
Total	51,679	24,770	26,909
Administered expenses			
Outcome ¹	941	175	766
Total	941	175	766
Total resourcing	52,620	24,945	27,675
Total resourcing and payments for the Department of the House of Representatives	52,620	24,945	27,675

1. Supply (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No.1) 2022–23 and Supply (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No.2) 2022-23, prior year departmental appropriation and section 74 retained revenue receipts.

2. Includes an amount of \$0.646 million in 2022–23 for the departmental capital budget. For accounting purposes this amount has been designated as 'contributions by owners'.

Third-party drawdowns from and on behalf of other entities

Table 2: Third-party drawdowns from and on behalf of other entities

	\$'000
Payments made on behalf of the Department of Finance (disclosed in the respective entity's Resource Statement)	53,271

Chamber and Federation Chamber

The Clerk's Office, Table Office and Procedure Office work together to support the day-to-day operations of the Chamber and Federation Chamber, with other areas contributing as necessary.

During the reporting period we continued to:

- » advise the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives
- » advise on the programming of House business and provide procedural support
- » process and draft bills and amendments
- » prepare and publish the record of proceedings of the House
- » process, provide access to and manage the custody of the documents and records of the House
- » undertake procedural and parliamentary research
- » produce information and publications on House practice and procedure
- » maintain procedural and statistical records on the work of the House
- » provide secretariat support to several domestic committees
- » provide professional development resources and activities on parliamentary procedure.

Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 14); staff levels are shown in Table 16.

Performance summary

The focus of each office is supporting the sittings of the House of Representatives Chamber and meetings of the Federation Chamber. Performance is usually measured in two ways:

- » qualitatively, based on an annual survey of members
- » quantitatively, based on information relating to the sittings of the House, meetings of the Federation Chamber, and business conducted in the Chamber and Federation Chamber.

Through the annual survey of members, feedback was received on the range and standard of the services provided, which was generally very positive. This result was largely consistent with comments received during the reporting period about the procedural resources available online and in hard copy, and the briefings on parliamentary topics of interest to members and their staff. The annual performance statement on pages 14 to 15 provides more detailed analysis of the results of the survey. Statistics on sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber in 2022–23 and the four preceding years are shown in Table 3.

There were 68 sitting days in 2022–23, 27 days more than in 2021–22, a period which was impacted by the dissolution of the House on 11 April ahead of the 2022 federal election.

Legislative activity continued at a proportionally high rate: 186 bills were introduced (32% more than the 141 introduced in 2021–22). The Federation Chamber, having been impacted in 2021–22 by both the election and the prevalence of COVID-19, returned to its usual meeting frequency, and met for more hours than in any of the previous four years.

Detailed information on the business of the Chamber and Federation Chamber is provided in Appendix 1 and in the department's publication *Work of the Session* (available on the Parliament of Australia website).

Table 3: Performance summary, Chamber and Federation Chamber, 2018–19 to 2022–23

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Number of sittings/meetings					
Sittings of the House	42	62	67	41	68
Meetings of the Federation Chamber	41	54	63	25	62
Hours of sittings/meetings					
Sittings of the House ^b	371	548	597	380	637
Meetings of the Federation Chamber ^b	130	185	232	75	264

a. Election year.

b. Excludes suspensions and rounded to the nearest hour.

Advice on practice and procedure

During proceedings, the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and other staff members provided immediate support and advice on the practice and procedure of the House to the Speaker, the Leader of the House, ministers, shadow ministers, members and others. They also provided detailed written advice on subjects such as: the application of the standing orders and the practice of the House; the content of questions without notice; procedures for private members' business; delegated legislation and the disallowance process; requirements of the Constitution and standing orders with respect to financial legislation; privilege matters; and requirements of the House for the registration of members' interests.

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have an impact on the work of the Chamber and Federation Chamber, albeit lessening as Commonwealth and ACT governments' health and safety restrictions were lifted. Physical distancing requirements were eased, room capacity restrictions removed and domestic and international travel for parliamentary business became easier. The formal agreements used during the pandemic to allow members to contribute remotely to parliamentary proceedings in the chamber were no longer considered necessary. However, some procedural adaptations did remain in place in the Chamber to minimise movement across the floor during divisions. While business and parliamentary procedures are returning to their pre-COVID-19 status, advice continues to be provided to the Speaker and other key stakeholders addressing COVID-safe operations as necessary.

Programming and coordination of business

During the reporting period, we provided advice and services to facilitate sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber by:

- » offering programming and procedural advice to ministers, shadow ministers, party whips, other members, their staff and others
- » preparing and publishing, each sitting day
 - » the *Notice Paper* – a document listing all unresolved business before the House and providing information about committee memberships and other matters
 - » the *Daily Program* (also known as ‘the Blue’) – an informal agenda for the day
 - » procedural scripts for all items of business for use in the Chamber and Federation Chamber
- » providing staff from the Serjeant-at-Arms’ Office to
 - » support sittings of the House and meetings of the Federation Chamber
 - » oversee ceremonial and security arrangements
 - » ensure the availability of chamber papers
- » processing members’ questions in writing to ministers, which involved
 - » editing them for compliance with the standing orders
 - » publishing them in the *Notice Paper* for the next sitting day
 - » managing answers to questions
- » providing a captioning service for the televised and webcast proceedings of the Chamber and Federation Chamber that describes the current item of business
- » publishing *This Week in the House*, a weekly online forecast of expected business for the House, and its counterpart, *Last Week in the House*.

Table 4 shows the number of questions in writing to ministers and answers that were processed by the House in the five years from 2018–19 to 2022–23.

Table 4: Questions in writing to ministers and answers to questions in writing, 2018–19 to 2022–23

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Questions in writing ^b	250	388	227	132	238
Questions answered ^c	206	346	161	64	

a. Election year.

b. Excludes questions withdrawn.

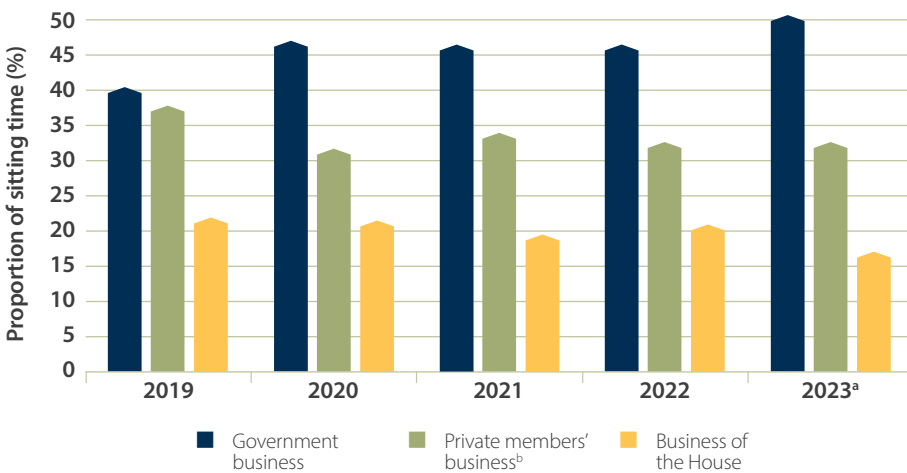
c. The responsibility for responding to questions in writing rests with the ministers to whom the questions are addressed.

All sittings required the coordination of people, documents and actions, and the programming of the following categories of business:

- » government business (for example, government legislation)
- » private members’ business (motions and bills proposed by private members)
- » business of the House (matters potentially involving all members; for example, Question Time, debate on committee reports, and matters of privilege).

Figure 3 shows a longitudinal view of the proportion of sitting time the House (Chamber and Federation Chamber inclusive) devoted to each of these three types of business.

Figure 3: Government and private members’ business and business of the House (Chamber and Federation Chamber), 2019 to 2023 (calendar years)



a. 2023 data is for January to June only.

b. Private members’ business includes consideration of private members’ motions and bills and other opportunities for private members, such as adjournment debates and discussion of matters of public importance.

Replacing the Document Production System

The Document Production System (DocProdSys) was a legacy software system, operating in Microsoft Windows 7. It was used to produce procedural scripts for use by members in the Chamber.

The department worked with the DPS to develop a replacement for DocProdSys. The Business Records and Documents (BRAD) application, which went into production during the reporting period, is compatible with both Windows 10 and 11 and is functioning well. Further minor improvements to the user experience of the application are expected in future reporting periods.

Processing and drafting of bills

Processing legislation

Support for the legislative process in 2022–23 included our traditional responsibilities of:

- » receiving bills from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and keeping them in custody under embargo before their introduction in the House
- » providing bills to ministers for introduction, and to all members in the Chamber after introduction
- » uploading to the Parliament of Australia website bills, explanatory memorandums and proposed amendments, and providing an over-the-counter service for access to hard copies of bills and associated material
- » processing all bills and amendments to bills
 - » initiated in the House – from introduction to assent
 - » initiated in the Senate – from introduction in the House until passage by the House
- » preparing and delivering formal messages to the Senate; during 2022–23, we delivered 182 messages relating to the passage of bills (116 in 2021–22) and 43 other messages (11 in 2021–22)
- » preparing and issuing a Daily Bills List for each sitting day; the list provides cumulative information on the status of all bills before the parliament or assented to in the current calendar year.

Queries on the bills and legislation collection on the Parliament of Australia website totalled 970,000 in 2022–23 (a decrease from 1.6 million in 2021–22). This represented 7.7% of the 12.6 million queries made via searches through ParlInfo – the database that includes all library publications as well as Hansard, bills, chamber and committee documents, and the parliamentary handbook.

During the year, 186 bills were introduced (32% more than the 141 introduced in 2021–22). Of these, 179 were initiated in the House of Representatives and seven were received from the Senate (compared with 125 and 16, respectively, last year).

The House passed 150 bills in 2022–23 (105 in 2021–22), an average of 2.2 bills for each sitting (compared with an average of 2.6 bills per sitting last year).

There was a small increase in the number of amendments moved during the consideration in detail stage: 709 in 2022–23 compared with 676 in 2021–22. Of the 351 amendments that were passed, crossbench members proposed 135.

The House amended 18 (12%) of the bills it passed, compared with 15 (14.3%) in 2021–22. The department incorporated the amendments into the text of all 18 bills and reprinted them (as third reading prints) before transmittal to the Senate.

The House agreed to Senate amendments, made amendments requested by the Senate, or did both, in relation to 32 House bills (9 in 2021–22). The House disagreed to nine Senate amendments to one bill. The Senate did not insist on its amendments and agreement was reached by both Houses.

In total, 113 bills were finally passed by both Houses in identical form (101 in 2021–22), of which 106 were initiated in the House of Representatives and seven were initiated in the Senate. After further processing by the Table Office, bills finally passed by both Houses in identical form were presented to the Governor-General for assent. Table 5 shows the number of bills introduced in the House and assented to in the five years from 2018–19 to 2022–23.

In total, during the reporting period the Table Office prepared 18 third reading prints (15 in 2021–22) and 106 assent prints (139 in 2021–22). All documents accurately reflected the decisions of both Houses.

Table 5: Number of bills introduced in the House, and number of bills assented to, 2018–19 to 2022–23

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Bills introduced	155	248	184	141	186
Bills assented to ^b	148	153	153	101	113

a. Election year.

b. Includes bills that passed both Houses in the financial year but were assented to in the following financial year.

Legislative drafting

The department drafts bills, amendments and second reading (in-principle) amendments for private members and ensures that those documents comply with the Constitution and the standing orders. We also prepare copies for circulation in the chambers.

In 2022–23, 22 private members' bills were introduced (none were private senators' bills). Of the 709 amendments moved during consideration in detail, 493 were private members' amendments, 135 of which were agreed to. Table 6 provides chamber statistics for private members' bills and amendments for the past five years. The figures do not reflect all of the department's work in this area, as some material is drafted but is not introduced into the House.

Since 2010, the department has had an arrangement with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for one of its senior drafters to be seconded to the department. That arrangement continues to be mutually beneficial. The seconded officer provides drafting advice to members and supports the drafting of private members' bills and detail amendments.

Table 6: Private members' bills introduced and amendments moved by private members (Chamber and Federation Chamber), 2018–19 to 2022–23

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Bills introduced	30	35	28	26	22
Second reading amendments moved	37	110	105	55	30
Consideration in detail amendments moved	95	107	145	125	493

a. Election year.

Record of proceedings and House documents

Votes and Proceedings

The *Votes and Proceedings* – the official record of the proceedings of the House – continued to provide an accurate, comprehensive and concise record of proceedings. The draft document for each sitting is published on the Parliament of Australia website, usually within an hour of the adjournment of the House.

The *Votes and Proceedings* are prepared from the *Votes Officer's Minutes* – better known as the *Live Minutes* – an electronic draft record of the proceedings of the Chamber and Federation Chamber. The *Votes Officer's Minutes* are more detailed than the *Votes and Proceedings* and are compiled progressively throughout a sitting. Because they are available in real time, they provide a practical means for members, staff and the public to follow House proceedings online. Internal and external users continued to rely on this service and provided positive feedback.

House Division Recording System

The House Division Recording System allows tellers to record members' votes electronically on a tablet. The division result is published immediately on announcement by the Speaker in the *Live Minutes*, to Hansard and on display screens located in the Chamber. A webpage publishes the results of divisions in real time and provides a searchable and filterable repository of divisions recorded in the system. The system recorded 165 divisions during the reporting period.

As part of this project, display screens were installed in each of the public galleries of the Chamber. Since the start of the 47th Parliament the screens have displayed information on the event that is currently in progress, explanations of the significance of the question that is being determined by the House, and the results of divisions once they have been announced by the Speaker.

Documents

During the year, the Table Office processed all documents presented to the House and recorded their details in the *Votes and Proceedings* and the *Index to Papers Presented to the House*. Copies were made available on request to members and their staff and others, principally in Parliament House. The original documents were added to the records of the House, which are maintained by the Table Office. Tabling stock requirements continue to be reviewed considering the online availability of documents and the declining demand for hard copies.

In 2022–23, a total of 3,643 documents were presented to the House, an increase from the 2,755 presented last year.

For each sitting, the Table Office prepares and issues a Disallowable Instruments List in both electronic and hard-copy form. The list provides details of all instruments presented to the House that are subject to disallowance, listed by the number of sitting days remaining in which a notice of disallowance can be given.

Online Tabled Documents project

With colleagues from the Department of the Senate and DPS, Table Office staff finalised the Online Tabled Documents project, which is a system for the electronic receipt and storage of documents for tabling in the parliament, and their subsequent publication via the Parliament of Australia website. The system streamlines administrative handling of documents and, following presentation, makes documents available online through a searchable database, providing an enhanced service for members and other interested parties.

Research

The Procedure Office collects, analyses and disseminates procedural and statistical information on the work of the House. In 2022–23, the office:

- » maintained comprehensive procedural and statistical records
- » prepared advice for the Speaker and members on House practice and the operation of the standing orders
- » responded to requests for procedural and statistical information from various stakeholders including members, parliamentary staff and members of the public
- » produced a range of publications on House statistics, practice and procedure.

The office also supported the House Standing Committee on Procedure (see page 38).

There was continued demand for the office's publications, while information requests were received from a variety of internal and external clients throughout the year.

Publications

The Procedure Office continued to produce a range of publications on the work of the House. Following each sitting fortnight, the office published:

- » *House Review*, a plain-English analysis of significant events in the House
- » *Statistical Digest*, a statistical breakdown of the business conducted by the House
- » *Procedural Digest*, a technical record of the Speaker's rulings, precedents and other procedurally noteworthy items.

The office also published a range of other resources on the Parliament of Australia website, including:

- » *Last Week in the House*, listing key events in the previous sitting week
- » *Work of the Session* (also published in hard copy), providing comprehensive periodic information on the work of the House and its committees

- » the *Infosheet* series, comprising short guides on the workings of the House and parliament in an easy-to-read format.

In addition, the office progressed work towards the publication of the next edition of House of Representatives Practice in coming years.

Collaboration

Collaboration with the Department of the Senate

The Procedure Office continued to work effectively with counterparts in the Department of the Senate, including through involvement with the Australian National Internships Program and the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program (see page 50).

Collaboration with other parliaments

The department continued its tradition of knowledge-sharing with colleagues from other parliaments. This included participation in study programs, and virtual delegation meetings and capacity-building work. The value of sharing experiences and ideas with other parliaments continues to extend beyond familiar procedural aspects and embraces challenges in common arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Procedural training and resources

Building procedural capacity amongst members and their staff was a priority during the year. A series of information sessions targeted at members' staff and crossbench members specifically was held during sitting weeks from November through June. Twelve topics were canvassed at the 24 sessions held in 2022–23, ranging from subjects such as chamber etiquette, introducing business, amending the text of a bill and procedures for disallowance of legislative instruments.

Building staff procedural capacity also remained a focus in 2022–23. Preparations were made for a fourth iteration of the 'Taste of Procedure' lunchtime discussions series, which was scheduled to commence in July 2023. The series of 11 lunchtime discussions is part of a package of learning opportunities for departmental staff, developed by the Procedure Office in collaboration with the Table Office, and presented by senior chamber support staff.

Updates were made to certain procedural training resources. This includes a series of educational videos on key House principles and procedures and is available to all staff through the department's intranet. Updates reflected changes to standing orders in the 47th Parliament and changes in the House's membership including key officeholders.

The department continued to support staff to develop expertise in parliamentary law, practice and procedure in the following ways:

- » debriefs following each sitting week or fortnight, focusing on matters of procedural interest (open to all staff)
- » induction and coaching for departmental staff who undertake duty as Clerks and Deputy Clerks in the Chamber and Federation Chamber
- » shadowing opportunities that enable staff to learn specialist skills such as preparing House procedures and the *Daily Program*, and processing bills and documents – once trainee staff have sufficient experience, the use of shadowing

allows chamber support staff to finish work earlier on some sitting nights, and provides a backup to enable business continuity in the event of staffing absences or turnover

- » participation in parliamentary conferences
- » participation in the Parliamentary Law, Practice and Procedure course, offered by the University of South Australia under the auspices of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table (ANZACATT)
- » participation in the online Professional Development Certificate in Parliamentary Management (McGill School of Continuing Studies, Canada).

Parliamentary committees

The department continued to provide effective secretariat and advisory support to five House committees and one joint committee dealing with the powers and procedures of the House. Committees supported by the Chamber and Federation Chamber activity area in 2022–23 were as follows:

- » standing committees
 - » Selection Committee
 - » Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration
 - » Standing Committee on Petitions
 - » Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests
 - » Standing Committee on Procedure
 - » Standing Committee on Publications
- » joint committee
 - » Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings.

In 2022–23, those committees held 71 meetings and produced 30 reports. Details of meetings and reports are set out in Appendixes 2 and 3.

Selection Committee

Table Office staff support the Selection Committee in fulfilling three important roles:

- » selecting and programming private members' business and committee and delegation business
- » selecting items of private members' business and committee and delegation business for referral to the Federation Chamber or return to the House
- » considering all bills introduced and determining whether to refer bills directly to House or joint committees for inquiry.

The committee consists of 14 members: the Speaker (as chair), the chief government whip, chief opposition whip, six government members, three opposition members and two crossbench members. The committee met 18 times during the reporting period and presented 14 reports.

Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration

The Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration considers estimates of the funding required for the operation of the department each year and matters relating to the provision of facilities in Parliament House affecting the House, its committees or its members, including ICT, the administration and funding of security measures and works in the parliamentary precincts. Together with the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations, Staffing and Security, the committee may consider estimates of the annual funding required for the operation of DPS.

The committee comprises nine members – the Speaker (as chair), four government members and four non-government members – and is supported by the Clerk, the Serjeant-at-Arms and other officers of the department as required. During the year the committee met six times and presented three reports.

Standing Committee on Petitions

The Standing Committee on Petitions facilitates the receipt and progression of petitions through the House. The committee can also conduct inquiries and undertake activities on any matter relating to petitions and the petitions system.

The committee continued to receive a high volume of petitions. Table 7 shows the number of in-order petitions presented to the House, and the number of signatories, for the past five years. In 2022–23, 577 petitions were presented, compared with 614 last year. The number of signatures received was 735,717, compared with 2,707,274 last year. The committee also presented 11 reports summarising the petitions and ministerial responses being presented.

The largest petition in 2022–23 received 119,048 signatures. It asked the House to enshrine the use of cash in law.

Table 7: Petitions and signatories to petitions, 2018–19 to 2022–23

	2018–19 ^a	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 ^a	2022–23
Number of petitions presented	190	498	649	614	577
Number of signatories	199,084	805,561	1,239,054	2,707,274	735,717

a. Election year.

Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests

The Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests met four times during the reporting period and presented two reports to the House. These related to an application for the publication of a response to references made in the House, and the operations of the committee in connection with the registration and declaration of members' interests during 2022.

The department supported the online lodgement of statements of registrable interests and notifications of alterations in accordance with the resolution of the House on the registration of members' interests.

The department also supported the online publication of the following two registers, in accordance with resolutions of the House:

- » the Members' Training Program Register, comprising statements provided by members declaring that they have undertaken the Safe and Respectful Workplaces Training Program administered by the Department of Finance
- » the Register of Members' qualifications, comprising statements and other material provided by members relating to their qualifications under sections 44 and 45 of the Constitution.

Standing Committee on Procedure

The Standing Committee on Procedure inquires into and reports on the practices and procedures of the House and its committees. In 2022–23 the committee met 22 times. No inquiries were completed during this period.

Standing Committee on Publications

The House Publications Committee considers documents presented to the House that are not covered by the resolutions of the House (of 28 March 2018) and Senate (of 8 February 2018) – or for which the House and Senate have not already made a determination – and recommends to the House whether they should be included in the Parliamentary Papers Series. The committee may confer with the Senate Publications Committee, forming the Joint Committee on Publications. Neither the House Publications Committee nor the Joint Committee on Publications were required to meet to consider documents or other matters during the reporting period.

Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings

The *Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946* requires Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) radio and, in some circumstances, ABC television to broadcast the proceedings of parliament. It is the statutory role of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings to advise parliament on general principles for the allocation of radio broadcasting time between the House and the Senate chambers, and to determine a more detailed schedule of broadcasting allocations. The committee is supported by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office.

Under the Act, the committee has nine members, including the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. By tradition, the Speaker is chair and the President is vice-chair. The committee meets when required and did not meet during the reporting period.

Improving performance

The chamber support areas have provided, and will continue to provide, tailored, responsive support to the Speaker, members and other stakeholders.

The department continues to leverage technology for improved performance in supporting the Chamber and Federation Chamber, including through the BRAD application and the Online Tabled Documents project.

Developing the procedural capacity of staff through both formal and informal means is a continuing priority for the department. Engagement with procedural development initiatives remained high throughout the reporting period.

Outlook

During the reporting period, the focus of the chamber support areas has been on continuing to deliver high-quality services to meet the needs of the Speaker, members and others, to assist the House in fulfilling its representative and legislative roles. Demand for advice and support remained high with the arrival of new members at the commencement of the 47th Parliament on 26 July 2022.

Replacements for legacy ICT systems, including the Table Office Production System (TOPS) and the Bills System are expected to result in further improvements and efficiencies as the Table Office transitions to a Microsoft Windows 11 and cloud-based ICT environment.

The Procedure Office will continue to offer a range of procedural development activities for members and their staff and for departmental staff. It will also explore the opportunities presented by technology to engage with stakeholders, including through improved presentation of statistical information.



*Division on the third reading of the Constitution Alteration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) 2023, 31 May 2023.
Image: Paul Furness, AusPic/DPS.*

Committee support

The Committee Office supports parliamentary committees in their investigatory work of examining policy and legislation, and of scrutinising the executive government. As at 30 June 2023, the Committee Office comprised 10 secretariats that supported 10 House committees and 11 joint committees (see Table 8). Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 16); staff levels are shown in Table 16.

Table 8: Committees of the 47th Parliament supported by the Committee Office as at 30 June 2023

House committees	Joint committees
Standing Committee on Agriculture	Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water	Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Standing Committee on Economics	Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training	Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport	Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Resources	Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport	Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs	Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services	Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth
	Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Note: Six House internal committees (Selection, Appropriations and Administration, Petitions, Privileges and Members' Interests, Procedure and Publications) and the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings are supported by other areas of the department and are discussed under parliamentary committees on pages 36 to 38.

Committee Office activity

In 2022–23, the Committee Office's support for the diverse work of committees involved:

- » facilitating committees' private meetings, public hearings and site inspections
- » providing procedural and inquiry-related advice to committees and stakeholders
- » fielding inquiries from stakeholders about the purpose and progress of inquiries
- » promoting committee inquiries and reports

- » conducting research and analysing evidence received by committees
- » drafting chairs' reports
- » facilitating the adoption and presentation of committee reports.

Overview

With the commencement of the 47th Parliament on 26 July 2022, House of Representative standing committees and relevant joint committees were established according to standing orders, appropriate resolutions of the respective houses, or statute soon after. During 2022–23, 75 reports were presented (45 by scrutiny committees, see Appendix 3).

Following on from changes made during the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of committee proceedings have continued to be conducted virtually during the period, either as a wholly virtual forum or a hybrid form of members and witnesses participating in-person and virtually in public hearings, briefings and meetings.

The Committee Office was able to successfully support all committees within its remit, with induction and support processes well-established for incoming committee chairs and members, as well as staff. The Clerk Assistant (Committees) Office continued its support of secretariats, as well as supporting the Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs (see page 45).

During the year, committees conducted inquiries on a diverse range of topics, including the following:

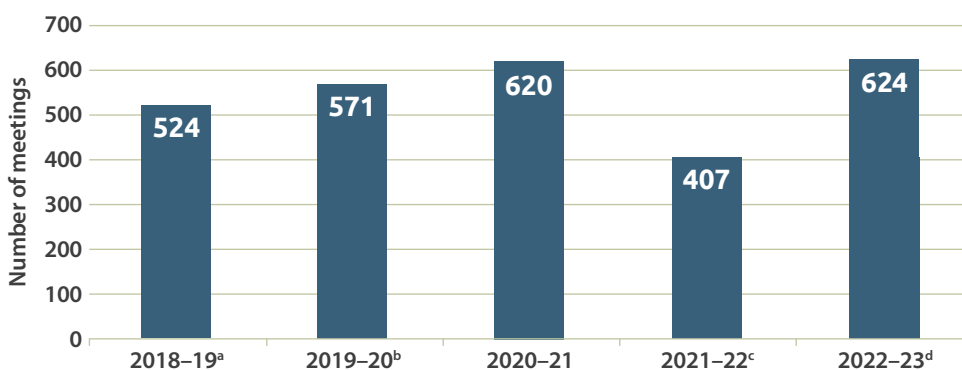
- » National Anti-Corruption Commission Bills: a Joint Select Committee on National Anti-Corruption Commission Legislation was established on 28 September 2022 to inquire into and report on the provisions of the National Anti-Corruption Commission Bill 2022 and the National Anti-Corruption Commission (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2022. The committee conducted an intensive short timeframe review of those bills, receiving 140 primary submissions and conducting four public hearings to achieve the requested reporting date of 10 November 2022.
- » Workforce Australia Employment Services: the House Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services was established on 2 August 2022. An interim report was presented on 1 March 2023 addressing the ParentsNext program administered by Services Australia. This report made 30 recommendations regarding the program, including the recommendation to abolish ParentsNext at the conclusion of its current contract and replace it with a new pre-vocational service for parents of young children.
- » Health: the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport presented its report for the Inquiry into Long COVID and Repeated COVID infections in April 2023. Inquiring into the ongoing effects of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the report made nine recommendations aimed at strengthening the Australian Government's recognition, management and communication of long COVID and its impacts on the Australian community.

- » Defence: the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade conducted an inquiry into how Australia makes decisions to send service personnel into international armed conflict. The Defence Subcommittee made seven recommendations aimed at improving the transparency and accountability of government decision-making in relation to armed conflict, including reaffirming the roles of the Executive and the Parliament in such decisions. The report also recommended the establishment of a Joint Statutory Committee on Defence, with a legislative establishment and footing to allow for classified and sensitive review and oversight mechanisms to be established.
- » Gambling: the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs conducted an inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on people experiencing gambling harm between September 2022 and June 2023, handing down its report 'You win some, you lose more' on 28 June 2023. The report outlined 31 recommendations applying a public health lens to online gambling to reduce harm to Australians, including developing and implementing a comprehensive national strategy on online gambling harm reduction, supported by national regulation, an online gambling ombudsman, a harm reduction levy on online wagering service providers, a public education campaign, more independent research and improved data collection.
- » Intelligence and security: the secretariat to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security continued to manage a high workload in 2022–23, supporting a large number of concurrent inquiries and oversight activities and managing secure facilities and information on behalf of the committee. The committee continued to provide important legislative scrutiny to the Parliament on national security priority bills.
- » Electoral Matters: the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters presented its interim report into the conduct of the 2022 federal election and other matters in June 2023. This initial report into the 2022 election made 15 recommendations regarding proposed reforms to donation laws and the funding of elections, truth in political advertising laws, and encouraging increased electoral participation and lifting enfranchisement of First Nations Peoples. These inquiries are conducted following every federal election.
- » The Joint Select Committee on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum was established by the House of Representatives and the Senate on 30 March 2023. The committee was tasked with reviewing the proposed provisions amending the Constitution. The committee published 270 submissions, and received thousands of items of additional correspondence within the space of three weeks, including songs, poetry and videos. It held five public hearings, including three interstate hearings, and tabled its final report to the Parliament on 12 May 2023. Notable features of the inquiry included its high profile (including high-profile witnesses such as former and current Members of Parliament) and the committee's engagement with Indigenous communities, receiving formal Welcomes to Country and ceremonial dances at public hearings.

Committee activity stayed at a similar level during the reporting period compared with last year. Scrutiny committees supported by the Committee Office held 624 meetings, as outlined in Appendix 2.

Figures 4 and 5 present the number of committee meetings held and reports presented, supported by the Committee Office, for the past five years. These figures highlight the sustained workload of committees.

Figure 4: Number of committee meetings supported by the Committee Office, 2018–19 to 2022–23



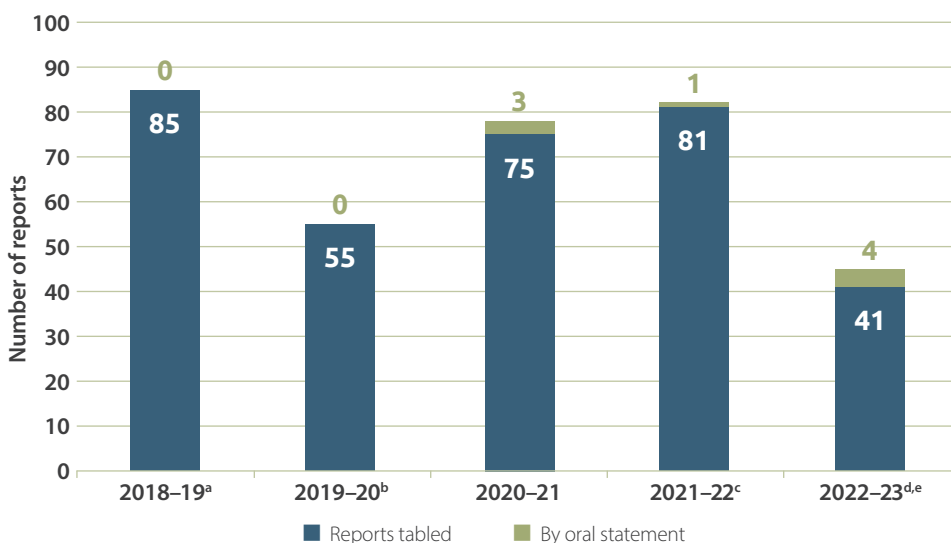
a. The 45th Parliament ended with the dissolution of the House on 11 April 2019.

b. The 46th Parliament opened on 2 July 2019.

c. The 46th Parliament ended with the dissolution of the House on 11 April 2022.

d. The 47th Parliament opened on 26 July 2022.

Figure 5: Number of reports tabled by committees supported by the Committee Office, 2018–19 to 2022–23



a. The 45th Parliament ended with the dissolution of the House on 11 April 2019.

b. The 46th Parliament opened on 2 July 2019.

c. The 46th Parliament ended with the dissolution of the House on 11 April 2022.

d. The 47th Parliament opened on 26 July 2022.

e. From 2022–23 reports by statement figures include statements made under House standing order 143(c) and reports by statement made by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security or the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit.

Government responses to committee reports

The government is required by resolution of the House to respond to recommendations contained in a report by a House or joint committee within six months of the report's tabling. The House adopted this resolution House on 29 September 2010.

As reported in the six-monthly Speaker's Schedule of the Status of Government Responses to Committee Reports (as at 20 June 2023), for the 47th Parliament there were 19 committee reports to that date that included recommendations requiring a government response. Of these reports:

- » government responses to two reports were received within the six-month timeframe
- » three reports have not received a response within the six-month timeframe
- » the six-month timeframe has not elapsed for the 14 remaining reports awaiting a response.

Information and communications technology

The Committee Office continued to work with DPS and the Department of the Senate on the redevelopment and deployment of Report Builder, the template for drafting committee reports which is integrated with the Shared Committee Information Database. The redeveloped Report Builder was developed, tested and deployed in early December 2022. The updated system has improved the layout, publishing and accessibility of committee reports. The Committee Office continues to work across parliament on ongoing enhancements and improvements.

The Committee Office also worked with DPS on the update and redevelopment of its secure committee documents system, known as CommDocs. A revised version of the platform in Microsoft SharePoint was launched in January 2023.

Improving performance

In 2022–23, the Committee Office supported continuous improvement in the way it delivers services to committees as well as how it supports and develops staff.

A number of internal resources were reviewed and updated during the reporting period, either as ongoing review work or as a result of projects undertaken during the 2022 federal election period. Some of these updated resources include:

- » guidance on managing sensitive and high-risk inquiries
- » revised style guide and manual for committee minutes
- » revised risk management tools for inquiry risks
- » Comparative Guide to House of Representatives and Senate committee procedures.

The Committee Office has continued to update and deliver a revised training program for new and existing staff. Fundamental training is provided to new and interested staff, and the in-depth training needs of longer-term staff are catered for in bespoke sessions presented under the Committee Training and Development program.

Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs

The Clerk Assistant (Committees) supports the Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs – an informal group of the chairs and deputy chairs of House-supported investigatory committees, chaired by the Deputy Speaker.

The liaison committee met for the first time in the 47th Parliament in June 2023 to discuss areas of administrative interest, including:

- » information on a pilot project for video broadcasting of away hearings
- » contemporary reporting of outstanding government responses to committee reports
- » the ‘General Principles for the Administration of Parliamentary Committees’
- » general administrative issues and support standards for committees.

Outlook

Looking forward into 2023–24, the Committee Office will continue to respond to shifting priorities and workloads for committee business from the parliament. The establishment of a number of new standing and select committees in the 47th Parliament, as well as a proposed expansion in the oversight functions of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, will necessitate a strategic approach to staffing levels including sufficient security-cleared staff to support the expectation for more classified and higher sensitivity work. The level of committee activity is expected to remain at a high tempo for the year to come.

The Committee Office will continue to provide a high level of professional support to members and new and existing committees. Staff recruitment and training and development will continue to be a priority for the coming year.



Chair of the House Standing Committee on Economics, Dr Daniel Mulino MP (centre), and Deputy Chair, Mr Garth Hamilton MP (right). Image: David Foote, AusPic/DPS.

Interparliamentary relations

The Australian Parliament's international program supports engagement and cooperation with parliaments internationally, with a focus on parliamentary relations in the Indo-Pacific region.

The program's activities and projects are coordinated by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office, which is jointly funded by the department and the Department of the Senate, with input from all four parliamentary departments.

Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 17); staff levels are shown in Table 16.

Performance summary

The Presiding Officers' delegation program resumed in-person engagement in 2022–23 following the easing of COVID-19 travel restrictions, with 14 international outgoing delegations covering 17 different countries. The outgoing delegation program provided opportunities for the Australian Parliament to be represented in multilateral forums where contemporary issues were debated and knowledge shared with parliamentary counterparts. Additionally, the Presiding Officers hosted three incoming Guest of Parliament delegations from New Zealand, Ukraine and Vietnam.

Parliamentary engagement

The International and Parliamentary Relations Office provided advice, planning assistance and briefing coordination to support the Presiding Officers as they established international connections and renewed important bilateral relationships following the commencement of the 47th Parliament in July 2022 and the opening up again of international travel.

The Australian Parliament maintained its strong commitment to international engagement, hosting the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) at Parliament House, Canberra in January 2023. The biennial conference focused on the topics of parliamentary engagement, security and e-Parliaments, and was an opportunity to share best practice.

Throughout 2022–23, the Presiding Officers led various parliamentary diplomacy initiatives supported by the International and Parliamentary Relations Office. Examples include:

- » The President of the Senate, Senator the Hon Sue Lines, led a parliamentary delegation to the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, held in Halifax, Canada in August 2022.
- » The Presiding Officers attended the 8th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20) in Jakarta, Indonesia in October 2022.
- » A parliamentary delegation led by the President of the Senate made a bilateral visit to Papua New Guinea in December 2022.

- » The Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Milton Dick MP, led parliamentary delegations to the 145th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda in October 2022 and the 146th IPU Assembly in Manama, Bahrain in March 2023.
- » On behalf of the Presiding Officers, the Deputy President of the Senate, Senator McLachlan, attended the 8th Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Türkiye, Australia (MIKTA) Speakers' Consultations in Istanbul, Türkiye in March 2023.

Parliamentary committees were also able to resume their international exchanges and fact-finding missions with two committees travelling in the period. The Senate Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport visited Vietnam and the Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport visited New Zealand and Samoa to gain international perspectives on current matters of inquiry.



The Presiding Officers and their Commonwealth counterparts at the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth held at Parliament House in January 2023. Image: David Foote, AusPic/DPS.

Parliamentary capacity building

In July 2022, parliamentary staff from the departments of the House of Representatives, the Senate and the Parliamentary Budget Office participated in the annual United Nations Development Programme mission to provide support for the budget processes of the Fijian Parliament.

The Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships Fund is a joint initiative with the state and territory parliaments to support parliamentary strengthening in the Pacific region. The fund is administered by the department and provides support to 12 parliaments in the Pacific region. In 2022–23 equipment was supplied to four Pacific parliaments (Bougainville, Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Tonga) to improve video conferencing and administration capabilities. Officers from the Samoan Legislative Assembly were also supported to attend training in Tasmania with their twinned parliament.

Improving performance

In December 2022, the International and Parliamentary Relations Office deployed a new database completing a project to replace an end-of-life system. The office also conducted a trial of new software to provide secure, remote access to documentation when delegations travel internationally.

Outlook

The resumption of delegation exchanges and the post COVID-19 increase in international engagement prompted a restructure of the International and Parliamentary Relations Office to strengthen capacity and meet program requirements. A number of recruitment activities were initiated to fill existing vacancies and reflect the new structure. When completed, the office should be well placed to meet the demands of the future.



President of the Senate, Senator the Hon Sue Lines, and Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Milton Dick MP, with a delegation from the Ukraine Parliament in March 2023. Image: David Foote Auspic/DPS.

Community relations and awareness

The department promotes the work of the House through a range of activities aimed at different sectors of the community. Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 19); staff levels are shown in Table 16.

Performance summary

During 2022–23 the department continued to use its communication channels to increase community engagement and awareness of the work of the House and committees. The department's seminar program was delivered through a mixture of in-person, online and hybrid seminars.

The department continued its work to support the school visits program and in providing support to the Parliamentary Education Office. The My First Speech competition resumed in 2022 with entries equal to pre-pandemic numbers.

Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program and Commonwealth Parliamentary Internships component of the Australian National Internships Program resumed in-person placements at Parliament House.

Media and publications

Social media remains an important tool to engage with people and distribute information for the department, with Twitter/X, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube all showing increases in audience in the reporting period. From October 2022, Twitter/X subscriber numbers declined for the first time. This may reflect a downturn in subscriber numbers across the platform. The department's Twitter/X, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn accounts continue to provide valuable public education opportunities. The Parliament Explained Facebook campaign targeted people of voting age with little to no knowledge of parliamentary procedure to broaden their understanding of how parliament functions. The campaign saw strong engagement throughout and grew the department's Facebook audience by 362.

During the reporting period, the department's Facebook subscriber base increased to 8,787 subscribers and its Twitter/X following increased to 51,739 followers. The House's YouTube account, used for publishing replays of Question Time and an 'About the House' series of short videos, showed growth in the reporting period and now has 16,731 subscribers: an increase of 4,000 from the last reporting period. The department's LinkedIn page, started in September 2022, now has 362 followers.

The department continues to issue media releases on behalf of committees, the Speaker and the Clerk of the House. The department issued 190 media releases during the reporting period, an increase on last year's figure. The 'About the House News' page and all its subpages received a total of 152,403 page views. This is an increase from last year's 111,000 views.

Seminars

The department's seminar program includes a series of seminars covering the parliament, the budget, the legislative process and the work of parliamentary committees. Additionally, customised seminars can be delivered to individual government departments or other stakeholders on request. The program is designed to raise awareness of the work of the House, particularly among employees of government agencies.

In 2022–23, the department delivered two seminars to 95 attendees – 54 attending in person and 41 via webinar. The three seminars scheduled to take place from January to June 2023 (one administered by the Department of the Senate) were cancelled due to low demand. It is not clear why the level of interest in some seminars was lower than in the previous reporting period, but advertising undertaken later in the year resulted in increased enrolments for the first seminar in 2023–24.

My First Speech competition

The My First Speech competition invites students in years 10 to 12 to imagine themselves as a newly elected member of the House of Representatives and write a 90 second speech on an issue that they are passionate about. The competition is held annually; and returned post COVID-19 restrictions in 2022. The competition attracted 171 entries, which is comparable to pre-COVID-19 engagement numbers.

Australian National Internships Program

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Internships component of the Australian National Internships Program, which operates under an agreement between the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University and the Australian Parliament's Presiding Officers, enables students from across Australia to undertake a placement with a member or senator as part of their formal course of study. Students complete a research project on a subject agreed by their host, as part of their placement. The project report is assessed by the university and counts towards the student's degree.

In 2022–23, following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, interns were once again able to undertake their placements at Parliament House. In the second semester of 2022, there were 30 placements with members and senators. In the first semester of 2023, eighteen interns undertook placements with senators and members.

The department worked with colleagues in the Department of the Senate to facilitate the program and deliver an orientation session for interns. The department continued to have a representative on the Australian National Internships Program's advisory board and parliamentary steering committee.

Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program

Under the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program – arranged through the Minister for Defence Personnel in conjunction with the Department of Defence – 33 Australian Defence Force representatives spent a week at Parliament House in November 2022, hosted by a member or senator. COVID-19 restrictions prevented the program from proceeding in 2021–22. The departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate work together to support the program and provide orientation sessions on the work of the chambers and committees.

Parliamentary Education Office

Jointly funded by the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives, the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) delivers parliamentary education services on behalf of the Australian Parliament to students, teachers and others across Australia. To date, more than 2.4 million students have expanded their knowledge of the Australian Parliament through participating in a PEO program.

In addition to operational management by the Department of the Senate, the PEO is guided by an advisory committee comprised of senators and members, which meets three times a year. The committee is co-chaired by the Deputy Presiding Officers and reports to the Presiding Officers.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the PEO in 2022–23 was 14.2 (compared with 10.8 in 2020–21).

Education programs: onsite, outreach and digital

The PEO is a leader in civics and citizenship education in Australia and delivers education programs onsite at Parliament House and in classrooms across Australia through its video conference and outreach programs.

In 2022–23, school visits to Parliament House started to return to pre-pandemic levels, with the PEO delivering 2,247 onsite programs to school students from across all states and territories. This is a 74% increase from 2021–22.

Demand for video conference programs remained strong, with the PEO delivering 357 programs in 2022–23. While this is a 20% decrease from 2021–22, the level indicates that while onsite programs are expected to return to pre-pandemic levels in the next reporting period, the demand for videoconference programs will remain much higher than pre-pandemic levels.

The PEO did not conduct its outreach program in 2022–23 (due to a combination of pandemic and resourcing constraints); however, the program will recommence in the next reporting period. The PEO continued to use teacher professional learning (TPL) to further the PEO's delivery of parliamentary education across Australia. The TPL program provides professional learning for teachers and pre-service teachers to support the delivery of an informative and engaging parliamentary and civics and citizenship curriculum for students. In 2022–23, the PEO introduced the Referendum masterclass program to complement its existing TPL programs. In 2022–23, the PEO delivered 25 TPL programs, one fewer than in the previous reporting period.

Content: online and print

The PEO website provides information about parliament and curriculum-aligned teaching resources for Australian teachers and students. In 2022–23, demand and interest in the website remained very strong, with 1.4 million users (representing 3.4 million unique page views). The PEO also produced, refined and distributed a range of publications during the reporting period and observed a notable increase in demand for the pocket edition of the Constitution during this period.

Services for members and senators

The PEO provides educational resources to senators and members to support their engagement with teachers, students and community groups across Australia. Members and senators are offered a complimentary annual allocation of education and information materials for students, teachers and others in their communities. Other activities included:

- » facilitating referendum information sessions for parliamentarians and their staff, which were delivered by representatives of the Australian Electoral Commission
- » supporting the Speaker's Parliament in Schools program through the provision of information sessions, bespoke resources, and briefings for parliamentarians and staff.

In the reporting period, the PEO Advisory Committee was re-established for the 47th Parliament, with the PEO providing secretariat services to support three committee meetings.

Parliamentary Education Office outlook

In the coming year, the PEO will scope a number of activities to further promote youth engagement in learning about parliament and support senator and members' engagement with schools in their communities. The *Federal Parliament history timeline* and the *Australian constitution online* webpages will be redeveloped, and the PEO website will undergo the next of its 5-year reviews to ensure it continues to meet the needs of users. The PEO's outreach program will be reinvigorated in 2023, with a focus on visiting jurisdictions with high levels of relative disadvantage.

Outlook

The increase in the number of subscribers across the department's social media channels indicates a continued strong interest by the public in the work of the House of Representatives. The department's website engagement was down from the previous reporting period but remained higher than all other years prior.

The department will continue to deliver outreach activities to increase awareness of the work of the department across the community and Australian public service. An increase in Indigenous engagement activities will be a goal for the department over the next reporting period. The department will continue to identify opportunities to work with the other parliamentary departments on various communication and engagement activities, as well as improve the Parliament of Australia website.

The department will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of products designed to inform the public about the work of the House and to ensure flexible delivery and maximum reach of its education program into the future.

Members' and corporate support

Members' and corporate support is provided by the Finance Office, the People Strategies Office and the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, all of which report to the Serjeant-at-Arms, and the Information Management Office, which reports to the Clerk Assistant (Procedure). The offices liaise with the Department of Finance and DPS to provide comprehensive services to departmental staff as well as to members and their employees, including:

- » providing advice and support on financial and human resource management, as well as records management, publishing and office services
- » paying members' salaries and allowances
- » organising members' office accommodation, furniture and fittings
- » providing mail and courier services, and a booking service for committee rooms and chamber gallery seating
- » maintaining and publishing key information about members and former members.

Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 21); staff levels are shown in Table 16.

Performance summary

Working with the Department of the Senate, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Australian Federal Police and DPS, this program area provides the Speaker and the Speaker's Office with timely advice and support on matters such as:

- » control and management of the precincts
- » arrangements in the chambers and their associated galleries
- » ceremonial aspects of the work of the House of Representatives.



Procession of Members of the House of Representatives to attend an address from the Governor-General of Australia in the Senate Chamber, 26 July 2022. Image: Penny Bradfield, Auspic/DPS.

The commencement of the 47th Parliament was a particularly busy time for the Finance Office, the People Strategies Office and the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. As required under the standing orders, the Opening Day commenced with a traditional Welcome to Country ceremony. On this occasion, Ngambri and Ngunnawal custodian, Aunty Matilda House and her son, Paul Girrawah House delivered the ceremony. This included a smoking ceremony on the Parliament House forecourt. Other aspects of the Opening of Parliament proceeded throughout the day, including the swearing in of all members, the election of the Speaker, the Hon Milton Dick MP, and presentation of the Speaker to the Governor-General of Australia, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (retd).



Smoking ceremony and Aboriginal dancers on the Parliament House forecourt following the Welcome to Country ceremony, 26 July 2022. Image: Penny Bradfield, Auspic/DPS.

The department played a significant ceremonial role after the passing of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, on 9 September 2022. A wreath laying ceremony was held on 10 September, and His Majesty, King Charles III, was proclaimed by the Governor-General on 11 September 2022. A memorial service for Queen Elizabeth was held in the Great Hall on 22 September 2022.

Two Budget speeches were delivered during the year: on 25 October 2022, and 9 May 2023. Budget week arrangements allowed for invited visitors to attend the public galleries to view the Budget and Budget reply speeches.



*Wreath laying ceremony attended by the Governor-General and members on 10 September 2022.
Image: Penny Bradfield, Auspic/DPS.*

Media services

During the year, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office continued to work with the various media bureaus and the governing committee of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery to ensure compliance with the rules for media-related activity in Parliament House and its precincts.

They also worked with members' and ministers' offices, representatives of the press gallery, the Australian Federal Police and the Parliamentary Security Service to ensure that media events in the precincts comply with the media rules and with minimum inconvenience to all.

The Serjeant-at-Arms and Usher of the Black Rod and their delegates liaised closely with the press gallery to balance media access, security and parliamentary requirements on a daily basis and at major events, including the delivery of the Budget and Budget reply speeches.

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office received and responded to 201 requests to film or photograph in the private areas of the building, including a large-scale filming request for a television drama.

Information for members

As part of the department's commitment to keep members and their employees informed about developments in the House, five editions of the members' bulletin House Update were published during the year.

From November 2022, the informal drop-in centres offered to members' staff became more focused information sessions. At each information session, senior officers present on areas of parliamentary practice and are available to answer procedural and administrative queries. Two drop-in centres were held in September 2022, and a further 12 information sessions

were offered in the reporting period. Topics covered included private Member's business, bills and amendments, disallowable instruments, divisions and quorums and Chamber etiquette.



Swearing-in of members of the 47th Parliament on 26 July 2022. Image: Penny Bradfield, Auspic/DPS.

Accommodation services

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office provides a concierge service for members, including coordination of accommodation, capital works and routine maintenance services in the House of Representatives wing.

During the reporting period, the Serjeant-at-Arms' office coordinated 13 suite moves, including the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker who were elected upon the opening of the 47th Parliament, and a number of assistant ministers. This involved extensive liaison and coordination with DPS in their role of making any alterations or adjustments to the fabric of Parliament House, the Department of Finance in their role in providing the secure Ministerial Communications Network to ministers and assistant ministers, and other government agencies that are providing support to their respective ministers and assistant ministers.

Maintenance, access and transport services

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office coordinates requests for maintenance, including routine and high-priority work, in members' suites and departmental offices. During the year, the office coordinated 347 high-priority requests, all of which were attended to promptly. In addition, the office coordinated 81 routine requests for repairs or alterations to suites or common areas. The office takes a proactive approach by performing office shutdowns and inspections at the commencement of each long recess so that issues can be identified, reported and addressed while parliament is not sitting.

The office coordinated 794 requests for assistance with telephone faults, relocations and allocations of telephone numbers (compared with 446 requests in 2020–21). Faults reported were referred to telephone support in DPS within five minutes of receipt, and appropriate timeframes for resolution were agreed with the affected areas.

The office approved 1,213 requests by DPS and contractors working on behalf of DPS to access suites and general circulation areas for works related to general maintenance, services and projects. This represents a 22% increase on last year (992 requests).

The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office operates a Transport Office, which coordinates with the Department of Finance's COMCAR service to deliver a parliamentary shuttle service during sitting periods. The shuttle provides a readily available, secure, car-with-driver service in Canberra for members. In 2022–23, the Transport Office managed 8,393 bookings from members, compared with 2,872 bookings in 2020–21 (figures exclude unbooked shuttle trips from the House of Representatives entrance). This represents an 82% increase in bookings on last year, reflecting a significant increased demand for shuttle services, influenced by additional sitting weeks following the election period and a relaxation of travel and social distancing restrictions relating to COVID-19.

Parliament House security

The Security Management Board, established pursuant to section 65A of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, advises the Presiding Officers on security policy and the management of security measures for Parliament House. The board met four times during the reporting period. The Serjeant-at-Arms represents the department on the board.

The department is also represented on two security-related consultative groups, both chaired by the Australian Federal Police:

- » The Incident Planning and Response Committee is attended by representatives of the parliamentary departments and several external agencies and meets before meetings of the Security Management Board in order to provide specialist advice to the board.
- » The Joint Management Group is attended by representatives of the parliamentary departments, the Department of Finance and the Australian Federal Police, and meets weekly to consider security-related matters and coordinate responses at the operational level.

The department has a business continuity network to coordinate contingency plans for work areas in the event of business disruptions. In the reporting period, the department continued to focus on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Serjeant-at-Arms' Office progressed work to update the business continuity framework for the department, in consultation with directors.

Security screening

Certain guests are exempt from security screening on entry to Parliament House. Approvals for any other exemptions are made jointly by the Serjeant-at-Arms and the Usher of the Black Rod. During the reporting period, seven exemptions were sought and considered.

Information and communications technology

The Information Management Office coordinates the department's ICT. The majority of the department's ICT and ICT security capacity is provided by DPS under the parliamentary ICT service-delivery framework. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the parliamentary departments underpins the framework. The original memorandum was deemed no longer fit-for-purpose as it provided the basis of a shared services arrangement agreed in 2018. A new principle-based interim MoU was signed by the heads of parliamentary departments and work commenced on a more comprehensive ongoing agreement.

In support of this arrangement, the department continued to participate in a range of ICT advisory and management committees during the reporting period.

The Strategic ICT Group (SIG), comprising senior parliamentary staff, provides strategic advice on ICT strategy, policy and risk. It considers the priorities for DPS capital expenditure on replacing or upgrading parliamentary business systems and projects. It met four times in the reporting period. The Clerk Assistant (Procedure) is the department's representative on the committee.

During the reporting period, the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) represented the department on the ICT Portfolio Board. This board was established to make key decisions to ensure the effective delivery of prioritised and funded ICT projects, including new ICT systems and enhancing existing applications. The ICT Portfolio Board met twice during the reporting period. It agreed to dissolve at its final meeting in December. ICT Portfolio Board functions have been transferred to the SIG, which now meets five times a year, and monthly service delivery meetings between DPS and each parliamentary department. Eight monthly service delivery meetings were held during the reporting period.

The department continued to work closely with DPS to ensure staff could effectively access departmental ICT systems to work remotely in support of the parliament.

During the reporting period the human resources system was modernised with the introduction of Aurion. The Australian Parliament Digital Strategy 2019–2022 encourages agencies to limit investment in existing systems and transition to selected fit-for-purpose enterprise resource applications. The introduction of Aurion:

- » improves the interconnectivity between internal systems and reduces the need for duplication of data
- » allows for faster and more accurate reporting
- » provides an improved user experience
- » provides opportunities to adopt simplified and standardised processes within the department.

The implementation of Aurion aims to improve services to members and departmental employees, while realising greater efficiency of processes within the People Strategies Office.

Digital strategy

The overarching vision and direction for the future delivery of digital services for the parliamentary departments is outlined in the Australian Parliament Digital Strategy 2019–2022. The strategy is a high-level statement of intent which is intended to:

- » provide a reference to guide all digital decision-making, particularly investment and architectural design
- » set enterprise ICT direction and priorities for the parliament that align with business needs
- » establish an agreed understanding of digital direction and priorities in support of the parliament's business.

To complement the broad parliamentary strategy, the department produced the Department of the House of Representatives Digital Strategy 2021–2024. It is intended to bridge the gap between shared objectives and additional priorities and business needs of the department. The strategy highlights four priority themes: technology reform; capability uplift; data and information management; and harnessing opportunities and reducing risk.

Parliamentary assistants program

The parliamentary assistants program is managed by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office. Parliamentary assistants are university students who perform the roles of messengerial attendants for an average of 10 hours per week, with rosters planned around student commitments and the requirements of the House.

Eight students took part in the program in 2022–23: six were continuing assistants, and two were new appointments. All of the assistants are studying at the Australian National University.

Members' salaries

The People Strategies Office processes members' salaries and certain allowances in accordance with legislation and administrative decisions. Ninety per cent of respondents to the 2023 members' survey said that they were satisfied with support for salary payments.

The department continues to focus on improving efficiencies and strengthening controls in relation to the payment of members' salaries and allowances.

Outlook

In 2023–24, the department will continue to provide advice and services of a high standard to support the Speaker, members in Parliament House and the department. Priorities for the members' and corporate support activity during the year include:

- » ongoing support for sittings of the Chamber and Federation Chamber, meetings of parliamentary committees and general departmental operations
- » consideration of a more coordinated approach to satisfy the department's governance, planning and reporting obligations.

Schools hospitality

The department receives a special appropriation to provide modest hospitality to school groups visiting Parliament House. School visits are coordinated by the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office, working in partnership with the Parliamentary Education Office and the Visitor Engagement section of DPS. Results against performance criteria are summarised in the annual performance statement (page 22).

Performance summary

In 2022–23 96,084 school students participated in educational tours of Parliament House, representing a significant increase from 22,457 in 2021–22 (see Table 9). The increase flows from a reduction in travel restrictions which has provided more certainty for schools to book and travel to Parliament House.

Table 9: Students visiting Parliament House, by location and year, 2018–19 to 2022–23

Year	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA	Total
2018–19	2,904	69,333	715	17,766	6,340	1,784	21,054	4,935	124,831
2019–20	1,230	46,660	444	14,883	4,565	1,730	12,695	4,108	86,315
2020–21	2,443	24,963	0	1,241	681	2	5,017	6	34,353
2021–22	1,229	17,609	0	674	0	0	2,945	0	22,457
2022–23	2,803	67,675	132	5,497	2,659	459	15,842	1,017	96,084

All visiting students participated in a guided tour and visited both the House and Senate chambers: 68% (65,198) received hospitality and 80% (76,794) participated in a Parliamentary Education Office program (see pages 51 to 52 for more information on the activities of the Parliamentary Education Office).

Outlook

Together, the parliamentary departments continue to manage school participation at Parliament House. As at 1 July 2023, 100,451 students from 2,768 school groups had been booked for the following 12 months, noting that these figures remain subject to change.