

Part 1

Secretary's review

2009-10 was a typical 'mid-term' parliamentary year, with high levels of activity in both chambers, and through the various parliamentary committees.

The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) works closely with the two chamber departments to support the operations of the Australian Parliament. The body of this Annual Report provides detailed information about the day-by-day service delivery of DPS through 2009-10, as well as the numerous improvement projects that we initiated or completed over the year.

So, how should stakeholders view the performance of DPS?

In the short run, the focus will understandably be on day-by-day service delivery and timely completion of improvement projects. Nevertheless, stakeholders also expect an organisation like DPS to plan for the medium term and longer term. I will use this review to briefly consider the short-term and the longer-term components of the performance of DPS.

Focusing on short-term service delivery, for 2009-10 the various performance indicators demonstrate that we have much to be proud of. Of particular note has been the improved

perception of customer service, as measured over the last three years. This time last year we were completing a major customer service survey, and the detailed results of that survey have now been included under the various programs that are listed in Part 4 of this report.

However, it is worth reflecting that much of this service delivery also requires DPS officers to respond to rapidly changing circumstances. For example, during 2009-10 we had two major political leadership challenges. As a result, DPS security staff were called upon at very short notice to assist in maintaining a level of order amongst media representatives. Journalists and photographers were clamouring to get the latest information about both challenges, and it fell to our PSS officers to prevent undue invasion of party meeting rooms and the various private offices during the challenges. I believe DPS staff acquitted themselves very well in trying circumstances.

Similarly, as the various policy agendas have unfolded through 2009-10, there have been urgent requests from parliamentarians for advice from the Library about diverse subjects, including climate change, health issues, mining taxes, and refugees. Library officers have, in each case, responded quickly and professionally to these requests.

Other examples of 'changing circumstances' have been the various incidents which have caused damage around Parliament House. DPS Maintenance Services staff have responded quickly to each event, making assessments of the situation and then completing repairs with minimal impact on building users. Similarly, in February our IT and telecommunications staff were put to the test when Parliament House was targeted with attacks to the website, nuisance faxes, phone calls and emails. IT staff responded efficiently to protect the Parliament House network. Again, well done.

DPS and the chamber departments have worked together to determine services that can be shared, thus delivering efficiencies for the Parliamentary Service as a whole. In 2009-10, DPS worked with the Department of the House of Representatives (DHOR) to transfer the DPS payroll function to DHOR.

In previous annual reports, I have noted that the operating budget available to DPS has been very constrained for some 10 years, so the achievements of DPS officers in making savings and continuing to provide high quality service deserve great recognition, especially given the unpredictability of some of the demands.

Turning then to the various improvement projects: some were completed and many were initiated during the year. For example, we commissioned a new security communications system to ensure effective communications between our PSS officers, the AFP external patrols, and our operations room. We also upgraded the entrance to the building from the main public car park. In total, we managed some 132 projects in 2009-10. A sample listing is at Figure 1.1.

If we now turn to longer-term issues, in the 2008-09 Annual Report I had noted that DPS officers had begun to think about the future of the Parliament, and of DPS. We had commissioned five task groups comprised of staff from across the department, each to focus on aspects of our business, including:

- (a) customer service;
- (b) enhancing productivity;
- (c) environmental performance;
- (d) workforce development; and
- (e) renewal and modernisation.

In the latter part of 2009, the findings of these task groups were used to help us to develop a new Strategic Plan for DPS. A further important input to the new Strategic Plan was a review of security for Parliament House, also completed in 2009.

A draft of the Strategic Plan was considered by various groups of DPS staff in late 2009 and early 2010, and we then finalised the Plan in March 2010.

The new plan has the title 'Supporting the Parliament 2010-13'. An important early component of the new plan is to recognise that DPS is an amalgamation of some very disparate businesses serving the Australian Parliament. In particular, we have identified seven distinct lines of business:

- (a) Library and research services;
- (b) Parliamentary records services;
- (c) Information and communication technology services;
- (d) Security services;
- (e) Building services and amenities;
- (f) Visitor services; and
- (g) Parliamentary service support (including corporate services and project management).

Importantly, the new plan attempts to look into the future and paint a general picture about where each of the lines of business need to be heading over the next 20 years. While predictions about the future are always very difficult, the DPS 'future-gazing' does include four important strands of thinking:

- (a) expectations that various information technologies will rapidly develop, and should be harnessed by DPS to support the Parliament;
- (b) a strong view that parliamentarians will wish to utilise new technologies to allow them to do their jobs even more efficiently;
- (c) recognition that a program of capital renewal and modernisation will need to continue for many years, not least because many of our electronic, electrical and mechanical systems are now ageing; and
- (d) an expectation that operating budgets will continue to be very constrained.

The Plan identifies specific actions that each line of business now needs to initiate over the next three years, including programs of staff development such as training in project management and contract management.

The final Plan was formally 'launched' via workshops with DPS officers in early 2010, using an excellent small video which had been produced by DPS broadcasting staff. The level of buy-in from DPS officers has been gratifying.

So what is the outlook for DPS for 2010-11 and beyond?

From a parliamentary perspective, it is clear that 2010-11 will be an election year. Furthermore (and without making any predictions about the outcome of the election), we know that a significant number of current Senators and Members will be retiring, and it is therefore inevitable that there will be a major influx of new parliamentarians. This will require changes in offices and a wide range of induction activities. DPS will work closely with the chamber departments to facilitate these changes.

There will be five other key priorities for DPS in 2010-11:

- (a) Continued, effective day-by-day service delivery, albeit operating on a frugal basis;
- (b) continuation of the major program of capital investments that we had initiated in 2009-10;
- (c) implementation of the two budget initiatives for which we received funding in the 2010-11 budget. One initiative focuses on improved security, and is the Government's response to a funding bid by DPS. The other initiative was the result of Government policy decisions and will allow the Library to provide improved policy advice for non-government parliamentarians in election years;

- (d) planning to improve the energy efficiency of Parliament House by renewing and replacing ageing energy systems with a highly efficient tri-generation system; and
- (e) progressive implementation of the various actions listed in the new DPS strategic plan.

Before I conclude, I wish to thank the Speaker of the House, Mr Harry Jenkins MP, and the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon John Hogg, for their support over the year. I also thank the chamber departments for their cooperation.

I also wish to recognise the contribution to the Parliament by Mr Harry Evans and Mr Ian Harris AO. Both retired in late 2009. I congratulate Dr Rosemary Laing and Mr Bernard Wright on their appointments to the respective Clerk roles.

My final thanks go to the staff of DPS for a job well done. We publicly recognise the contributions of our staff in two ways.

Firstly, we continue to recognise people who have made major contributions to Parliament, DPS and the broader community through Australia Day Awards. In total we recognised 10 staff in this way in early 2010. I thank all of these officers (see the case study on page 8). We were deeply saddened that one of the recipients, Ms Margaret Hickey, passed away in 2009.

Secondly, we recognised the long service of DPS officers with the award of long service pins. Well done.

I look forward to working with DPS staff to deliver services to the Parliament for the year 2010-11 and beyond.

Figure 1.1—Improvement Projects for Parliament House.....a sample list

Projects substantially completed in 2009-10

New security communications system

.....to replace an ageing system, and ensure effective communication between DPS security staff and AFP officers.

Upgraded building entrance from the public car park (Security Point 1)

.....to improve processing of passholders and visitors entering the building, and improve amenity for security staff.

Exterior lighting improvements for pedestrians

.....to improve pedestrian safety, especially at the House of Representatives and Senate entrances.

Digitisation of Hansard

.....to digitise old Hansard records, between 1901 and 1980, thus improving access to Parliamentary records for the whole Australian community.....Hansard records after 1980 are already digitised, and have been accessible through the Parliament House website.

House of Representatives Chamber improvements

.....to provide a distinguished visitors' gallery, and improve information systems and ergonomics for the Speaker.

Upgrade of Parliament Drive

.....this project completed the conversion of Parliament Drive to a one-way road, improved safety and replaced ageing pavement.

Projects underway in 2009-10

Parliament House website upgrade

.....will replace ageing IT systems and ensure easier and timely access to Parliamentary information for the Australian public.

Hansard Production System replacement

.....will replace ageing IT systems and improve services to Senators, Members, media representatives and the public.

Upgrade of closed circuit TV system

.....these projects will replace an ageing IT system, and expand the number of cameras to ensure coverage of blind spots.

Additional DPS office accommodation

.....will provide new office accommodation to replace space now being occupied by the new Parliament House Briefing Room, and will allow DPS office staff in basement accommodation to move to offices with daylight.

External lighting upgrade for Parliament Drive, and car parks

.....these projects will replace ageing electrical equipment, improve road and pedestrian safety, and reduce electricity consumption.

Re-activation of water features

.....this project will recycle water from the Parliament House cooling system, and swimming pool so that we can reactivate a number of water features around Parliament House.....the water features had been largely decommissioned because of water restrictions in Canberra.

Parliament House Briefing Room (PHBR)

.....this project is being sponsored by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Attorney-General's Department, and will provide a high tech room to brief Government about emergency events. The PHBR will occupy space previously occupied by DPS staff. DPS has a vital role in facilitating site access and providing services to the PHBR.