

Part 1

Secretary's review

The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) works closely with the two Chamber departments to support the operations of the Australian Parliament. This Annual Report provides detailed information about service delivery by DPS in 2010–11, as well as about numerous innovations and improvement projects that were initiated or completed during the year.

The year in review included a Federal election held on 21 August for the 43rd Parliament. There was a post-election hiatus during which negotiations occurred between the major parties, minor parties and independent members. As a result, the number of hours of Chamber activity and committee work were well below the level typically seen in a non-election year.

Nevertheless, 2010–11 was a busy year for DPS and, in part, this was because of election-related activities. Notably, in the pre-election period, the Parliamentary Library quickly established a Pre-election Policy Unit to assist non-government parties and independents in developing policies. There is greater detail about this unit in Part 3 of this report.

Immediately after the election, we worked with our colleagues in the Department of the

House of Representatives during September and October 2010 to facilitate the post-election changeover of parliamentarians, which included the departure of 29 Members, and the induction of the same number of new Members. Towards the end of the financial year, we commenced a similar process working with the Department of the Senate to facilitate the departure of 12 Senators and the induction of new Senators in July 2011.

Another post-election activity has been the development of a detailed proposal by the Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO). Significant submissions on the proposed PBO were provided to the Committee by DPS as a whole, and by the Parliamentary Librarian. A number of DPS officers also appeared before the Committee.

In addition to these election-related activities, DPS officers continued to provide effective day-by-day services to the Parliament. Details of these services are provided in later sections of the Annual Report, but I will take this opportunity to discuss the delivery of IT services.

Over recent years, delivery of IT services to the Parliament has been particularly challenging, for three reasons. Firstly, the rapid development

of new hardware and applications creates an understandable interest from more than 4,000 clients who wish to be provided with new equipment and services, although available funding is limited.

Secondly, for many years the Department of Finance and Deregulation has provided IT services to Electorate Offices, while the Parliamentary Service departments provide services within Parliament House. This has created frustrations for parliamentarians and their staff because it has not been clear about the 'point of contact' when a problem arises.

Thirdly, of necessity, the IT staff of DPS have been focussed on information security issues for the last year and a half. These issues have consumed a great deal of our IT resources and time.

Against this background, it is pleasing to report three significant improvements to the provision of IT services:

- (a) The extension of the wireless IT coverage to virtually all parliamentary suites, thus allowing parliamentarians to use laptops without the need to use network connection cords.
- (b) The facility to connect hand-held iPad and iPhone devices to the Parliamentary Computing Network (PCN) via the extended wireless network. The initial connection service is for parliamentarians only; but in August 2011 we will begin providing a service to parliamentary staff as well.
- (c) Negotiations to transfer Electorate Office IT services from the Department of Finance and Deregulation to DPS. We expect the transfer will be completed in late 2011, thus creating a single point of contact for parliamentarians when they require access to IT services.

During 2010–11, we also commenced an upgrade of the ICT physical network in Parliament House. This is a major investment which will help future-proof the capacity of the IT system within the building. By mid-2011, the installation of new cabling in ceiling spaces was evident around the building. This project is scheduled to be completed in early 2012.

The year 2010–11 has also been a time of innovation in building infrastructure.

Notably, we commissioned a treatment plant to enable the re-use of water from the large cooling tower, rather than simply discharging the water into the sewerage system. Since late 2010, this treated water has been used to reactivate a number of the water features around Parliament House that had been decommissioned for some years because of the long-term water restrictions in the ACT. The recommissioning of these water features has greatly enhanced the amenity of the building for visitors and people who work here.

Another innovation has been the installation of a pilot set of solar electric panels on the roof of the Senate wing and on our gardeners building. The primary purpose of the pilot has been to learn about the challenges, costs and benefits of integrating this alternative source of power. The panels were successfully commissioned in late June 2011, and are now contributing electric power to the building, providing a modest offset against our substantial energy bills.

A third innovation has been the digitisation of all Hansard records back to 1901, and the commencement of digitising our broadcast records, which were previously held on outdated, and physically deteriorating, video tapes.

Upgrades to security infrastructure were also a major focus during 2010–11, and it is pleasing to note that we completed a major upgrade to our closed circuit television (CCTV) system, including an increase in the number of cameras and a new CCTV camera management system. We also upgraded security systems for key internal doors, and built a new mail screening room to improve safety and amenity for our staff who deal with mail security. Further work is now underway to improve security for the various underground car parks, and to provide a new security operations room for the building.

In 2010–11, we completed some other major projects, including the new Hansard Production IT System. This new system is bringing many benefits, including improved productivity for our Hansard services. We also substantially completed an upgrade of lighting in our underground car parks. This upgrade replaced old and unsafe fittings with new lights which provide better lighting and reduce energy consumption by some 30 to 40 per cent.

We worked with the Attorney-General's Department to construct and commission the new, high-security Parliament House Briefing Room, adjacent to the Cabinet Suite, and we created some new office space for DPS staff. The new office space, just north of the Staff Dining Room, has allowed us to re-accommodate staff who had been displaced by the new briefing room and staff who had been working in basement offices without any natural light.

During 2010–11, we also made excellent progress in developing a draft Heritage Management Framework for Parliament House. When completed, this framework is intended to provide guidance when proposals for changes in the building are being developed. We also fully commissioned the 'Vernon CMS' database, which records and tracks our magnificent Parliament House Art Collection (PHAC).

In 2010–11, we also commenced negotiations with DPS staff and relevant unions on a new employment agreement. We look forward to completing this process in 2011–12.

We expect that 2011–12 will be a very busy parliamentary year, with similar levels of Chamber activity and committee hours to other post-election years.

For 2011–12, we will have a continuing focus on day-by-day service delivery, but will need to be very frugal if we are to operate within our budget allocation.

Some other important priorities for 2011–12 will include:

- (a) continuing the program of capital improvements, including completion of further security works;
- (b) completion of a new Parliament House website;
- (c) further improving our environmental performance through projects such as the phased installation of modern lighting within the building;
- (d) continuing our focus on information security, especially for our IT systems;
- (e) subject to deliberations of the Parliament, working with the Chamber departments and relevant executive government agencies to facilitate the establishment of the new Parliamentary Budget Office;

- (f) continuing to address concerns about access for the disabled, by installing power-operated doors on the very heavy internal doors;
- (g) developing a comprehensive package of proposals to respond to other disability concerns, including the provision of 'captioning' for our Chamber and committee broadcasts;
- (h) improving support for DPS staff, including their physical and mental well-being;
- (i) continuing our investigations into new energy-efficient technologies for the building. This investigation will take into consideration the new solar panels, but will have a major focus on our 'base load' energy demands, where we believe that high efficiency trigeneration systems will be the best response;
- (j) developing a database to track items and assets around Parliament House that have heritage value (in addition to the Art Collection); and
- (k) progressively implementing measures listed in our 2010–13 strategic plan, to allow us to provide better long-term services against a background of continuing budget restraint.

DPS will also seek to contribute constructively to any relevant parliamentary inquiries.

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.

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 eight individual staff and two groups in this way in early 2011. I thank all of these officers (see the case study on Page 10). Secondly, we recognise the contribution of DPS officers with the award of long service pins for 10, 15, 20 and 25 years service to the Parliament. Well done.

I look forward to working with DPS staff to deliver services to the Parliament through 2011–12.

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

Projects substantially completed
in 2010–11

Wireless IT access

... expanded wireless access in Parliament House to include Senators' and Members' suites.

Re-activation of significant water features

... reactivated a number of water features around Parliament House using water recycled from the Parliament House cooling system.

New Hansard Production System

... replaced an ageing and increasingly unreliable system and provide improved services to Senators, Members, media representatives and the public.

Upgrade to security points 2 & 3

... improved the standard of security at the doorways between the Marble Foyer and the private areas of the building.

Upgrade of closed circuit TV system

... replaced an ageing IT system and expand the number of cameras to ensure coverage of blind spots.

Parliament House Briefing Room (PHBR)

... provided a high-tech room to brief Government about emergency events. The PHBR occupies space previously occupied by DPS staff. DPS had a vital role in facilitating site access and providing services to the PHBR.

Relocated mail screening room

... provides improved safety for DPS staff and improved mail screening capability.

Broadcast cameras and robotics

... replaced ageing existing robotics system and associated broadcast cameras used to capture the proceedings of the Chambers and committees.

Solar panels pilot

... to better understand the impact of integrating alternative energy sources within Parliament House and assess the longer-term benefits and costs.

External lighting upgrade for Parliament Drive, and for underground car parks

... these projects replaced ageing electrical equipment, improved road and pedestrian safety, and reduced electricity consumption.

Additional DPS office accommodation

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

Projects underway in 2010–11

Security enhancements

... works underway include a new operations room, improved security for the various garages, film on external windows and a security wall in the public carpark.

Committee Room Audio System Replacement

... will replace the audio production systems for the parliamentary committee rooms.

Audio Visual Asset Management and Archiving

... will preserve broadcast records and improve accessibility of the archived broadcast material of parliamentary committees and the Chambers through the internet.

Upgrade to existing email systems

... will upgrade and modernise the existing email system to produce faster response times and higher availability.

Broadcast Routing Switch Replacement

... will replace ageing analogue technology with new digital technology for the distribution of all broadcasting production signals.

Upgrade Parliamentary Computing Network

... will replace ageing Parliamentary Computing Network infrastructure to increase capacity and reliability.

Parliament House website upgrade

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

