

PART 1

SECRETARY'S REVIEW





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Gardener, Forecourt (2014)
Parliament House Art Collection,
Department of Parliamentary Services

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The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) provides essential services to support the work of the Parliament, maintain Parliament House as a symbol of democracy and ensure the important activity that takes place within it is accessible and engaging. A more detailed description of the work of DPS is provided in Part 2 of this report.

The Presiding Officers of the Parliament—the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate—are jointly responsible for the administration and operation of Parliament House. As Secretary of DPS, I report directly to the Presiding Officers.

Main highlights of 2013–14

Budget

Last year my review finished by noting that as the Department entered 2013–14 it faced major financial challenges and the need to make substantial changes to its programs and services to manage within its operational budget. I am pleased to open this year's review reporting a cautious, but brighter view of the financial outlook for the year ahead.

The 2013–14 financial year was a time of budgetary constraint. As noted in this report, the budget deficit affected DPS' ability to continue to deliver some elements of the transformation agenda foreshadowed last year. Fiscal constraint also contributed to less than hoped for results against some existing key performance indicators in building maintenance and delays in other areas, such as full implementation of the recommendations of the visitor experience review, progress against which is noted below.

As ongoing budget pressures continued to curtail the Department's capacity to deliver services as intended, we focused efforts on making savings which—in the short term—have relatively lesser impact on the amenity of the building, and identifying further changes which could be made but would more significantly impact on service delivery. This focus resulted in savings where work (such as cleaning of the building's exterior) was deferred. We increased efficiencies by streamlining internal processes, including reviewing our organisational structures to ensure that resources were directed towards maximising the support DPS provides to the Parliament.

Significantly, the Department improved its contract management capabilities, for instance in the management of catering services. While further improvements are required, professional management of the contract has delivered service delivery improvements in the retail catering venues, and the implementation of performance indicators relevant to the industry across the contract has increased the caterer's

awareness of the high level of service required for Parliament House. Improved contract management will continue to reap benefits as contract and licence arrangements more broadly are rigorously negotiated and managed. Building on these improved ways of working, DPS remains committed to progressing its change agenda to gain further efficiencies.

I am pleased to be able to report that the Department received a one-off supplementation of \$5.5 million in the Mid-year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) and additional funding of \$15 million each year over the forward estimates in the 2014–15 Budget. I am grateful for the support of the Presiding Officers and the members of the Joint House Committee in particular for allowing me the opportunity to brief and regularly update them on our financial position. Together they championed the call for a more sustainable financial model for the Department's work.

The cumulative effect of increased real costs in a wide range of areas and the greater demands of maintaining a 25 year old building, teamed with compounding efficiency dividends, brought the Department to a position where the provision of some services was at risk of delay or being ceased all together. While this additional funding provides more certainty, pressures for budgetary reform continue, and the Department will maintain its stringent approach to financial management in order to manage within its budget envelope.

Preparation for the 44th Parliament

Despite the financial challenges, the year 2013–14 was an exceptionally busy one. It began with a period of intense preparation for the 44th Parliament and a focus on carrying out those works which can only practically be progressed when Parliament is not sitting and key areas can be more easily accessed. One major project was the construction of new accommodation for the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO). This work, funded by the PBO, commenced at the beginning of the year in review and was completed prior to the return of the new Parliament. I particularly thank the many DPS staff whose own workplaces were disrupted, for their patience while this important work was completed.

During the election period, coinciding with the first quarter of the year, the Department's ICT staff were able to demonstrate their expertise and flexibility by establishing and equipping a mobile office for the Leader of the Opposition (the Prime Minister being supported by his Department). DPS ICT also provided the mobile office with ongoing, dedicated support.

Supporting the 44th Parliament

With the commencement of the 44th Parliament, DPS' focus turned to service initiatives and the enhancement of existing offerings to support parliamentarians and facilitate their smooth transition to the Parliament House environment—many for the first time.

The new Parliament was an opportunity to reframe DPS' client service model and to introduce a streamlined approach which makes it easier for parliamentarians to access the services they need quickly and easily. Existing DPS staff with a range of expertise were given targeted customer service training and nominated as the primary

points of contact for parliamentarians and their staff. Supported by a range of easy-to-use guides to DPS' services and a suite of updated Parliament House maps, the revised approach was particularly valuable for new parliamentarians and staff as they familiarised themselves with Parliament House.

Foundations for the future

As the latter half of the 25th anniversary year, the balance of 2013 was a period of celebration of the history of Parliament House, and reflection on how best to steward this iconic building and dynamic workplace into the future. An atmosphere of celebration pervaded Parliament House Open Day in August 2013 when some 8,000 visitors took the opportunity to enjoy behind the scenes tours and activities. Rounding out the anniversary year were an exhibition of 25 treasures from the Parliament House Art Collection and a special anniversary commission of the photographs featured in this report. The images in *Parliament House at work* are a fitting legacy from the building's first 25 years.

I am pleased to report progress in response to the 2013 Review of Visitor Experience at Parliament House. DPS is working to make Parliament House more accessible and visits more engaging, providing visitors with opportunities to learn about Parliament, the building, and the collections. In 2013–14 DPS provided programs for over 9,000 more visitors than in the previous year. This work has been undertaken in close collaboration with Canberra's cultural institutions and the tourism sector at both local and national levels.

As primary custodians of the heritage values of Parliament House, DPS continued work to embed best practice frameworks to ensure these values are maintained and nurtured, and to work with the parliamentary departments and others to ensure Parliament House fulfils its design intent of serving the people and the Parliament for 200 years. Capacity for the strategic management of Parliament House—including its heritage—was significantly bolstered during the year. Key positions in the Building and Asset Management Division were filled, progressing the transformational agenda referred to in last year's report. Certainty of funding provided by an allocation in May 2014 for the 2014–15 Budget has enabled the development of *Design Principles* which will in turn inform the development of a comprehensive, five year Conservation Management Plan. I thank the Heritage Advisory Board for their contribution in support of these two significant pieces of work.

Along with the Building and Asset Management Division, functional and capability reviews were undertaken in the Corporate Services, and Strategy and Performance branches. The input from those reviews and the continued realignment of departmental functions also saw the creation of a Chief Operating Officer Division. Bringing together the planning, governance and corporate functions, this division will play an important role in strengthening the alignment of planning and reporting for the Department. Under its auspices, assessment of DPS' delivery of services to its customers will become more regular and rigorous. Better and more frequent customer surveys will allow for the collection and analysis of performance data to support the clear reporting on revised key performance indicators which was hoped for this year, but deferred by financial constraints.

Toward the new vision of Parliamentary ICT

In my 2012–13 review I reported the recent endorsement of the first Parliament of Australia Strategic ICT Plan: the foundation for a new era of ICT service provision for parliamentarians. The plan's vision is to connect Senators and Members to the services they need anywhere, any time and on a range of devices. I am pleased to report significant steps toward the realisation of this vision in 2013–14. Since the commencement of the new Parliament in November, DPS has introduced a range of ICT innovations. For the first time parliamentarians are able to choose the ICT equipment that best suits their individual needs, they can access the Parliamentary Computing Network via a 'virtual desktop' and they can watch parliamentary and committee proceedings on their tablet or smartphone thanks to a new 'ParlView' app.

Looking ahead into 2014–15

The Department will continue to be challenged by the financial resources available to it in the coming year. However, I am confident that with the structural reforms which have occurred and are to come in 2014–15—most notably the rationalisation of corporate systems using the functionality of the SAP system, and the accommodation review—we can look forward to the realisation of benefits which will bolster our capacity to deliver on the Department's purpose.

Since the close of the 2013–14 year, Australia's National Terrorism Alert Level has been raised to High, and security arrangements at Parliament House have been enhanced. The security arrangements in the parliamentary precinct are constantly under assessment and, as ever, we are working closely with the Presiding Officers, appropriate policing bodies and the parliamentary departments to ensure that the appropriate security arrangements are in place at Parliament House.

The safety of the Parliament, the occupants of Parliament House and the visiting public is paramount among DPS' concerns. Our challenge going forward will be to balance this fundamental purpose with our stated goal of ensuring that Parliament House and the work that takes place within it are accessible.

I am confident that this balance can be achieved.

Acknowledgements

I thank the Presiding Officers in the reporting year—Senator the Hon. John Hogg, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop, and former Speaker of the House, Ms Anna Burke, for their support of DPS and endorsement of the change agenda which has continued into the current year. I would also like to recognise the heads of the other parliamentary departments: Dr Rosemary Laing, Clerk of the Senate; Mr David Elder, Clerk of the House of Representatives and the former Clerk, Mr Bernard Wright, and Mr Phil Bowen, Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Again I thank the staff of DPS for their dedication in delivering the services with which we support the Parliament and parliamentarians.

Carol Mills
Secretary