

Annual Report 2011–12

The Committee

- 1.1 The Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration, appointed under standing order 222A, considers estimates of the funding required for the operation of the Department of the House of Representatives for each year and provides to the Speaker for presentation to the House and transmission to the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, estimates of amounts for inclusion in the appropriation bills for the Department.
- 1.2 The Committee also considers proposals for changes to the administration of the Department of the House of Representatives or variations to services provided by the Department, other matters of finance or services as may be referred to it by the Speaker or the House, the administration and funding of security measures affecting the House, and proposals for works in the parliamentary precincts that are subject to parliamentary approval. The Committee reports on these matters to the Speaker or the House, as appropriate.
- 1.3 When conferring with the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing, the Committee may consider estimates of the funding required for the operation of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) each year, and provide to the Speaker for presentation to the House and transmission to the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, estimates of amounts for inclusion in appropriation bills for the DPS. To date, the Committee has heard from DPS on its estimates and budgetary position, but has not reported to the House on these matters.
- 1.4 Standing order 222A(vi) (ii) provides that the Committee make an annual report to the House the amounts for inclusion in the appropriation bills for the Department of the House of Representatives.
- 1.5 The House Appropriations and Administration Committee was established at the beginning of the 43rd Parliament on 29 September 2011.

The establishment of the Committee reflected a requirement in the Agreement for a Better Parliament: Parliamentary Reform. Members of the committee were appointed on 25 October 2010.

Reports

- 1.6 During the reporting period the Committee tabled two reports:
- *Report no. 2 – Annual Report 2010-11; and*
 - *Report no. 3 – Budget estimates 2012 – 2013 for the Department of the House of Representatives.*
- 1.7 The first annual report of the Committee was tabled on 23 November 2011. It reported on the establishment and early activities of the Committee.
- 1.8 Report no. 3 was presented in accordance with standing order 222A(a) (ii) which requires that the Committee provide to the Speaker for presentation to the House the amounts for inclusion in the appropriation bills for the Department of the House of Representatives. The report was tabled on 9 May 2012. In summary, the total appropriation to be approved by the Parliament for the Department of the House of Representatives in the Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2012–2013 was \$22.691m, compared to \$23.253m in 2011–12.
- 1.9 The Committee had endorsed the proposals of the department to seek additional operational funding in the form of New Policy Proposals for the Budget and three out years totalling \$2.148m. In response, the Government agreed to additional funding of \$0.487m over the Budget and three out-years to support the oversight of the Parliamentary Budget Office by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit.
- 1.10 The Committee reported its disappointment that only some of the required supplementary funding for the Department of the House of Representatives had been provided. While the additional funding was welcome, the one-off increase in the efficiency dividend of 2.5 per cent resulted in a net outcome for the operational funding of the Department of a reduction of \$1.7m over the Budget and three out-years. The Committee also reported that the pressure on the departmental budget was in spite of the implementation of a range of savings measures and expenditure reductions over the past 15 to 20 years.

Meetings of the Committee

- 1.11 During the reporting period the Committee met seven times, on 6 July 2011, 12 October 2011, 23 November 2011, 15 February 2012, 21 March 2012, 9 May 2012 and 20 June 2012. The following are among the matters considered at the meetings:

- the report of the House of Representatives – Committee Office – Review of Staffing Levels, March 2011
- various briefings to the Committee by the Clerk of the House on the financial performance of the Department of the House of Representatives, its budgetary outlook and proposals for additional operational funding for the department for 2012/2013. Subsequently the Committee was briefed on the outcomes of the proposals and options for savings in the 2012/13 year
- various briefings by the Clerk of the House on a proposed project to replace progressively the office furniture (status C) of the staff of Members and departmental staff – the Committee endorsed the commencement of communications with Members for the replacement of office furniture for their staff. (Subsequently, however, the scope of the project was narrowed to replacement of furniture in the high use offices of a small number of Parliamentary Office holders and departmental staff)
- various briefings to the Committee by the Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) on the financial performance of the department, financial outlook, proposed Budget Bids for 2012/13 and savings measures and the current inquiry by the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee into the performance of the DPS
- a briefing paper by the Department of the House of Representatives on the establishment of a permanent meeting room for the Federation Chamber of the House of Representatives; and
- the terms of reference for a review of the information and communication technology for the Parliament – the Committee requested that it be briefed further on the review in future if relevant to the responsibilities of the Committee under the standing orders.

1.12 Although it has been a tight financial environment for the parliamentary departments, the Committee considers it has played a positive role in assessing the funding requirements of the parliamentary departments which it oversees and bringing these to the attention of government. The Committee will continue this role in 2012/13.

