
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series

Joint Committee on Publications

May 2006
Canberra

© Commonwealth of Australia 2006

ISBN 0 642 78789 1 (printed version)

ISBN 0 642 78790 5 (HTML version)



Contents

Foreword	v
Membership of the Committee	vi
Terms of reference	vii
List of abbreviations	viii
List of recommendations	ix
1 Introduction	1
The Joint Committee on Publications	1
The Parliamentary Papers Series	2
Purpose.....	2
Selection of documents.....	2
Distribution	3
The inquiry.....	4
2 Changes to the eligibility guidelines.....	7
Background	7
Summary of changes.....	8
Commonwealth government departmental libraries	8
Municipal libraries	10
Foreign embassies and political parties	11
3 Methods of distributing hard copies of parliamentary papers	13
The Parliamentary Papers Series	14

Cessation of blister packs	14
Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes	19
Internal distribution within Parliament House	21
Parliamentary Library distribution	22
Duplication between schemes	22
Enhanced Library Deposit and Free Issue Scheme	23
Adherence to productions standards	24
4 Electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series	27
Background	27
The current situation	28
Benefits of an electronic Parliamentary Papers Series	29
An alternative or adjunct to hard copies?.....	29
Availability of electronic publications	30
Long term availability	32
Options for electronic distribution	35
Delivery via the Publications.gov.au website.....	35
Parliamentary notification of online publishing	36
Hyperlinked list of Parliamentary papers.....	37
A digital repository.....	38
5 Cost recovery and subscriptions to the Parliamentary Papers Series.....	43
Background	43
Cost recovery	44
Recoverable costs.....	44
Full or partial cost recovery	46
Subscriptions to the PPS	46
Demand for subscriptions	47
The cost of a subscription	49



Foreword

The Parliamentary Papers Series does not contain all documents presented to Parliament; however the significant documents that comprise the series provide vital information on the activities of government and the Parliament since Federation.

Advances in technology have resulted in a move towards the publication of electronic documents rather than the traditional hard copy reports. While electronic distribution may provide great opportunities for widening the access to the series, long-term availability to these documents is not yet assured. A framework is required to ensure that the series is permanently available, both in hard copy and in electronic forms, to the widest possible audience.

While costs are seen to have an impact on the distribution of parliamentary papers, the Committee feels that, due to the historical significance of the Parliamentary Papers Series, it is important that it continue to be available.

The Committee feels that the recommendations contained in this report provide a foundation on which the Parliamentary Papers Series can continue to be available to the widest possible audience.

Mrs Trish Draper MP
Chair



Membership of the Committee

Chair Mrs Trish Draper MP

Deputy Chair Senator John Watson

Members	Mr Dick Adams MP	Senator Steve Hutchins (to 1/7/05)
	Mr Mark Baker MP	Senator David Johnston
	Mr Bob Baldwin MP (to 28/2/06)	Senator Linda Kirk (to 1/7/05)
	Ms Ann Corcoran MP	Senator Gavin Marshall
	Mr Chris Hayes MP (from 16/6/05)	Senator Clare Moore (to 1/7/05)
	Mrs Kay Hull MP	Senator Fiona Nash (from 16/8/05)
	Mr Michael Johnson (from 28/2/06)	Senator Helen Polley (from 1/7/05)
	Mr Roger Price MP (to 16/6/05)	Senator Nigel Scullion (to 16/8/05)
		Senator Glenn Sterle (from 1/7/05)
		Senator Dana Wortley (from 1/7/05)

Committee Secretariat

Secretary Mr Jason Sherd

Papers Manager Ms Vicki Bradley



Terms of reference

To inquire and report on the distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS), with particular reference to:

- The potential impact of changes to the distribution of the PPS made by the Presiding Officers, namely the tightening of eligibility guidelines and the cessation of blister packs to commence on 1 January 2006;
- The provision of the PPS in a digital format, either as an alternative or an adjunct to the hard copy series;
- The feasibility of a subscription service, either in digital or hard copy form; and
- The possibility of partial or full cost recovery for the series.



List of abbreviations

AGIMO	Australian Government Information Management Office
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
LDS	Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes
OISOs	Online Information Service Obligations
PPS	Parliamentary Papers Series
URLs	Uniform Resource Locators



List of recommendations

2 Changes to the eligibility guidelines

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the eligibility guidelines for the Parliamentary Papers Series be amended to include Commonwealth government departmental libraries.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that recipients of the series be regularly surveyed to ascertain whether they wish to continue receiving Parliamentary Papers.

3 Methods of distributing hard copies of parliamentary papers

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the chamber departments:

- continue to monitor agency compliance with the requirements of the Parliamentary Papers Series; and
- report to the Committee, by 30 June the following year, any defaulting agencies.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that, due to the costs passed on to recipient libraries being in excess of the savings realised by the chamber departments, blister packs of parliamentary papers continue to be available to eligible recipients.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that recipients of the Parliamentary Papers series be surveyed to ascertain whether they wish to receive the series as loose pamphlet copies or as a blister pack.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the guidelines for the provision of the Parliamentary Papers Series be amended to read as follows:

- that libraries of States, State Parliaments, tertiary education institutions, Commonwealth Departments, the main national or parliamentary library of a country which has an exchange with the National Library of Australia, and appropriate addressees as determined by the Presiding Officers, be entitled to be supplied, on request, with either:
 - ⇒ one free copy of each Parliamentary Paper; or
 - ⇒ one free collated set of the Parliamentary Papers Series.
- that trade, business, employer, employee, professional, commercial and similar organisations including members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and newspapers, be not entitled to receive free distribution of the above;

that the Presiding Officers advise current recipients on the free distribution list when the revised distribution scheme becomes operative, and instigate checks, from time to time as they consider necessary, to ascertain whether recipients desire to continue to receive their entitlement.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office monitor agency compliance with the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and provide a report, detailing defaulting agencies, to Parliament by no later than 30 June the following year.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Tabling Officer of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet write to each recipient of the internal Parliament House document distribution to determine their stock requirements.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that, where possible, any duplication between the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and the Parliamentary Papers Series be eliminated.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office, together with the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate, investigate methods to reduce the duplication between the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and the Parliamentary Papers Series. A report of their findings is to be supplied to the Committee within six months of the tabling of this report, and any changes implemented within a further six months.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the printing standards for documents presented to Parliament be strictly adhered to.

The Committee will monitor compliance with this recommendation and will regularly report to the Parliament those agencies not adhering to the standards.

4 Electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series**Recommendation 12**

The Committee recommends that the Australian National Audit Office regularly monitor the online availability of government documents, especially those presented to Parliament.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office continue to work with agencies to ensure that all government documents are made available online.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office take steps to ensure that documents presented to Parliament are permanently available online, including encouraging the use of persistent identifiers to online information.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that any digital versions of the Parliamentary Papers Series augment the hard copy series.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that agencies provide a website link, for all documents to be presented to Parliament, to the Tabling Officer of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. This link is to be included in the daily list of documents scheduled for presentation to Parliament, which is circulated to Members and Senators.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the chamber departments investigate providing an online list of Parliamentary Papers with hyperlinks to those documents on agency websites.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the legal deposit provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968* be extended to include electronic copies of documents.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate, in consultation with the Australian Government Information Management Office and other stakeholders, investigate and implement the development of an online digital repository for the Parliamentary Papers Series.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that, to complement the Department of the Senate's digital imaging project, the Department of the House of Representatives investigate the digital imaging of House committee reports presented from 1901 to 1996 and making these available online.

5 Cost recovery and subscriptions to the Parliamentary Papers Series

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that any cost recovery measures are only applied to partially recover the administrative costs of the Chamber Departments.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that all recipients of the series be offered additional copies of the series by subscription, in either pamphlet or blister pack. Organisations that previously received the series should be offered an opportunity to subscribe to the series.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the Chamber Departments set the price for a subscription to the Parliamentary Papers Series, and annually report to the Committee:

- The cost of a subscription to the series; and
- The organisations subscribing to the series.

Introduction

The Joint Committee on Publications

- 1.1 The Joint Committee on Publications is comprised of the Publications Committees of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. These committees can meet separately or together as a joint committee.
- 1.2 When meeting jointly, the Committee has the power to “inquire into and report on the publication and distribution of parliamentary and government publications and on matters referred to it by a Minister”.¹
- 1.3 This is the 12th report of the Committee since its establishment in 1970, and the fourth dealing specifically with the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS). Other inquiries relating to the series were presented in 1971, 1986 and 1997.
- 1.4 In 1997 the Committee recommended that the series “continue in its present form until there is a viable replacement either in electronic or printed form (or both).² This recommendation was accepted by the Presiding Officers.³

1 House of Representatives standing order 219 and Senate standing order 22.

2 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. iii.

3 Presiding Officers’ response, *Senate Hansard* (10.11.98) pp. 32–3; Government response, *Senate Hansard* (11.3.99) p. 2773.

The Parliamentary Papers Series

Purpose

- 1.5 The Parliamentary Papers Series is a comprehensive series of documents recording the activities of the Australian government, the Parliament and its committees since Federation.⁴ The series is intended to provide a convenient and accessible permanent record of certain papers concerning the Parliament and Government.⁵

Selection of documents

- 1.6 The 1964 report of the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary and Government Publications (the Erwin Committee) stated that documents presented to the Parliament “of a substantial nature” should be selected for the PPS.⁶ Responsibility for determining which documents are to be included in the series lies with either House.
- 1.7 A resolution that a presented document be printed (Senate), or that the document be made a Parliamentary Paper (House of Representatives), includes that document in the PPS.⁷ This is the way most Parliamentary committee reports are included in the series.
- 1.8 For the vast majority of documents, however, this function is delegated to the Publications Committee of each House, which usually meet together as the Joint Committee on Publications.
- 1.9 The Committee considers all documents presented to Parliament which have not been made a Parliamentary Paper by either House. The Committee recommends which of these documents should be included in the PPS. These recommendations are usually always adopted by the Houses.
- 1.10 Guidelines for inclusion of documents into the series were laid down in the Committee’s 1977 report, and were amended by the Committee in 1986.⁸

4 Department of the Senate, *Submission 1*, p. 1.

5 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 1.

6 Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary and Government Publications, *Report*, Canberra, 1964, p. 28.

7 Senate standing order 169 and House of Representatives standing order 202.

8 Joint Committee on Publications, *Inquiry into the purpose, scope and distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra, 1977, p. 6; Joint Committee on Publications, *Review of the cost and distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra, 1986, p. 9.

Distribution

- 1.11 The Parliamentary Papers Series is essentially two products:
- Loose documents (called pamphlet copies), which are processed as parliamentary papers as soon as possible after tabling. These are dispatched in economical parcels and not necessarily in numeric order.
 - Blister packs, which, as of 2001, come to recipients infrequently in large batches after each document in the batch is available and each volume's preliminary matter is ready. (No blister pack volume is dispatched until all its contents are available.) The last volume in the last batch for the year contains an index. This product may be bound by the recipient.⁹
- 1.12 Each document is allocated a unique parliamentary paper number to assist in identification. This number is shown on a label at the foot of the back cover on all PPS copies of documents.
- 1.13 Government departments and agencies are required to supply 150 B5 copies of each Parliamentary Paper. Forty of these copies are untrimmed, or slightly oversized to facilitate binding, which are the copies used for the blister packs. Author bodies meet the costs of producing these papers and any action made necessary because the documents do not meet the required production standards.¹⁰
- 1.14 The series is administered by the Department of the House of Representatives, with the assistance of the Department of the Senate. The chamber departments share the costs of the series, estimated to be approximately \$130 000 per year.¹¹ This figure reflects the processing, storage and distribution costs of the series.
- 1.15 Canprint Communications Pty Ltd is the Parliament's distribution agent for the PPS. It is responsible for labelling each parliamentary paper, distribution of the series and the collation and storage of blister packs.
- 1.16 Prior to 1 January 2006, recipients of the series received free copies of the series in pamphlet and/or blister pack form. The Parliament, through the Joint Committee on Publications and the Presiding Officers, determines which organisations are entitled to receive sets of the series.

9 House of Representatives Table Office, *Parliamentary Papers Series*, see http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/publ/admin_rec.htm.

10 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Guidelines for the Presentation of Government Documents, Government Responses, Ministerial Statements & Other Instruments to the Parliament*, see http://www.dpmc.gov.au/guidelines/docs/guidelines_govt_docs.pdf.

11 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 12.

- 1.17 The criteria for inclusion in the guidelines “were gradually laid down in the early years of the [20th] century”¹² and have been designed to ensure the widest possible dissemination of Parliamentary publications.
- 1.18 Previous recommendations of the Committee relating to these guidelines have attempted to balance public access to the series against the desire for cost effectiveness. In its 1986 report, the Committee recommended that secondary schools be excluded from the free distribution guidelines, as no schools were currently receiving them. The Committee also recommended excluding members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery because this group already received documents upon presentation, and the provision of PPS copies would be an unnecessary duplication.¹³
- 1.19 The series is highly valued by recipients as it provides publications that can otherwise be hard to find or obtain.¹⁴ Many submissions received by the Committee stated that the series is frequently used by students, researchers, staff and clients.

The inquiry

- 1.20 On 12 May 2005 the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives (the Presiding Officers) wrote to the Committee, informing them of changes they had made to the distribution of the PPS, to take effect from 1 January 2006, and requested the views of the Committee on further, more extensive changes.
- 1.21 The Committee resolved to undertake a formal inquiry into the more extensive changes suggested by the Presiding Officers, as well as investigating the impact of the changes already made.
- 1.22 The Committee contacted all recipients of the PPS, including all Commonwealth Government Departments and several peak bodies, informing them of the changes made by the Presiding Officers and inviting them to make submissions to the inquiry.
- 1.23 The Committee advertised its inquiry in the House Committees advertisement in *The Australian* newspaper on 5 October 2005.

12 Joint Committee on Publications, *Report relating to the distribution and pricing of Parliamentary publications*, Canberra, 1971, p. 39

13 Joint Committee on Publications, *Review of the cost and distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra, 1986, pp. 21-22.

14 Parliamentary Library of Western Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 1.

- 1.24 Twenty submissions were received, as well as three supplementary submissions. A list of submissions is at Appendix A. Six exhibits were also received and these are listed in Appendix B.
- 1.25 The Committee held public hearings on 31 October and 7 and 28 November 2005 at Parliament House, Canberra. Details of the hearings and the witnesses who appeared are at Appendix C.
- 1.26 Realising that the Committee would be unable to report before the changes to the distribution took effect on 1 January 2006, the Chair of the Committee wrote to the Presiding Officers, requesting that the implementation of the changes be delayed until the Committee presented its report.
- 1.27 The Presiding Officers replied by stating that the changes would be implemented as planned and indicated that stock numbers supplied by agencies for the PPS will not be reduced in the short term, to allow flexibility in responding to the Committee's recommendations stemming from this report.
- 1.28 On 6 February 2006 members of the Committee undertook on-site inspections and informal briefings on both the National Library of Australia's PANDORA web archive project and the processing of parliamentary papers by Canprint Communications Pty Ltd.

Changes to the eligibility guidelines

Background

- 2.1 Hard copies of the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS) are provided free of charge to eligible recipients. The distribution list is determined according to guidelines approved by the Presiding Officers, and has been amended from time to time. Organisations apply to receive the series free of charge and, if they meet the criteria, are included in the distribution list.
- 2.2 The Committee first made recommendations concerning the free distribution list in 1971, setting out the eligibility guidelines in substantially the same form as then applied. In his submission to that inquiry, the Clerk of the House of Representatives stated that recommendations by the Committee would be welcomed, as the criteria for inclusion had not been challenged for many years.¹
- 2.3 Since that time, the number of copies distributed to eligible recipients has been reduced from at least 552 in 1971 to 134 in 2005. Several categories of recipients, such as secondary schools and newspapers, have been removed on the recommendation of the Committee,² contributing to the reduction in distributed copies.

1 Joint Committee on Publications, *Report relating to the distribution and pricing of parliamentary publications*, Canberra, 1971, p. 34.

2 Joint Committee on Publications, *Review of the cost and distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra, 1986, pp. 21-22.

Summary of changes

- 2.4 The Presiding Officers' changes to the PPS guidelines, to take effect from 1 January 2006, include restricting the list of eligible recipients. The "increasing electronic availability of the documents in the PPS" was cited as the basis for making these changes.
- 2.5 Under the revised eligibility guidelines, the libraries of States, State parliaments, tertiary education institutions and the main national or parliamentary library of a country which has an exchange arrangement with the National Library of Australia will continue to be eligible for one free copy of the series, along with appropriate addressees as determined by the Presiding Officers.
- 2.6 Twenty five recipients – fourteen departmental libraries, seven foreign embassies, three municipal libraries and one political party – will no longer be eligible for a free copy of the series.³
- 2.7 The Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate stated that there would be minor savings in postage from the reduced number of recipients.⁴

Commonwealth government departmental libraries

- 2.8 Of those recipients removed from the eligibility guidelines, only Commonwealth government department libraries provided submissions to the inquiry, either on their own behalf or through the Australian Government Libraries Information Network.
- 2.9 The Department of the House of Representatives reported that of the 25 bodies no longer eligible to receive the series free of charge, four government departments wrote to the Department seeking to continue receiving the PPS. The Department of the House of Representatives stated that it had some sympathy with the case put by these agencies for their reinstatement.⁵
- 2.10 The Committee received evidence that departmental libraries consider the series essential in supporting their agencies in the development and delivery of government services. The PPS is a vital source of information on the activities of government and the parliament, including the review

3 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 3.

4 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 3 and 11; Ms Rosa Ferranda, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 4.

5 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 10.

- of past policies and programs.⁶ As such, the series is highly valued and utilised, especially in those departments whose work encompasses all portfolios, such as the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.⁷
- 2.11 Receipt of the PPS by these departmental libraries would avoid a significant duplication of effort and waste of resources of library staff who would otherwise have to obtain the documents from other sources, such as from author agencies directly, inter-library loan or via the Internet, were the documents to be available online.⁸
- 2.12 Several submissions expressed reservations about accessing the PPS electronically. While most parliamentary papers are placed online by author agencies, there are gaps in the online series, and long term access to the papers is not guaranteed.⁹ The Committee also heard evidence that, even if a document was available online, desktop internet access is not universal across government agencies.¹⁰
- 2.13 The Department of the Senate submitted that the provision of copies of the PPS to departmental libraries is “an appropriate exchange” for the documents provided for the PPS by government departments and agencies.¹¹
- 2.14 The Committee accepts that the removal of departmental libraries from the eligibility guidelines would have a detrimental effect on their ability to provide effective and efficient services to government. The minimal cost savings to the chamber departments would be outweighed by the increased cost to be incurred by each departmental library as a result of their exclusion from the guidelines. The Committee therefore encourages the Presiding Officers to take a ‘Whole of Government’ view when reviewing the eligibility guidelines to the PPS.
- 2.15 Several submissions recommended that Commonwealth departmental libraries continue to be eligible to receive free copies of the PPS and that

6 Australian Government Libraries Information Network, *Submission 4*, p. 2. See also Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission 17*, p. 1; Attorney-General’s Department, *Submission 20*, p. 1.

7 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Submission 7*, p. 1.

8 Australian Government Libraries Information Network, *Submission 4*, p. 2. See also Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission 17*, p. 1; Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Submission 11*, p. 2.

9 Ms Kym Holden, Australian Government Libraries Information Network, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 8; Ms Gaik Khong, Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, pp. 19-20.

10 Ms Kym Holden, Australian Government Libraries Information Network, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 7.

11 Department of the Senate, *Submission 1*, p. 2.

individual libraries be asked whether they wish to remain on the PPS distribution list.¹² The Department of the House of Representatives commented that the “inclination is for people to say that they wish to continue to receive a free service”, indicating that it is unlikely for recipients to opt out of the distribution list.¹³

- 2.16 The Committee agrees with this sentiment but notes that the revised guidelines recommend the regular survey of recipients. The Committee encourages the Department of the House of Representatives, as the principal administrator of the series, to check with recipients, at least every 18 months, whether they wish to continue to receive their entitlement.

Municipal libraries

- 2.17 Under the changes made by the Presiding Officers, municipal libraries will no longer be eligible to receive a free copy of the PPS.
- 2.18 In its 1997 report on the future of the PPS the Committee stated that “it is through Australia’s library systems that the public has access to parliamentary papers.” At that time, it was estimated that 70% of the Australian population visited a public library between 1989 and 1994.¹⁴
- 2.19 During 2003-04 there were 105 million visitors to local government, national and state libraries. Almost 100 million of these were to the 532 local government libraries.¹⁵
- 2.20 The Presiding Officers have agreed that, in the instances where such libraries have received parliamentary papers prior to 1 January 2006, these libraries will remain on the distribution list.¹⁶

12 Department of the Senate, *Submission 1*, p. 2. See also Australian Library and Information Network, *Submission 6*, p. 4; Ms Kym Holden, Australian Government Libraries Information Network, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 5.

13 Ms R McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 10.

14 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, pp. 10-11.

15 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Public Libraries, Australia, 2003-04*, see [www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/DD3BEA2E4FA5DA11CA256FF100787DE0/\\$File/85610_2003-04.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/DD3BEA2E4FA5DA11CA256FF100787DE0/$File/85610_2003-04.pdf).

16 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 4; Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

Foreign embassies and political parties

- 2.21 The Committee has in the past accepted that foreign embassies¹⁷ and political parties¹⁸ should be included on the free list for the PPS, on request. This has been based on ensuring the “widest possible access to documents tabled in the Parliament”.¹⁹
- 2.22 The demand for the series among these recipients has, however, declined since 1971, when political parties and embassies received at least 45 copies between them²⁰. By 1997 this had fallen to 22 copies and by 2005, eight copies.²¹
- 2.23 While libraries offer access to the general public, and departmental libraries serve the public through better services to government, the sets of the PPS held by foreign embassies and political parties are accessed by a limited number of people.
- 2.24 The Committee considers that the alternative methods of accessing parliamentary papers, while unacceptable for departmental libraries, may be appropriate for embassies and political parties.
- 2.25 As suggested by the Presiding Officers, these bodies can access most PPS documents through the publications.gov.au website, or can obtain copies directly from the author body. This has the added advantage of them receiving only the documents of interest, rather than the entire series.
- 2.26 Another approach for these bodies may be to subscribe to the series. The issue of providing the series as a subscription service is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Recommendation 1

- 2.27 **The Committee recommends that the eligibility guidelines for the Parliamentary Papers Series be amended to include Commonwealth government departmental libraries.**

17 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. 14.

18 Joint Committee on Publications, *Report relating to the distribution and pricing of Parliamentary publications*, Canberra, 1971, p. 7.

19 Joint Committee on Publications, *Review of the cost and distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra, 1986, p. 20.

20 Joint Committee on Publications, *Report relating to the distribution and pricing of Parliamentary publications*, Canberra, 1971, p. 39. These 45 copies were of papers relating to financial matters. It is unclear how many copies of the other papers were received by foreign embassies.

21 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, pp. 14-15.

Recommendation 2

- 2.28 **The Committee recommends that recipients of the series be regularly surveyed to ascertain whether they wish to continue receiving Parliamentary Papers.**

Methods of distributing hard copies of parliamentary papers

3.1 Documents presented to Parliament are distributed through a variety of methods:

- Presented documents of a substantial nature, which are selected by either House to be part of the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS), are distributed free of charge to a distribution list of eligible recipients.
- All government documents, whether presented to Parliament or not, are required to be distributed through the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes (LDS), which are administered through the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO).
- Within Parliament House, copies of presented documents are distributed to the Parliamentary Library, press gallery and Table Offices of the Senate and House of Representatives, for the use of Senators, Members and staff.

3.2 The major issues relating to the distribution of hard copies of documents are:

- Copies of documents required for these distributions are not always provided by author agencies in a timely manner; and
- Duplication among these distribution methods.

The Parliamentary Papers Series

- 3.3 The distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series is described in Chapter One. A discussion of the eligible guidelines for free sets of the series is in Chapter Two.
- 3.4 Prior to 1 January 2006, 97 pamphlet copies and 37 collated blister packs were distributed to 73 recipients. This includes 20 copies each for the Senate and House of Representatives Table Offices.
- 3.5 As a result of the changes made by the Presiding Officers, 89 pamphlet copies will be distributed to 50 recipients.¹

Cessation of blister packs

- 3.6 In May 2005 the Presiding Officers decided to cease the provision of blister packs; the 2005 series being the last to be produced in this form. The recipients of blister packs would instead receive one pamphlet copy of each parliamentary paper.
- 3.7 Under the revised arrangements nineteen recipients, who had previously received both a blister pack and a pamphlet copy, will now only receive the pamphlet copy. A further fifteen recipients will receive a pamphlet copy instead of a blister pack. The arrangements for sixteen recipients, who had received one pamphlet copy, will continue.²
- 3.8 The Presiding Officers gave the following reasons for deciding to cease providing blister packs:
- The delay by agencies in supplying, and the time spent by chamber departments monitoring the receipt of, stock for the series.
 - Reducing the costs of storing, processing and distribution.

Supply of stock

- 3.9 Blister packs are despatched in bulk once the entire set of documents for a given year are assembled. The Department of the House of Representatives reports a delay of up to 30 months in the provision of blister packs, caused by some agencies not submitting their documents in a timely manner.³

1 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

2 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 3.

3 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 9.

- 3.10 The Commonwealth Department of Parliamentary Services submitted that there were problems with the distribution of the PPS, including long delays in the receipt of documents. As a result, they are forced to rely on the distribution of documents within Parliament House, which provides a more immediate service.⁴
- 3.11 The Committee considers the 30 month delay in completing a series unacceptable but does not accept that the issue of timely supply of documents for distribution will be addressed by the abolition of blister packs. These delays by agencies also affect the provision of pamphlet copies, and are not isolated to the Parliamentary Papers Series.
- 3.12 Organisations seeking to bind their pamphlet copies will still have to wait for the entire series to be compiled. The core issue is one of agency non-compliance and, if not addressed, delays in providing the PPS will always be experienced, regardless of format.
- 3.13 It should be noted that a great majority of agencies do provide adequate stock of their documents for distribution. However the coordinating agency, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, must play a role in encouraging all agencies to provide stock of documents for the Parliamentary Papers Series in a timely manner.

Monitoring compliance

- 3.14 The Australian Library and Information Association recommended an audit of agency performance for the supply of documents to Parliament. The Australian Government Information Management Office stated that they have been working with the Australian National Audit Office to ensure that agency requirements are being met.⁵
- 3.15 The Committee would welcome an investigation by the Audit Office into whether agencies are meeting their obligations to make government publications available and encourages the Audit Office to include such obligations in their regular audit programs.
- 3.16 In 1997 the Committee recommended that Ministers should ensure that agencies fulfil their obligation to provide sufficient copies of documents for the PPS. The Committee also recommended that defaulting agencies be

4 Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Submission 11*, p. 1.

5 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 5; Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 3.

reported to Parliament.⁶ To date no agency has been reported to Parliament as not complying with the requirements of the PPS.

- 3.17 Officers in both chamber departments spend considerable time actively monitoring agency compliance with the requirements of the PPS, including the supply of copies of the documents to Canprint. This has the effect of ensuring the completeness of the series, although after long delays.⁷ The Committee intends to continue working closely with the chamber departments in ensuring the timely completion of each year's series.

Recommendation 3

- 3.18 **The Committee recommends that the chamber departments:**

- **continue to monitor agency compliance with the requirements of the Parliamentary Papers Series; and**
- **report to the Committee, by 30 June the following year, any defaulting agencies.**

- 3.19 The relevant Minister also has a role in ensuring that agencies provide adequate stock of their documents. Upon receiving the report from the chamber departments on defaulting agencies by 30 June the following year, the Committee will report any defaulting agencies to Parliament. The Chair of the Committee will then ask the Presiding Officers to seek an explanation from the relevant Minister as to why their agency has not complied with the requirements of the PPS.

- 3.20 The Committee believes that the potential for an agency to be named in Parliament, and their non-compliance to be reported to their Minister by either the Speaker of the House of Representatives or the President of the Senate is a strong incentive for compliance.

Cost savings

- 3.21 The Department of the House of Representatives submitted that only "modest cost savings" will be achieved as a result of the changes.

6 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. iii.

7 Ms Rosa Ferranda, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 3; Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, pp. 13, 14.

Approximately \$30,000 per year, the cost of storing, processing and distributing the series, will be saved by ceasing the provision of blister packs.

- 3.22 The State Library of New South Wales asserted that a collated series ensures long term access to parliamentary papers by keeping all the copies for a particular year together.⁸ The Australian Library and Information Association submitted that the abolition of blister packs would place at risk the efficient collection of parliamentary papers.⁹
- 3.23 Recipient libraries indicated that they would be required to do a great deal of extra work to source, collate and check their own sets to ensure their completeness. This would result in an added administrative and financial burden to manage a large number of single items.¹⁰
- 3.24 The Committee has some sympathy with these libraries; however it reiterates the view, expressed in its 1986 report, that organisations have a responsibility to secure their own holdings.¹¹ Yearly lists of Parliamentary Papers, recently made available online by the Department of the House of Representatives, should assist libraries in managing their papers.¹²
- 3.25 Similarly, concerns that individual libraries would process the series differently, resulting in holdings that are not comparable with one another¹³ are not shared by the Committee. Libraries are currently not required to bind the blister packs they receive, although many do. It is possible, and likely, for a library to process their blister pack in a way that suits them, such as sorting them by subject area.
- 3.26 The Committee considers that the additional costs transferred to libraries in obtaining a collated set of parliamentary papers, when multiplied across numerous libraries, would be in excess of the savings realised by the chamber departments. On this basis, blister packs should continue to be available to be provided to eligible recipients.

8 State Library of New South Wales, *Submission 3*, p. 2.

9 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 5.

10 Department of Parliamentary Services (Victoria), *Submission 9*, p. 2; National Archives of Australia, *Submission 10*, p. 3; Parliamentary Library of Western Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 1.

11 Joint Committee on Publications, *Review of the Cost and Distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra, 1986, p. 31.

12 See <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/publ/PPS.htm>.

13 State Library of Victoria, *Submission 2*, p. 1; Department of Parliamentary Services (Victoria), *Submission 9*, p. 2.

Recommendation 4

- 3.27 **The Committee recommends that, due to the costs passed on to recipient libraries being in excess of the savings realised by the chamber departments, blister packs of parliamentary papers continue to be available to eligible recipients.**
- 3.28 The Committee accepts the limit of one set of the PPS per recipient imposed by the Presiding Officers. Accordingly, recipients should be surveyed to ascertain whether they wish to receive the series as loose pamphlet copies or as a blister pack.

Recommendation 5

- 3.29 **The Committee recommends that recipients of the Parliamentary Papers series be surveyed to ascertain whether they wish to receive the series as loose pamphlet copies or as a blister pack.**
- 3.30 Given the value placed on blister packs by recipient libraries, this may be an area where some cost recovery is possible. The issue of providing blister packs as a subscription service is discussed in Chapter 5.

Recommendation 6

3.31 The Committee recommends that the guidelines for the provision of the Parliamentary Papers Series be amended to read as follows:

- that libraries of States, State Parliaments, tertiary education institutions, Commonwealth Departments, the main national or parliamentary library of a country which has an exchange with the National Library of Australia, and appropriate addressees as determined by the Presiding Officers, be entitled to be supplied, on request, with either:
 - ⇒ one free copy of each Parliamentary Paper; or
 - ⇒ one free collated set of the Parliamentary Papers Series.
- that trade, business, employer, employee, professional, commercial and similar organisations including members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and newspapers, be not entitled to receive free distribution of the above;

that the Presiding Officers advise current recipients on the free distribution list when the revised distribution scheme becomes operative, and instigate checks, from time to time as they consider necessary, to ascertain whether recipients desire to continue to receive their entitlement.

Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes

3.32 The Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes (LDS) are administered by the Australian Government Information Management Office, a business group of the Department of Finance and Administration. It augments the Legal deposit requirements of section 201 of the *Copyright Act 1968* and state legislation.

3.33 One copy of each publication produced by government department and agencies are required to be provided to each of the 41 deposit libraries, including the National Library, state libraries and university libraries identified under the *Higher Education Funding Act 1988*.¹⁴

14 Australian Government Information Management Office, see <http://www.agimo.gov.au/information/publishing/deposit>.

- 3.34 All government documents are distributed through the LDS, including those not included in the PPS and documents not presented to Parliament. This gives the LDS a wider range of documents than the Parliamentary Papers Series.¹⁵
- 3.35 Like the PPS, the LDS is also adversely affected by agencies not providing adequate copies. The former distributor of the LDS has been unfairly criticised for being unable to supply documents.¹⁶ This criticism should be more appropriately directed at agencies who fail to supply documents for distribution under the schemes.
- 3.36 The LDS is a statutory requirement of agencies and ultimately Ministers are responsible for ensuring that their agency meet their obligations.¹⁷ The Committee does not think it appropriate that a private company, given the contract to distribute either the PPS or the LDS, should have responsibility to monitor and enforce agency compliance with these schemes.
- 3.37 In evidence to the Committee, the Australian Government Information Management Office admitted that it does not monitor the supply of documents to the LDS by author agencies. Instead, agencies are relied upon to be aware of their obligations.¹⁸
- 3.38 The Committee accepts that non-compliance with statutory obligations by agencies is not deliberate.¹⁹ Nevertheless, if a requirement is important enough to be included in legislation, some monitoring of the adherence to those requirements should be performed.

Recommendation 7

- 3.39 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office monitor agency compliance with the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and provide a report, detailing defaulting agencies, to Parliament by no later than 30 June the following year.**

15 Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 15.

16 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 2; State Library of New South Wales, *Submission 3*, p. 2.

17 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. iv.

18 Mr John Lalor, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 8.

19 Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 4.

Internal distribution within Parliament House

- 3.40 The distribution of documents within Parliament House from external departments and agencies is coordinated by the Tabling Officer of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Copies of reports from the Auditor-General and parliamentary committees are distributed by the relevant committee secretariat or through the Table Office of each chamber department.
- 3.41 Two-hundred and eighty one copies of documents are required, and must be properly boxed and labelled by the presenting agency before being presented to Parliament.
- 3.42 The distribution list is as follows:
- 75 copies for the House of Representatives Table Office.
 - 100 copies for the Senate Table Office.
 - 21 copies for the Parliamentary Library.
 - 5 copies for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Tabling Officer.
 - 80 copies for the press gallery. This is the only optional part of the distribution.²⁰
- 3.43 Consistent with Recommendation 2, the recipients of the internal Parliament House distribution should also be surveyed regarding their need for documents.

Recommendation 8

- 3.44 **The Committee recommends that the Tabling Officer of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet write to each recipient of the internal Parliament House document distribution to determine their stock requirements.**

²⁰ Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, see <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/guidelines/index.cfm>.

Parliamentary Library distribution

- 3.45 The Parliamentary Library receives 21 copies of all presented documents shortly after tabling. Nine copies are passed on to other Parliamentary Libraries throughout Australia and New Zealand, with the rest used by library researchers and information specialists.²¹

Duplication between schemes

- 3.46 The submission of the Department of the House of Representatives identified duplication between the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and the Parliamentary Papers Series, and also between the Parliamentary Papers Series and the Parliamentary Library's distribution.²²
- 3.47 Significant overlap does exist, with more than half of all recipients receiving a second copy of each document. The Commonwealth Department of Parliamentary Services indicated that work needed to be done to eliminate some duplication. The Clerk of the House of Representatives likewise expressed a desire to see a rationalised Parliamentary Papers Series, free of unnecessary duplication.²³
- 3.48 The elimination of this duplication would result in minor cost savings for agencies, which would not be required to produce as many copies of their documents. The Committee, however, acknowledges the difficulties in removing this duplication and that the costs of doing so may outweigh the potential savings for the administrators of each scheme.
- 3.49 The Committee believes that this issue needs to be addressed despite these obstacles.

21 Miss Roslynn Membrey, Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 20.

22 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, pp. 17-18.

23 Miss Roslynn Membrey, Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 18; Mr Ian Harris, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 15.

Recommendation 9

- 3.50 **The Committee recommends that, where possible, any duplication between the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and the Parliamentary Papers Series be eliminated.**

Enhanced Library Deposit and Free Issue Scheme

- 3.51 One possible solution to address this duplication, proposed by the Department of the House of Representatives in its submissions to the 1997 inquiry and to the current inquiry, is for an enhanced Library Deposit Scheme.²⁴
- 3.52 This proposal again warrants further investigation. In 1997, the Committee recommended that a working party be established to investigate this proposal. The Presiding Officers accepted this recommendation²⁵ but to date no working party has eventuated.
- 3.53 The Committee believes that the responsibility for investigating and implementing an enhanced LDS lies with the Australian Government Information Management Office, in conjunction with the chamber Departments.
- 3.54 The inaction regarding the Committee's 1997 recommendation should not be allowed to be repeated. Accordingly, the Committee asks that the investigation be completed within six months from the date of this report and a report presented to the Committee. Any changes to the LDS and PPS should then be implemented within a further six months.

24 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. 25; Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, pp. 7-9.

25 Presiding Officers response, *Senate Hansard* (10.11.98) pp. 32-3.

Recommendation 10

- 3.55 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office, together with the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate, investigate methods to reduce the duplication between the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and the Parliamentary Papers Series. A report of their findings is to be supplied to the Committee within six months of the tabling of this report, and any changes implemented within a further six months.**

Adherence to productions standards

- 3.56 The Committee has identified potential savings for the whole of Government in the costs of production of reports presented to Parliament.
- 3.57 Many reports presented to Parliament are printed in full colour, which is in excess of the requirements of Parliament and contrary to the guidelines set down by this Committee, which encourages restraint in the presentation quality of documents.²⁶
- 3.58 The purpose of reporting to Parliament is to provide information on the activities and performance of an agency. Colour within reports should be used only if necessary to make this information clearer, for example in graphs. In most cases, single colour text is adequate.
- 3.59 The Committee desires a return to the practice, in place until a few years ago, of agencies writing to this Committee to seek an exemption from the standards. Agencies have been encouraged to use their own judgement when applying the guidelines and have been asked to follow the principle of 'value for money' in the publications.

26 Joint Committee on Publications. *Printing standards for documents presented to Parliament*, see http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/publ/printing_standards.htm.

Recommendation 11

3.60 The Committee recommends that the printing standards for documents presented to Parliament be strictly adhered to.

The Committee will monitor compliance with this recommendation and will regularly report to the Parliament those agencies not adhering to the standards.

Electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series

Background

- 4.1 The Committee has previously considered the issue of providing the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS) in alternative formats.
- 4.2 In its 1986 review of the costs and distribution of the series, the Committee looked at the possible use of new technologies in the production of documents for presentation. The Committee did not endorse the wide-scale use of alternatives to hard copy, however it recommended that alternative technology may be used for material that is not required to be read with the body of a report.¹
- 4.3 In 1997, the Committee presented a report on the future of the PPS in response to a proposal from the Presiding Officers to abolish the series. The Committee then recommended that the PPS “should continue in its present form until there is a viable replacement either in electronic or printed form (or both)”, and that agencies “should publish their documents electronically as well as in print”.²
- 4.4 In their letter to the Committee of 12 May 2005, the Presiding Officers cited the “increasing electronic availability of the documents in the

1 Joint Committee on Publications, *Review of the Cost and Distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra, 1986, pp. 19-20.

2 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*. Department of the Senate, Canberra, 1997, p. iii.

PPS” as the basis for restricting the eligibility guidelines for the series. The Presiding Officers also asked the Committee to provide their views on distributing the Parliamentary Papers Series in a digital format, whether as an alternative or an adjunct to the hard copy series.

- 4.5 Developments since the Committee’s last report in 1997, such as the closure of the Government Bookshop Network and the introduction of the publications.gov.au website indicate that it is now timely to reconsider the provision of the Parliamentary Papers Series in an electronic format.

The current situation

- 4.6 There is no doubt that government information is more accessible electronically than was the case in 1997. The Committee received evidence that most agencies do comply with their obligations to publish documents online.³ As an example, all Parliamentary committee reports are available electronically upon presentation, with some dating back to 1996.⁴
- 4.7 Despite most government publications being available online, an electronic version of the PPS does not currently exist. The individual documents which make up the series are placed on agency websites but are not identified as belonging to the series.⁵
- 4.8 There is no doubt that the establishment of an electronic PPS would be widely supported.⁶

3 Ms Pamela Gatenby, National Library of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 13; Ms Jennefer Nicholson, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 21.

4 Mr Harry Evans, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 2; Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 11.

5 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 6; Australian Government Libraries Information Network, *Submission 4*, p. 3.

6 New South Wales Parliamentary Library, *Submission 13*, p. 1; Ms Roslynn Membrey, Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 16.

Benefits of an electronic Parliamentary Papers Series

- 4.9 The benefits that an electronic version of the PPS could deliver include:
- more immediate and wider access to the series. The delays in providing hard copy Parliamentary Papers⁷ could be largely avoided by electronic distribution,⁸ and more users could access the PPS through home and local library internet connections;⁹
 - increasing flexibility to search for information;¹⁰ and
 - long term cost effectiveness.¹¹ An electronic PPS could reduce demand for hard copies¹² and prevent the time consuming and inefficient practice of libraries creating their own digital repository of major reports.¹³

An alternative or adjunct to hard copies?

- 4.10 There is widespread support for an electronic version of the PPS as an adjunct, rather than as an alternative, to hard copy.¹⁴
- 4.11 The Australian Library and Information Association suggested that electronic versions of the PPS could eventually replace blister pack copies but the completeness of the series in both the short and long term would need to be assured before libraries would accept the change.¹⁵

7 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 9.

8 Ms Jennefer Nicholson, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 26.

9 Australian National Audit Office, *Submission 15*, p. 1.

10 Dr Stephen Ellis, National Archives of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 10.

11 Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Submission 11*, p. 2.

12 Ms Roxanne Missingham, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 26.

13 Ms Gaik Khong, Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 19.

14 For example, National Archives of Australia, *Submission 10*, p. 4; Parliamentary Library of Western Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 2.

15 Ms Roxanne Missingham, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 28.

Availability of electronic publications

- 4.12 In 1997 the Committee recommended that agencies producing parliament papers should do so electronically as well as in hard copy, and that where an electronic version was not produced, the reasons for this should be advised to the relevant Minister in the letter of transmittal of the document. This would have raised the issue of non-availability of an electronic version of the document at the ministerial level, but it appears that this recommendation was not implemented.¹⁶

Requirements for the online publication of government information

- 4.13 The Online Information Service Obligations (OISOs) developed as part of the *Government Online* strategy in 2000, stipulate that once documents are presented to Parliament they are required to be published online.¹⁷
- 4.14 As with the supply of hard copies for distribution, a small minority of agencies, estimated at 10 percent, are currently not meeting their obligations.¹⁸
- 4.15 The Committee agrees with AGIMO that this non-compliance is seldom deliberate,¹⁹ but more needs to be done to ensure that all agencies comply with their obligations to make their publications available electronically. Until this occurs, hard copies will always be seen as more reliable than electronic copies.

Responsibility for monitoring online publishing

- 4.16 The Committee is concerned that no single agency appears to have taken a role in monitoring and ensuring that all appropriate government information is published online, as required under the OISOs.

16 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. iii; Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 11.

17 Australian Government Information Management Office, *Submission 18*, p. 1; see also <http://www.agimo.gov.au/information/oiso>.

18 Ms Pamela Gatenby, National Library of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 13.

19 Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 4.

- 4.17 The Committee heard that it is the responsibility of the Australian Government Management Office (AGIMO) to monitor agency compliance with the OISOs.²⁰
- 4.18 AGIMO agreed that they have a responsibility to ensure that standards are applied and identify and remedy shortcomings. The web guides for agencies that they have developed, which set out the rules, standards and expectations for online publication of government information, give them the capacity to review and influence the behaviour of agencies.²¹
- 4.19 At present, AGIMO does not have a mechanism to identify material required to be published online but not placed online by agencies. However they are hopeful that future technology would assist them in this regard.²²
- 4.20 The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) was nominated by AGIMO as the appropriate body to monitor agency performance. AGIMO stated that they work closely with the ANAO to ensure that the standards such as the OISOs are included in their regular audit programs.²³
- 4.21 The Clerk of the House of Representatives referred to the effectiveness of adverse audit comments in focussing attention on requirements.²⁴ Given that there is little evidence to suggest that non-compliance with their obligations is deliberate, the prevention of adverse comments from the ANAO would be more likely to focus the attention of agencies towards ensuring that all of their publications are published online.

20 Mr Ian Harris, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 11; Ms Roxanne Missingham, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 29.

21 Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 2, 8; see also <http://www.agimo.gov.au/webguide>.

22 Mr Peter Alexander, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 7; Mr John Lalor, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 7.

23 Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 3.

24 Mr Ian Harris, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 14.

Recommendation 12

- 4.22 **The Committee recommends that the Australian National Audit Office regularly monitor the online availability of government documents, especially those presented to Parliament.**

Recommendation 13

- 4.23 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office continue to work with agencies to ensure that all government documents are made available online.**

Long term availability

- 4.24 While agencies are required to place all presented documents online, there does not appear to be any obligation to retain online access to older publications. Material can be, and is, removed from agency websites,²⁵ despite the Australian Government Information Management Office stating that this should not happen.²⁶
- 4.25 Changes to Uniform Resource Locators (URLs), used to locate online publications also cause major problems for libraries and researchers. This phenomenon is colloquially known as 'link rot', and can occur when agencies move publications, often into the archival areas of their website or when an agency changes its name.²⁷
- 4.26 Persistent identifiers, which allow information to be found regardless of its location on a website, would address this problem, but this is practice is not widely used by government.²⁸

25 Dr Stephen Ellis, National Archives of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 15.

26 Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 2.

27 Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Submission 11*, p. 2; Ms Janet Smith, Australian Government Libraries and Information Network, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 8.

28 Ms Pamela Gatenby, National Library of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, pp. 11-13; Mr Harry Evans, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 6.

Recommendation 14

- 4.27 **The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office take steps to ensure that documents presented to Parliament are permanently available online, including encouraging the use of persistent identifiers to online information.**

Technological barriers

- 4.28 Several technological barriers exist which prevent the community accessing an electronic version of the Parliamentary Papers Series.
- 4.29 It is estimated that 53% of Australian household have Internet access and delivery of services by electronic means can be problematic in regional and remote areas.²⁹ Many Australians also lack the necessary skills to effectively access online information.³⁰ Large electronic documents can be time consuming to download, difficult to read online, and costly to print out.³¹
- 4.30 Library resources for accessing electronic material can also be limited. Since the closure of the Bookshops, libraries now have a greater role in providing public access to government publications³² and many public libraries are reporting an increased use of government websites, both for transactions and information.³³ According to the Australian Library and Information Association, government websites account for up to 10% of electronic data accessed by the public at libraries.³⁴ The State Library of New South Wales reported that the PPS is referred to daily.³⁵
- 4.31 Even within government, universal access to the internet for staff is not guaranteed. In these cases, staff must access hard copies of

29 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Household use of information technology*, Canberra, 2004, p. 5; State Library of Queensland, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

30 State Library of Victoria, *Submission 2*, p. 2; Ms Pamela Gatenby, National Library of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 11.

31 Ms Pamela Gatenby, National Library of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 11.

32 State Library of Queensland, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

33 Gillian Savage, NSW Public Library Network Research Committee, *Public Libraries + eGovernment 2004*, see <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pln/projects/summary.pdf>.

34 Ms Jennefer Nicholson, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 21.

35 State Library of New South Wales, *Submission 3*, p. 1.

parliamentary papers, either held by a departmental library or obtained through an inter-library loan.³⁶

- 4.32 Constant changes in the technology used to generate and read electronic publications have also proven a barrier to relying on digitised versions of documents.³⁷ The need to keep up to date with technology, so that documents can still be read in the future is a major consideration.³⁸
- 4.33 The Committee shares concerns about the longevity of storing information on CD-ROM. Depending on its quality, the life of a CD-ROM can be as short as twelve months,³⁹ which may be a solution for the immediate distribution of the PPS, but is not a viable long-term alternative to hard copy.
- 4.34 The National Archives of Australia have avoided tying their digital preservation strategy to a specific technology, enabling them to reproduce the information at a later date regardless of format.⁴⁰ This strategy should be employed for the digital provision of the PPS, to avoid the situation where an application is not backwards compatible, i.e. older information is unable to be read by newer versions of software.⁴¹
- 4.35 The Committee heard that a lot of work in the areas of architecture and searchability is required before digital versions could replace hard copies,⁴² which are currently seen as primarily used for long term preservation and access.⁴³

36 Australian Government Libraries and Information Network, *Submission 4*, p. 3; Ms Kym Holden, Australian Government Libraries and Information Network, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 7.

37 Mr Harry Evans, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 3.

38 Parliamentary Library of Western Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 2; Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 5.

39 Mr Ian Harris, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 14; Dr Stephen Ellis, National Archives of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 11.

40 Dr Stephen Ellis, National Archives of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 11.

41 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission 17*, p. 2.

42 Miss Roslynn Membrey, Commonwealth Department of Parliamentary Services, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 16.

43 Mr Harry Evans, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 6.

- 4.36 With many issues yet to be satisfactorily addressed or resolved, the Committee cannot recommend that the Parliamentary Papers Series be available solely in a digitised form.

Recommendation 15

- 4.37 **The Committee recommends that any digital versions of the Parliamentary Papers Series augment the hard copy series.**

Options for electronic distribution

- 4.38 The Committee is keen to see the “comprehensive, certain and effective system of providing government information” sought by the majority of submission being applied to the Parliamentary Papers Series.⁴⁴
- 4.39 The State Library of Western Australia and others suggested that the “PPS should be available digitally via the Internet”.⁴⁵ The Committee agrees, because of the limitations of storage media mentioned in paragraph 4.33.
- 4.40 There are several options available which need to be carefully considered, possibly in consultation with stakeholders before a decision on a delivery mechanism is made.

Delivery via the Publications.gov.au website

- 4.41 The publications.gov.au website, administered by AGIMO, was developed following the closure of the Government Bookshop Network (Bookshops) in October 2003. The decision to close the Bookshops was announced in the 2003-2004 Budget, and was made as a result of declining sales and the use of alternative distribution methods by agencies.⁴⁶
- 4.42 The publications.gov.au website contains links to government publications on agency websites, along with details on how to obtain

44 Department of Parliamentary Services (Victoria), *Submission 9*, p. 1.

45 State Library of Western Australia, *Submission 19*, p. 2.

46 Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Portfolio, *Portfolio Budget Statements 2003-04*, Budget Related Paper No. 1.3, pp. 513-4.

publications that were previously available through the Bookshops.⁴⁷ Documents comprising the Parliamentary Papers Series, which are a subset of all government publications presented to Parliament, are also available on the website.

- 4.43 The website is in great demand as a portal to government information. Use of the website is steadily increasing, up 40 percent since its launch in July 2004 and still growing.⁴⁸
- 4.44 The publications.gov.au website is only as good as the information published online by agencies. While there are an increasing number of reports available online via the website, not all are available.⁴⁹
- 4.45 The Committee has addressed these issues earlier in this chapter and the implementation of recommendation 8 would assist in this regard.

Parliamentary notification of online publishing

- 4.46 The Commonwealth Department of Parliamentary Services suggested that agencies should be encouraged to include the Internet address of each publication in the catalogue records contributed to the Libraries Australia bibliographic database, as well as in the publication itself.
- 4.47 The Committee would encourage this move, as it would enable the publication to be found more easily online, however problems would arise if the Internet address changed for whatever reason.
- 4.48 The Department of the Senate requires that agencies presenting a document out of sitting also provide a link to the document on the agency website. This link is then distributed by email to Senators and Members.⁵⁰
- 4.49 The requirement to provide a link to a document on an agency's website should be extended for all documents presented to Parliament. The link would be provided to the Tabling Officer of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and should be listed as a requirement for presentation in the *Guidelines for the Presentation of*

47 Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 1.

48 Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 2.

49 Mr Patrick Callioni, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 2.

50 Ms Rosa Ferranda, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 6.

*Government Documents, Government Responses, Ministerial Statements & Other Instruments to the Parliament.*⁵¹

- 4.50 The link would then be included on the daily list of documents to be presented to Parliament, circulated to Members and Senators. It could also be included in other documents or databases as a resource to access these documents online.
- 4.51 The lack of a link on the list of documents would draw attention, at least within Parliament, to the fact that the agency is not publishing the document online. This will also alert agencies such as AGIMO and the ANAO to monitor agency compliance with the OISOs. They can then assist agencies to publish all presented documents online.
- 4.52 Greater liaison between the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Tabling Officer and agencies is required to ensure that the documents are not released on the website prior to their presentation. The Committee feels that this will not be too onerous a burden on the parties involved.

Recommendation 16

- 4.53 **The Committee recommends that agencies provide a website link, for all documents to be presented to Parliament, to the Tabling Officer of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. This link is to be included in the daily list of documents scheduled for presentation to Parliament, which is circulated to Members and Senators.**

Hyperlinked list of Parliamentary papers

- 4.54 Several submissions cited the need of a list of parliamentary papers to be available electronically.⁵² The Committee heard evidence that this has already been implemented⁵³ and would welcome further

51 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. See http://www.dpmc.gov.au/guidelines/docs/guidelines_govt_docs.pdf.

52 Australian Government Libraries Information Network, *Submission 4*, p. 3; Ms Jennefer Nicholson, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 26.

53 Ms Gaik Khong, Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 17; Mr Peter Alexander, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 7.

developments in this area, such as providing hyperlinks in these lists to the electronic versions of the documents.⁵⁴

- 4.55 Such a list would be a very good short term solution to make the PPS accessible online, but would be subject to the same problems as delivery via the publications.gov.au website.

Recommendation 17

- 4.56 **The Committee recommends that the chamber departments investigate providing an online list of Parliamentary Papers with hyperlinks to those documents on agency websites.**

A digital repository

- 4.57 Several submissions to the inquiry maintained that the Parliamentary Papers Series needs to be contained in a single database, on a fully searchable website.⁵⁵ This would be an efficient method of storing the PPS and would ensure the long term availability of the documents.⁵⁶
- 4.58 The Australian Library and Information Association suggested that such a repository could enable agencies to upload their report into the system.⁵⁷ There would, however, still be a need for input by the chamber departments to identify each document and link it to its parliamentary paper number.⁵⁸

National Library

- 4.59 The National Library of Australia offered to store an electronic PPS through its PANDORA web archive. The Library stated that it already has developed the knowledge and architecture to undertake the

54 State Library of Queensland, *Submission 8*, p. 1; Mr Peter Alexander, Australian Government Information Management Office, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, p. 7.

55 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 7; Australian National Audit Office, *Submission 15*, p. 2; Miss Roslynn Membrey, Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth), *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 18.

56 Ms Roxanne Missingham, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 23.

57 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 7.

58 Ms Penny Scott, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 27.

project although additional funding would be required to expand the PANDORA archive.⁵⁹

- 4.60 The Australian Library and Information Association supported this proposal, recommending that existing infrastructure be used to host a digital version of the PPS.⁶⁰ The suggestion was also supported by the National Archives of Australia, who stated that the National Library is responsible for ensuring access to publications.⁶¹
- 4.61 The Clerk of the Senate indicated that he would be happy for the National Library to host the digital version of the PPS, provided they can find the funding.⁶² The National Library estimate the cost of hosting the PPS repository would be in the order of \$200,000.⁶³
- 4.62 In 1997, the Committee recommended that administration of the series should be continued to be the responsibility of the Department of the House of Representatives, assisted by the Department of the Senate.⁶⁴ The Committee maintains this view and considers that responsibility for both the hard copy and digital versions of the series should be held by Parliament.
- 4.63 The Committee has no objection to the National Library hosting a digital repository containing Parliamentary Papers. However, any developments in this area should be done in consultation with the Chamber departments.
- 4.64 Under the *Copyright Act 1968*, hard copy publications are legally required to be deposited with the National Library. The Committee heard that an amendment to the Copyright Act to extend the legal deposit requirement to electronic publications would improve the ability of the National Library to collect and provide access to the publications they store on the PANDORA web archive.⁶⁵

59 National Library of Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 1; Ms Pamela Gatenby, National Library of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 11.

60 Ms Jennefer Nicholson, Australian Library and Information Association, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 25.

61 Dr Stephen Ellis, National Archives of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 November 2005, pp. 14-15.

62 Mr Harry Evans, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 2.

63 Ms Pamela Gatenby, National Library of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 14.

64 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. iv.

65 Ms Pamela Gatenby, National Library of Australia, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 15.

Recommendation 18

- 4.65 **The Committee recommends that the legal deposit provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968* be extended to include electronic copies of documents.**

Within Parliament

- 4.66 One suggestion for the location of a central repository of the PPS is within the website of the federal Parliament.⁶⁶ This makes some sense, as the administration for the series is shared by the Departments of the Senate and House of Representatives, and the Parliamentary website would most likely be the first port of call for those searching for documents presented to Parliament.
- 4.67 The Department of the House of Representatives has indicated that they would not be inclined to establish such a repository because of the lack of evidence of demand.⁶⁷ The Committee has no doubt that once established a permanent digital repository of parliamentary papers would be widely used by both libraries and the community.
- 4.68 The initial set up costs of a new repository may be more expensive than to utilise an existing one. Despite the lack of a definitive indication of the costs, and the reluctance of the Department of the House of Representatives to provide the PPS digitally, the Committee's preferred option is for the Chamber departments to develop a new digital repository for the Parliamentary Papers Series.

Recommendation 19

- 4.69 **The Committee recommends that the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate, in consultation with the Australian Government Information Management Office and other stakeholders, investigate and implement the development of an online digital repository for the Parliamentary Papers Series.**

66 State Library of New South Wales, *Submission 3*, p. 2; Ms Kym Holden, Australian Government Libraries and Information Network, *Transcript of evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 6.

67 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 11.

- 4.70 An alternative to setting up a new repository, or as an interim measure until such a repository is developed, would be to utilise the Department of the Senate's digital imaging project. This project initially involved generating microfilm images of all documents presented to the Senate since 1901 and has now moved to digitising these images. The digital images are then expected to be made available through a web-based repository.⁶⁸
- 4.71 The Committee sees this as a possible solution for an electronic PPS, however only documents that have been presented to the Senate are digitally imaged.
- 4.72 House of Representatives committee reports and the Department of the House of Representatives annual reports are not included in the Department of the Senate's project, although from 1996 onwards they are available online elsewhere. The Committee would encourage the House of Representatives to make available digital images of earlier committee reports to ensure a complete set of documents tabled in both Houses.

Recommendation 20

- 4.73 **The Committee recommends that, to complement the Department of the Senate's digital imaging project, the Department of the House of Representatives investigate the digital imaging of House committee reports presented from 1901 to 1996 and making these available online.**

68 Department of the Senate, Annual Report 2004-05, Canberra, 2005, p. 36; Mr Harry Evans, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 3.

Cost recovery and subscriptions to the Parliamentary Papers Series

Background

- 5.1 The issues of cost recovery and a subscription service to the series are closely related. The most obvious way to recover some or all of the costs of the series is by offering paid subscriptions to the series.
- 5.2 The concept of paying for copies of parliamentary papers is not new. In 1964 the Erwin Committee stated that “if a document is public, copies should be readily available to any person at reasonable cost”.¹ Prior to the closure of the Australian Government Printing Service, overseas universities subscribed to the PPS² and until 2003, standing orders for parliamentary papers were available through Government bookshops.³
- 5.3 The 1971 report of the Joint Committee on Publications recommended that the cost of purchasing parliamentary papers be increased to reflect the increased cost of production.⁴
- 5.4 In 1986 the Committee found that parliamentary papers, which are processed and released some time after presentation to Parliament, were less attractive for sale than more immediately available copies of the same

1 Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary and Government Publications, *Report*, Canberra, 1964, p. 20.

2 Joint Committee on Publications, *Future of the Parliamentary Papers Series*, Canberra, 1997, p. 14.

3 Department of the Senate, *Submission 1*, p. 2.

4 Joint Committee on Publications, *Report relating to the distribution and pricing of Parliamentary publications*, Canberra, 1971, p. 10.

documents.⁵ Prior to the closure of the Government Bookshops, twenty five copies of each parliamentary paper were provided for sale.⁶

Cost recovery

- 5.5 The Committee heard that the cost of administering the series by the two Chamber departments was in the order of \$115,000 to \$130,000 per year. This figure is significantly lower than at the time of the 1986 report, when the costs of printing each paper were met by the Chamber departments. Since that time, author agencies have met the cost of production of the 150 copies supplied for the PPS.⁷
- 5.6 The savings achieved by the changes to the series made by the Presiding Officers to take effect from 1 January 2006 would reduce the costs to the Chamber departments by approximately twenty-five percent. Without cost recovery methods, any further reductions in the costs of the series, by restricting eligibility to the series, would be small, due to the underlying administrative costs.⁸
- 5.7 The Committee, earlier in this report, has identified savings to the costs of producing the series without resorting to cost recovery methods. Whilst these savings will not be realised by the Chamber departments, they will nevertheless reduce the burden on the government as a whole.

Recoverable costs

Administrative costs

- 5.8 The Chamber departments stated that any cost recovery for the series would only cover the administrative costs they incurred.⁹ These costs, if recovered, should be shared equally between the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate.

5 Joint Committee on Publications, *Review of the cost and distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra 1986, p. 23.

6 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 14.

7 Joint Committee on Publications, *Review of the Cost and Distribution of the Parliamentary Paper Series*, Canberra, 1986, p. 12; Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 10.

8 Rosa Ferranda, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 4.

9 Department of the Senate, *Submission 1*, p. 3; Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 10.

- 5.9 Author agencies also incur a cost in providing copies of their documents for series. These documents are printed as a statutory requirement for presentation to Parliament, and the copies for the PPS are typically run-on copies (with the exception of the untrimmed copies). The cost of producing these parliamentary paper copies, while still an additional cost, is less than if a separate print run was required.
- 5.10 The Committee considered the view that Parliament should not pass on the costs of the series for which it is funded. As most of the recipients of the series are publicly funded, the costs of the series would be shifted from one arm of government to another, which is not an efficient use of public funds.¹⁰
- 5.11 The Chamber Departments were divided on their obligations towards the PPS. The Department of the House of Representatives questioned the role of the Parliament in disseminating the reports of the executive, while Senate viewed the series as fulfilling an obligation of the Parliament to inform the public.¹¹
- 5.12 The Committee is of the view that, as the Parliament selects the reports of the executive (and of the Parliament) that it sees as significant enough to warrant inclusion in the Parliamentary Papers Series, it should remain the responsibility of the Parliament to ensure its distribution as long as that collection of significant documents continues in existence.
- 5.13 All documents presented to Parliament are, or at least should be, already available to the public through the publications.gov.au website or individual agencies. The PPS, as a subset of the substantial documents of government and the Parliament, is a value-added product when processing, numbering, labelling and despatch are taken into account. At least a portion of these costs should be able to be recovered by the Chamber Departments, which would reflect the value of the series.

Printing costs

- 5.14 There is no proposal before the Committee to recover the printing costs of agencies in providing copies of documents for the PPS, although the Department of the Senate feared that this may occur should the Chamber Departments move towards cost recovery.¹² The administrative cost of

10 Department of Parliamentary Services (Victoria), *Submission 9*, p. 3; Ms Pamela Gatenby, National Library of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 October 2005, p. 11.

11 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, pp. 6-7; Department of the Senate, *Submission 1*, p. 3.

12 Department of the Senate, *Submission 1*, p. 3.

distributing any monies raised to agencies would likely be greater than the actual costs recovered.

Full or partial cost recovery

- 5.15 The Clerk of the House of Representatives recommended trialling a subscription service on a partial cost recovery basis, although full cost recovery for the series would also be feasible.¹³
- 5.16 The Committee has earlier recommended that certain organisations continue to receive copies of the PPS free of charge. It therefore opposes full cost recovery through a user pays system.

Recommendation 21

- 5.17 **The Committee recommends that any cost recovery measures are only applied to partially recover the administrative costs of the Chamber Departments.**

Subscriptions to the PPS

- 5.18 The committee received several submissions expressing firm resistance to any subscription service for the Parliamentary Papers Series. Libraries, whose resources are limited, would be placed under great pressure to continue to provide the same level of services if forced to pay for the series. This would detrimentally affect public access to the series.¹⁴
- 5.19 The Parliamentary Library of Western Australia stated that subscriptions for the series would jeopardise reciprocal arrangements between State and Commonwealth libraries.¹⁵
- 5.20 The Committee takes the view, consistent with that of the Australian Library and Information Association, that libraries or others, who make

13 Department of the House of Representatives, *Submission 16*, p. 11; Mr Ian Harris, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 9.

14 Australian Government Libraries Information Network, *Submission 4*, p. 8; Parliamentary Library of Western Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 2; Council of Australian State Libraries, *Submission 5*, p. 2.

15 Parliamentary Library of Western Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 2.

the papers publicly available, should not be required to subscribe to the PPS.¹⁶

- 5.21 Similarly, Government departmental libraries serve the public by providing a better service to government, and the Committee has already stated that cost shifting from one agency to another is not appropriate.

Demand for subscriptions

- 5.22 The Department of the Senate indicated that there is scope for a limited number of subscriptions to be offered from the 15 spare sets of documents provided for the series.¹⁷ However, if demand for subscriptions increases beyond this capacity, the stock required to be supplied by agencies would need to be increased.

- 5.23 It is not certain whether or not a market exists for a subscription service. Some agencies, such as the National Archives of Australia, have indicated that they would be prepared to pay a subscription if it was the only means to continue receiving the series, while the Australian National Audit Office stated that the feasibility of a subscription service would hinge on the cost and the nature of the product offered.¹⁸

- 5.24 The Department of the House of Representatives suggested surveying recipients to determine whether they would be prepared to subscribe to the PPS. They conceded, however, that in all likelihood recipients would respond that they would prefer to receive the series free of charge. Other issues affecting demand for a subscription are libraries receiving stock through the Library Deposit and Free Issue Schemes and accessibility via the Internet.¹⁹

- 5.25 The Committee heard that organisations most likely to subscribe to the series are those that have been recently removed from the eligibility guidelines. These include foreign embassies, municipal libraries and political parties, as well as those libraries that desire additional copies of the series.²⁰

16 Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 6*, p. 8.

17 Department of the Senate, *Submission 1*, p. 3; Mr Harry Evans, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 7.

18 National Archives of Australia, *Submission 10*, p. 3; State Library of New South Wales, *Submission 3*, p. 3; Australian National Audit Office, *Submission 15*, p. 2.

19 Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 10.

20 Ms Rosa Ferranda, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 6; Mr Ian Harris, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 10.

Recommendation 22

- 5.26 **The Committee recommends that all recipients of the series be offered additional copies of the series by subscription, in either pamphlet or blister pack. Organisations that previously received the series should be offered an opportunity to subscribe to the series.**
- 5.27 Without the establishment of an online repository for the PPS, or an alternative supply mechanism for distribution of digital copies, subscriptions should be limited to hard copies only.
- 5.28 The State Library of Victoria suggested that subscriptions be offered for blister packs but the electronic version of the series and loose pamphlet copies remain free.²¹ This is consistent with the approach taken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which provides basic information for free, but places a fee on more detailed information.²²
- 5.29 The Parliamentary Library of Western Australia indicated that to pay a subscription on top of the significant binding costs, estimated by the Department of the Senate at around \$2000, would be prohibitive.²³
- 5.30 The Committee is committed to providing the series free of charge to eligible recipients. It also accepts the limit of one free copy imposed by the Presiding Officers in their recent changes to the eligibility guidelines (see Recommendation 6).
- 5.31 Whether an eligible organisation receives a pamphlet copy or blister pack, it should not be required to pay for it. However, a subscription charge should apply to any subsequent copies of the series supplied to those eligible recipients.
- 5.32 Organisations that fall outside the eligibility guidelines should be also able to subscribe to the series.

21 State Library of Victoria, *Submission 2*, p. 3.

22 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission 17*, p. 1.

23 Parliamentary Library of Western Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 2; Department of the Senate, *Submission 1A*, p. 1.

The cost of a subscription

- 5.33 The Department of the House of Representatives told the Committee that a subscription charge of \$2600 paid by 50 subscribers would fully recover the \$130,000 administrative cost of the Chamber Departments. A subscription at even half this price, the Committee heard, would probably be too expensive for most libraries.²⁴
- 5.34 As an indicator to the sort of pricing set for other similar subscriptions services, the Bills subscription service, administered by the Chamber Departments sets the costs at \$752 per annum.²⁵ The Committee considers that this figure would not be an unreasonable cost for subscribers to the PPS to bear. At an average of roughly 430 documents per year, this equates to less than \$1.75 per document.
- 5.35 The Committee is comfortable with the Chamber Departments setting the price for a subscription to the series, but will require annual reports detailing the cost of a subscription and the organisations subscribing.

Recommendation 23

- 5.36 **The Committee recommends that the Chamber Departments set the price for a subscription to the Parliamentary Papers Series, and annually report to the Committee:**
- **The cost of a subscription to the series; and**
 - **The organisations subscribing to the series.**

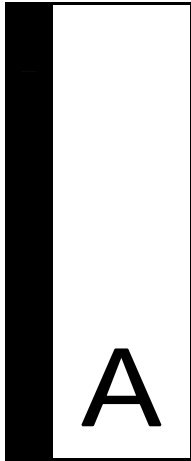
Mrs Trish Draper MP

Committee Chair

May 2006

24 Ms Robyn McClelland, Department of the House of Representatives, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 10.

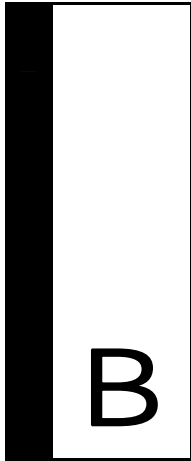
25 Ms Rosa Ferranda, Department of the Senate, *Transcript of evidence*, 7 November 2005, p. 5.



Appendix A – List of submissions

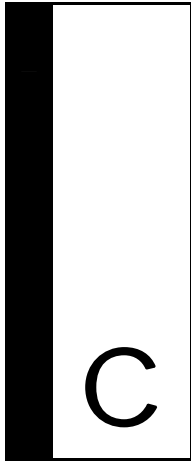
Number	Organisation
1	Department of the Senate
1a	Department of the Senate SUPPLEMENTARY (to Submission No. 1)
2	State Library of Victoria
3	State Library of New South Wales
4	Australian Government Libraries Information Network
5	Council of Australian State Libraries
6	Australian Library and Information Association
7	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
8	State Library of Queensland
9	Department of Parliamentary Services (Victoria) – Parliamentary Library
10	National Archives of Australia
11	Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth) – Parliamentary Library
11a	Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth) – Parliamentary Library SUPPLEMENTARY (to Submission No. 11)
12	Parliamentary Library of Western Australia
13	New South Wales Parliamentary Library

- 14 National Library of Australia
- 15 Australian National Audit Office
- 16 Department of the House of Representatives
- 17 Department of Education, Science and Training
- 18 Department of Finance and Administration - Australian
Government Information Management Office
- 19 State Library of Western Australia
- 20 Attorney-General's Department



Appendix B – List of exhibits

- 1 Copy of a letter from Ms Ingrid Blount, Team Leader, Knowledge Management and Information Services Branch, Department of Finance and Administration to Mr Richard Selth, Director (Legislation and Records), Department of the House of Representatives, 27 July 2005.
- 2 Copy of a letter from Ms May Priddle, Manager, Information & Records Services Unit, The Treasury to Ms Robyn McClelland, Clerk Assistant (Table), Department of the House of Representatives, 25 August 2005.
- 3 Copy of email from Mr Colin MacDougall, Foreign and International Collections Librarian, Library of Parliament, Canada to Mr Jason Sherd, Secretary, Joint Committee on Publications, 19 October 2005.
- 4 Document *Public Libraries + eGovernment 2004*, prepared by Gillian Savage for the Public Library Network Research Committee, 15 November 2004, tabled by the Australian Library and Information Association, at a public hearing in Canberra on Monday, 7 November 2005.
- 5 Document *Digital amnesia: Challenges of government online - 21 April 2005, Summary of key issues and presentations*, forwarded by the Australian Library and Information Association.
- 6 Document *Access to government online publications*, forwarded by the Australian Library and Information Association.



Appendix C – List of public hearings

Monday, 31 October 2005 - Canberra

Australian Government Libraries Information Network

Ms Kym Holden, Executive Convenor

Ms Janet Smith, Executive Member

National Library of Australia

Ms Pamela Gatenby, Assistant Director-General, Collection Management
Division

Monday, 7 November 2005 - Canberra

Australian Library and Information Association

Ms Jennefer Nicholson, Executive Director

Ms Roxanne Missingham, Director

Ms Penelope Scott, Convenor, ALIA Expert Group on Government
Publications

**Department of Parliamentary Services (Commonwealth) – Parliamentary
Library**

Miss Roslynn Membrey, Assistant Secretary, Library Resources and
Media Services

Ms Gaik Khong, Director, Collection Management, Library Resources
and Media Services

Department of the House of Representatives

Mr Ian Harris, Clerk of the House of Representatives

Ms Robyn McClelland, Clerk Assistant (Table)

Department of the Senate

Mr Harry Evans, Clerk of the Senate

Ms Rosa Ferranda, Director, Legislation and Documents, Table Office

Monday, 28 November 2005 - Canberra**Department of Finance and Administration - Australian Government
Information Management Office**

Mr Patrick Callioni, Division Manager

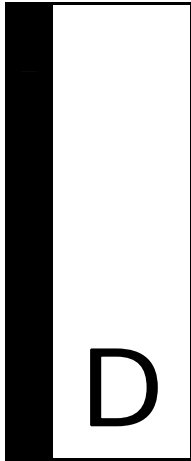
Mr John Lalor, Manager, Service Delivery Branch

Mr Peter Alexander, Manager, Online Development, Service Delivery
Branch

National Archives of Australia

Mr James Barr, Deputy Director-General

Dr Stephen Ellis, Assistant Director-General, Government Branch



Appendix D – Inspections and discussions

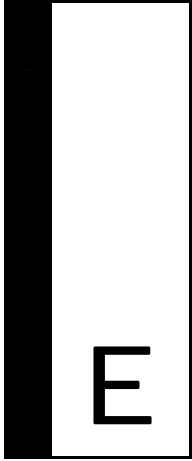
Canberra – Monday 6 February 2006

Meeting and discussion with:

National Library of Australia.

Inspection

The Committee conducted an inspection of the Parliamentary Paper processing facilities at the Hume, ACT warehouse of Canprint Communications, Pty Ltd.



Appendix E – Correspondence relating to
the inquiry



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House of Representatives

12 MAY 2005

Mrs Trish Draper, MP
Chair
Joint Committee on Publications
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Draper

PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS SERIES

We are writing to inform you of changes we have recently made to the distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS) and to seek the views of the Joint Committee on Publications (JCP) on potential further changes to the methods of providing the PPS.

Background

As you are aware the PPS is the only longitudinal collection of significant government documents available to researchers and the general public and has been in existence since 1901. The cost of the PPS has been reduced since the 1980s, and further savings are achievable with changes to the method of provision and distribution of the series.

In both 1977 and 1986, the JCP reviewed proposals to produce the series in alternative formats but saw merit in continuing the series in hard copy form because suitable alternatives such as microfilm and CD-ROM were not well developed or widespread.

In its 1997 report, the JCP recommended that 'the Parliamentary Papers Series should continue in its present form until there is a viable replacement either in electronic or printed form (or both)'. That recommendation was endorsed by the then Presiding Officers.

The closure of the Commonwealth Government Bookshops in 2003 led to the development of the publications.gov.au website to distribute electronic versions of government publications. The current widespread availability and use of the Internet leads us to conclude that it is timely once again to consider alternative, electronic delivery mechanisms for the PPS.

Changes to distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series

In light of the increasing electronic availability of the documents in the PPS, we have decided to restrict the eligibility guidelines for recipients of the PPS to include only the libraries of States, State parliaments, tertiary education institutions, the main national or parliamentary library of a country which has an exchange arrangement with the National Library of Australia, and appropriate addressees as determined by the Presiding Officers. Current recipients which will no longer be entitled to receive documents through the PPS include municipal libraries, Commonwealth departmental libraries, foreign embassies and political parties.

We have also decided to cease provision of the series in collated 'blister' packs. Recipients will now be entitled to one free 'pamphlet' copy of each document in the series, together with an annual index. This will impact thirty four recipients who currently receive a blister pack.

Views of the Committee

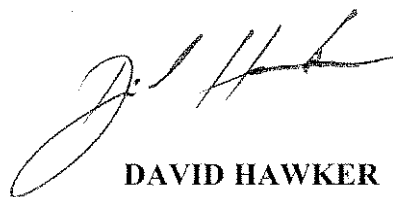
Before any more extensive changes are made to the Parliamentary Papers Series, we would welcome the views of the JCP on the following:

1. Would the distribution of the PPS in a digital format be an acceptable alternative to continuing the hard copy series or a useful adjunct to the hard copy series?
2. Is there a market for a subscription service for the series (in either digital or hard copy form)?
3. Could some form of partial or full cost recovery be applied to the series?

Yours sincerely



PAUL CALVERT



DAVID HAWKER



PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATIONS

Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600 | Phone: (02) 6277 4791 | Fax: (02) 6277 4517 | Email: publications.committee.reps@aph.gov.au

10 November 2005

Senator the Hon. Paul Calvert
President of the Senate
Parliament House
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Mr President

As you are aware, the Joint Committee on Publications is conducting an inquiry into the distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series. The Committee has received evidence regarding the changes to the Parliamentary Papers Series, namely the cessation of blister packs and the tightening of the eligibility guidelines, which are due to take effect from 1 January 2006.

The Committee has therefore resolved to ask both Presiding Officers to delay the implementation of any changes to the Parliamentary Papers Series until the Committee presents its report, which is now expected to be early in 2006.

Yours sincerely

Mts Trish Draper, MP
Chair



PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATIONS

Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600 | Phone: (02) 6277 4791 | Fax: (02) 6277 4517 | Email: publications.committee.reps@aph.gov.au

10 November 2005


Hon. David Hawker, MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Mr Speaker *Dear David,*

As you are aware, the Joint Committee on Publications is conducting an inquiry into the distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series. The Committee has received evidence regarding the changes to the Parliamentary Papers Series, namely the cessation of blister packs and the tightening of the eligibility guidelines, which are due to take effect from 1 January 2006.

The Committee has therefore resolved to ask both Presiding Officers to delay the implementation of any changes to the Parliamentary Papers Series until the Committee presents its report, which is now expected to be early in 2006.

Yours sincerely


Mrs Trish Diaper, MP
Chair



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House of Representatives

- 7 DEC 2005

Mrs Trish Draper, MP
Chair
Joint Committee on Publications
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Draper *Trish*

Thank you for your letters of 10 November 2005 informing us of the Committee's resolution asking the Presiding Officers to delay implementation of changes to the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS) until the Committee presents its report, which is now expected to be early in 2006.

We have given your request careful consideration. PPS recipients were informed in July this year of our decision to change the guidelines with effect from January 2006, and we have decided that the changes to the guidelines should continue to apply from that date. However, in response to the committee's request and noting the committee's planned reporting date of early 2006, we have decided to retain the capacity to respond flexibly to the results of the committee's inquiry. Accordingly, stock requirements for presentation of government documents to the Parliament will not be reduced at this stage pending the outcomes of the committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature of Paul Calvert in black ink.

PAUL CALVERT

Handwritten signature of David Hawker in black ink.

DAVID HAWKER