

# Chapter 4

## Workplace culture and employment issues

### Introduction

4.1 In its final report for the previous inquiry, the committee set out concerns regarding employment issues in the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS).<sup>1</sup> The committee's terms of reference specifically refer to progress since the committee's last inquiry in relation to 'workplace culture and employment issues'.

4.2 In this chapter the committee outlines DPS' response to particular recommendations in relation to workplace culture. The discussion then focusses on issues raised with the committee concerning two areas of DPS: Hansard and Visitor Services.

### Progress in implementing recommendations

4.3 The committee's final report for the previous inquiry made a number of recommendations to address the unacceptable culture of bullying and harassment which had developed in DPS. Specifically, those recommendations were:

- DPS implement appropriate training programs for managers in relation to bullying and harassment and ensures that adequate processes are in place so that all employees are confident in reporting bullying and harassment (Recommendation 2);
- DPS develop a bullying register to record information about bullying such as details of the incident, where it happened and what action has been taken so that any trends can be quickly and easily identified (Recommendation 3);
- if areas with systemic bullying issues are identified, that DPS undertake a pre-emptive investigation of the area rather than wait until formal complaints are received (Recommendation 4); and
- DPS approach Comcare to undertake a further audit, including a survey of all staff, before the end of 2013 to measure improvements, if any, in the management of bullying and inappropriate workplace behaviour in DPS (Recommendation 5).

4.4 DPS supported all these recommendations.<sup>2</sup> In its response to the committee's report, DPS stated:

The committee's findings on bullying and harassment within DPS, the lack of confidence in senior management and lack of leadership in this area is beyond dispute. Regrettably, historically there has not been sufficient active

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1 See Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, *The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services – Final Report*, November 2012, pp 7-42 (Chapter 2).

2 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: *The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services*, February 2013, pp 3-4.

focus on bullying and harassment and several individual cases were not appropriately dealt with. It is acknowledged that further and on-going action is required by the Department.<sup>3</sup>

4.5 In the next section of the report, the committee considers DPS' responses to these recommendations.

***Appropriate training and adequate processes (Recommendation 2)***

4.6 In its response to the committee's final report, DPS stated:

In 2012 DPS focused on a corporate compliance training program to educate managers and staff on appropriate workplace behaviour through the following courses:

- Bullying and Harassment;
- Parliamentary Service Values & Code of Conduct;
- Fraud and Ethics; and
- Work Health and Safety Awareness.<sup>4</sup>

4.7 DPS' response noted that DPS staff were now required to attend these courses every two years. The response referred to additional training for managers:

In November 2012, DPS also conducted a pilot course on the management of workplace behaviours which was compulsory for all Parliamentary Executive Level 2 Directors. This course covered what is, and what is not, appropriate workplace behaviour and, strategies to remedy inappropriate behaviour; leadership techniques, roles and responsibilities; and the DPS complaint management process.<sup>5</sup>

4.8 DPS indicated that measures were to be implemented:

By July 2013, DPS will also create a suite of information and support tools for staff and managers that articulate the roles and responsibilities of all staff. This will include:

- the establishment of a structured complaint management framework with appropriate support tools and information guides for staff;
- regular monitoring and reporting to enable the Executive to identify 'hot-spots' of staff dissatisfaction or stress;
- ongoing review of strategies to manage workplace behaviour; and

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3 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, February 2013, p. 3.

4 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, February 2013, p. 4.

5 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, February 2013, p. 4.

- the establishment of workplace behaviour agenda items in key communications forums[.]<sup>6</sup>

4.9 In its submission, DPS noted that incidences of bullying and harassment have reduced as a result of the training and awareness raising that had been undertaken:

In 2012-13, the Department received sixteen complaints about bullying and harassment, all of which have [been] resolved. Of the sixteen complaints, the largest number was in the Security Branch (five complaints). The majority of complaints (ten complaints) were resolved through management resolution. Two complaints resulted in code of conduct investigations. In one case the allegations were shown to be unproven and in the other, a sanction of one pay point was determined.

In 2013-14 there were four complaints about bullying and harassment. Of these, one resulted in the resignation of a staff member, two were subject to management resolution and one is in progress. One of the complaints led to a code of conduct review, which found the allegations to be unproven.<sup>7</sup>

4.10 DPS also commented that the introduction of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* and the insertion of anti-bullying amendments to the *Fair Work Act 2009* had provided the opportunity to provide additional training to all staff about the requirements and provisions under those Acts and to review and update internal procedures.<sup>8</sup>

4.11 In an update provided in May 2015, DPS noted it had completed its response to Recommendation 2 and provided the following information on the current training it offered:

Work Health and Safety Awareness training includes a component on respect, courtesy and the prevention of workplace bullying and harassment...

Being Professional in the Parliamentary Service training also includes components on appropriate workplace behaviour and the prevention of workplace bullying and harassment...

Promoting Appropriate Behaviours @ DPS, and the Prevention of Workplace Bullying and Harassment publications are available on the DPS Staff Portal...<sup>9</sup>

### ***Development of a bullying register (Recommendation 3)***

4.12 DPS' response to the committee's final report noted that in July 2011 DPS had established a Human Resource (HR) Register (Register) in which HR staff record workplace issues:

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6 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, February 2013, p. 4.

7 *Submission 1*, p. 2.

8 *Submission 1*, p. 2.

9 Answer to question on notice, received 1 May 2015, p. 3.

Matters recorded include complaints of bullying and harassment, workplace disputes, Code of Conduct investigations and requests for review of management action.

DPS currently uses the Register as both a reporting mechanism and as a preliminary stage of its case management process to help ensure that all workplace matters are recorded and actioned through to an appropriate conclusion of the complainant and respondent.<sup>10</sup>

4.13 The DPS response indicated that, from March 2013, the DPS Executive will review regular reports on bullying and harassment complaints, disputes and pending workplace investigations:

The intent of this process is that workplace behavioural issues are swiftly and professionally addressed. This action will establish more streamlined and effective processes that will avoid the mistakes of the past and enable issues to be better managed through proper oversight and regular reporting.<sup>11</sup>

4.14 In its submission, DPS stated:

DPS continues to use its [Register] to record workplace issues, including complaints of bullying and harassment and code of conduct investigations...

The [Register] is used for assessing trends and reporting to the DPS Executive in relation to workplace issues.<sup>12</sup>

4.15 The update provided to the committee in May 2015, noted that DPS' HR Services have established a 'register of reported complaints and resolutions which have been escalated to them for investigation' and '[all] such complaints are investigated on receipt'.<sup>13</sup>

#### ***Pre-emptive investigations (Recommendation 4)***

4.16 Recommendation 4 of the committee's final report recommended DPS undertake pre-emptive investigations of areas where systematic bullying issues are identified, rather than waiting for formal complaints to be received. In its response to the committee's recommendation, DPS stated:

[All] DPS section managers have conducted formal Bullying Risk assessments to identify whether trends or hotspots exist. The responses have been analysed and advice provided back to each branch head regarding contributory factors, such as the level and intensity of workload; staff shortages; and organisational change. In September 2012 Branch

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10 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, February 2013, p. 5.

11 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, February 2013, p. 5.

12 *Submission 1*, p. 3.

13 Answer to question on notice, received 1 May 2015, p. 4.

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heads were provided advice on the various options which exist within DPS to mitigate the risk of inappropriate behaviour.<sup>14</sup>

4.17 DPS' submission provided some more information on complaints of bullying and harassment in the Security Branch, which had the highest number of complaints in the previous two financial years:

Of the twenty incidents of bullying and harassment reported in the last two financial years, complaints came from several business areas. The highest number was in Security Branch (six complaints). Of these six complaints:

- one case related to alleged bullying by colleagues and a preliminary investigation is in progress;
- one case related to alleged abuse by a Senator's staffer, and the matter was managed directly with the Senator;
- one case related to alleged abuse by a delivery driver, and was referred to the service provider for action, and an apology was received; and
- three cases related to officers being requested to perform duties within the requirements of [their] roles. In each of these cases, the matter was resolved through intervention by management.<sup>15</sup>

4.18 DPS' response to the committee's final report also noted the role of Harassment Contact Officers (HCOs):

The role of the HCO is to assist staff by being the first point of contact for issues of bullying and harassment, discrimination and other forms of unacceptable behaviour.

The HCO network is a significant mechanism which provides individual staff opportunities for direct and discreet contact, whilst ensuring that issues of inappropriate workplace behaviour are promptly addressed and privacy assured. HCOs are tasked with distributing information about their services throughout DPS...<sup>16</sup>

4.19 The number of HCOs appears to have fluctuated over time. In October 2012 there were nine HCOs and this number increased to 27 in December 2012, following DPS' decision to 'revamp and re-energise' the HCO network.<sup>17</sup> In September 2014, DPS stated that there were 18 HCOs available, with an additional HCO being on long term leave.<sup>18</sup> The update provided in May 2015 does not provide any information on the current number of HCOs.

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14 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, February 2013, p. 5.

15 *Submission 1*, p. 3.

16 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, February 2013, p. 5.

17 DPS, Response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee report: The performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, February 2013, p. 5.

18 *Submission 1*, p. 3.

### ***Comcare audit (Recommendation 5)***

4.20 In February 2013, DPS reported that it had approached Comcare to undertake a further audit to measure improvements in the management of bullying and inappropriate workplace behaviour. DPS anticipated that Comcare would conduct an audit and survey in late 2013.

4.21 In its submission DPS reported that Comcare had revisited the Department in October 2013 to review progress against the recommendations from the 2011 Bullying Prevention Audit:

Comcare inspectors indicated they were pleased with DPS' progress and that 'DPS is tracking well'. Importantly, Comcare made no further recommendations, nor did they exercise any formal powers under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.<sup>19</sup>

4.22 In an update in May 2015, DPS reiterated the outcomes from Comcare's visit in October 2013 and added:

DPS participated in the 2014 [Australian Public Service Commission (APSC)] Census which includes questions on bullying and harassment. DPS will participate in the 2015 Census.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Committee view***

4.23 The committee acknowledges that there has been a reduction in bullying and harassment complaints between 2012-13 and 2013-14. However, changing a culture of bullying and harassment is an ongoing process to ensure that cultural change becomes embedded within the organisation.

4.24 For this reason, the committee would like to see the data on bullying and harassment for the 2014-15 year, in order to have a clearer picture of whether there is a continuing trend of reducing bullying and harassment complaints.

4.25 In this respect, the update that DPS provided in May 2015 setting out DPS' response to these workplace culture recommendations was not very useful. The committee is therefore recommending that DPS provide this data along with a range of information for the 2014-15 financial year, prior to the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearings in October 2015.

### **Recommendation 7**

**4.26 The committee recommends that DPS provide the following information on bullying and harassment complaints to the committee by 1 October 2015:**

- **the number of complaints recorded on the HR register for the 2014-15 financial year;**
- **the number of complaints recorded on the HR register for the 2014-15 financial year which have been resolved and the nature of that resolution;**

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19 *Submission 1*, p. 4.

20 Answer to question on notice, received 1 May 2015, p. 5.

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- **the number of complaints recorded on the HR register for the 2014-15 financial year which have been escalated for investigation and the outcome of that investigation;**
  - **the current number of Harassment Contact Officers in DPS (as at 30 September 2015).**

4.27 The committee is not satisfied with the response that DPS has made in relation to Recommendation 4 with regards to pre-emptive investigations. DPS has noted that the Security Branch had the highest level of complaints, but it is not clear whether DPS has instigated a pre-emptive investigation, or whether DPS does not consider the level of bullying and harassment in the Security Branch not to be systemic and for what reasons.

### **Recommendation 8**

**4.28 In providing the information on bullying and harassment in Recommendation 7, DPS should identify the three areas of DPS where the most complaints of bullying and harassment have been received and whether a pre-emptive investigation has been conducted in relation to any of those areas.**

4.29 In order to continue to monitor DPS' progress in this area, the committee also recommends that, prior to each estimates hearing, DPS provide the committee with updated information on the number of bullying and harassment complaints on the HR register.

### **Recommendation 9**

**4.30 The committee recommends that, prior to each estimates hearing, DPS provide the committee with the following information on the number of bullying and harassment complaints:**

- **the number of new complaints recorded on the HR register since the previous estimates update was provided;**
- **the status of each of the new complaints recorded on the HR register since the previous estimates update was provided;**
- **the number of complaints withdrawn from the HR register and the reasons that the complaints were withdrawn; and**
- **the number of Harassment Contact Officers in DPS.**

### **Hansard**

4.31 At the public hearing on 17 November 2014, Ms Karen Greening, then Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Recording and Reporting Branch, stated that morale in Hansard was 'not high'.<sup>21</sup> When pressed for an explanation as to why this might be the case, Ms Greening stated:

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21 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 11.

It is a difficult environment to work in, because the workload is fairly constant. The editors take a great deal of pride in their work, and unfortunately there is a level of unhappiness.<sup>22</sup>

4.32 Noting that Hansard staff have always taken pride in their work and been required to work under time pressures, the committee was interested in what had changed in the Hansard area to result in low morale. Ms Greening stated that while 'nothing has really changed' to cause the unhappiness, there was some concern that with the heavy workload for committees, the finalisation of the chamber transcripts had fallen behind:

And it did for a period of time, for a month or so, but we actually rejigged the workplace in order to bring the chamber work up to date. When I say the chamber work—the Hansard proof is published in the early hours of the morning after the chambers rise. We continue to receive corrections from senators and members to their speeches and we have 15 non-sitting days in which to finalise the proof transcript to the official. We put that to one side for a period of time while we focused on committee transcripts, but then we went back and caught up with that workload. But there was some general unhappiness among our staff because they felt that we were neglecting that function.<sup>23</sup>

4.33 Ms Greening referred to the establishment of the 'Hansard forum' as one of the mechanisms for addressing staff morale:

[I]n April [2014] we implemented the Hansard forum, where we asked for two volunteers from each team in Hansard—there are four editor teams and our Hansard Support Unit. We set up a process for engagement with the staff where we tried to encourage these representatives to work with us on how we can deliver our services better. We got some good ideas from the staff, which we have been exploring over the last six or so months.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Staff turnover***

4.34 Ms Greening indicated that there had been a high level of staff turnover and that there was anticipated to be a high level of turnover for a large period of time as about half of the Hansard editors are in the 55-plus age bracket.<sup>25</sup> Ms Greening stated that 'primarily' the staff that have been leaving are trained staff and not trainees.<sup>26</sup>

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22 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 11.

23 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 12. DPS subsequently clarified that the period of time involved was 'approximately three months', not 'a month or so', Additional Information, Correspondence from Ms Eija Seittenranta, Chief Operating Officer, DPS to Committee Secretary, Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, dated 5 December 2015, p. 2.

24 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 12.

25 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 10.

26 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 10.



4.35 Aside from retirement, Ms Greening identified a lack of full-time employment opportunities and career advancement as other reasons for staff leaving:

Some of the feedback has been from people who were looking for career development and, in the Hansard environment, our editors come in at the [Parliamentary Service Level (PSL)] 5 level. Once they have completed the training program, they are broadbanded to the PSL 6 level. We have got 58 staff at the [PSL] 5-6 level. Then we go to four assistant directors—that is the [Parliamentary Executive Level (PEL)] 1 level, which is the next level up. So there is not a lot of career development, especially for our younger employees; no career opportunities. So, they come in at the [PSL] 5 level, transition to the [PSL] 6 level once they have completed their training and then their career can basically stall for a period of time...

There has been dissatisfaction with—for instance, we employ staff primarily at the moment as sessional editors, so editors who work for 25 weeks a year and primarily when parliament is sitting. The younger people who have left want full-time employment and a career opportunity. And so that has been the prime reason for staff leaving. We have had people who have left saying that they are unhappy with the workload. They want other opportunities.<sup>27</sup>

4.36 The committee asked Ms Greening if any of the staff leaving had expressed dissatisfaction with the operation of Hansard or how they were treated by management. Ms Greening stated:

I have not looked at any exit surveys for a while in that I have not had any presented to me for a while.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Training for Hansard editors***

4.37 The committee was told that, because of the high staff turnover Hansard had a large number of trainees. As at November 2014 there were 20 trainees out of a total of 58 editors. Previously the number of trainees per year was around eight.<sup>29</sup>

4.38 Given the high number of trainees, the committee pursued the nature of the training that was being provided:

We have a mixed-mode training program: some of it is online, some of it is face-to-face training and some of it is peer-to-peer training. We try to support the new trainees, as soon as they arrive. We have asked our experienced editors to take on a mentor role and, at the moment, because we do have so many trainees, we have taken two very experienced Hansard editors offline and they are working with those individuals. They are developing training plans, they are assessing them, looking at what they

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27 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 10.

28 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 10.

29 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 10.

need to move them along the training program and working closely with them.<sup>30</sup>

4.39 DPS subsequently clarified that '[s]ome face-to-face small group training sessions are held with the trainee editors and some one-on-one training is done on the job with the mentors and with other experienced editors'.<sup>31</sup>

4.40 In relation to the two editors who are providing the training, DPS informed the committee:

Two Hansard editors had been taken offline until the end of 2014 to coordinate training and support the current large cohort of trainees in progressing through the training programs. This is in addition to the mentors that are allocated to assist each of the trainees.<sup>32</sup>

4.41 Until 2012, two people at PEL 1 level had developed the training program and managed the trainees, but only one of them delivered the actual training.<sup>33</sup> At the hearing Ms Greening explained the change in the training program to the mix-mode training:

We made the decision to move away from that model, primarily because at the time they were two full-time officers and we had about eight trainees who were sessional employees, so they were only in the workplace for 25 weeks a year. So we moved to the mixed-mode training program where the trainees would work their own way through the training program, but with support from others.<sup>34</sup>

4.42 The committee questioned Ms Greening as to whether, given there were now two full-time staff training 20 trainees, when previously there would only have been eight trainees, this placed pressure on the trainees in terms of less dedicated attention:

The trainees are split across four teams, and the assistant directors [PEL 1s] have prime responsibility for working with the trainees and the training program. The mentors are allocated time during the sitting weeks to assist their trainees, so they are on hand to help them with and subedit their work, because all trainees' work is subedited. So, yes, it is an impost at the moment but it is one that we are working through.

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30 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 11.

31 Additional Information, Correspondence from Ms Eija Seittenranta, Chief Operating Officer, DPS to Committee Secretary, Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, dated 5 December 2015, p. 2.

32 Additional Information, Correspondence from Ms Eija Seittenranta, Chief Operating Officer, DPS to Committee Secretary, Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, dated 5 December 2015, p. 2.

33 Additional Information, Correspondence from Ms Eija Seittenranta, Chief Operating Officer, DPS to Committee Secretary, Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, dated 5 December 2015, p. 2.

34 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 11.

...What we have done is actually allocate additional days to those trainees to bring them into the workplace to assist so that our two editors who are offline can actually work with them. We have brought them into the workplace for additional days of employment in order to assist them through their training program.<sup>35</sup>

### *Hansard editing*

4.43 Ms Greening provided the committee with the following overview of how Hansard transcripts are produced and edited:

When a Hansard editor is sitting in the chamber, they are actually not taking down everything that they hear. What they actually do is they take down notes that help them to transcribe the corresponding 7.5 minutes of sound. They then go back to their desks and they use the audio that is provided by the ParlAV team, and they either rekey or revoice the audio into the Hansard Production System. They produce a transcript. For our trainees, every transcript that is produced by the trainees is subedited by an editor. In an environment where we had more trained staff, they would also subedit each other's work. But at the moment, because we have so many trainees, we take a risk management approach on some days, depending on how much work we have on hand and we will say, 'Okay, we're not going to subedit a fully trained editor's work today.'<sup>36</sup>

4.44 In terms of the level of subediting of Hansard transcripts, Ms Greening made the following comments:

[W]e do do a proof check before the Hansard is made official, as well.

...

The pink or the green—the draft—may go to a senator or member without having been subedited; it may be published that night without having been subedited by another editor. But what we try to do is to have it looked at before the Hansard is made official.<sup>37</sup>

4.45 On notice, DPS provided the following information on the frequency with which work was subedited:

Between 12 May 2014 and 1 November 2014, there were 7937 chamber turns transcribed and edited.

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35 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 11. DPS subsequently clarified that '[s]ubediting of the trainees is not always done by their mentor; sometimes it is done by other PSL 6 editors. However, it is correct that all trainee's work is subedited', Additional Information, Correspondence from Ms Eija Seittenranta, Chief Operating Officer, DPS to Committee Secretary, Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, dated 5 December 2015, p. 2.

36 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 14.

37 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 15.

Of the 7937 chamber turns, 3325 chamber turns (approximately 42 per cent) were subedited.<sup>38</sup>

4.46 DPS continued:

Prior to 12 May 2014, subediting of chamber turns was regularly rostered and undertaken with the exception of the sitting week of 24 to 27 March 2014 where, due to a high level of staff illness, only minimal subediting was undertaken. During 2013 and 2014, and prior to 12 May 2014, on each sitting day, all chamber turns transcribed by both editors and trainee editors were subedited with the exception of the sitting week of 24 to 27 March 2014 and during the weeks 26 – 29 August 2013 and 12 – 14 November 2013 when only chamber turns transcribed by trainee editors were subedited.<sup>39</sup>

4.47 The DPS answer to the question on notice reiterated that '[t]rainee turns have continued to be subedited 100 per cent of the time'.<sup>40</sup>

4.48 Ms Greening stated that, although all the fully trained editors have gone through an extensive training program, due to different levels of experience there will always be a 'slight difference' in the transcripts produced:

That is one of the reasons why we would like to subedit when we have resources on hand. Once our 20 trainees are through the training program, it will make it easier to do that.<sup>41</sup>

4.49 Ms Greening agreed that in situations where transcripts were not subedited, this placed enormous pressure on the editor doing the transcription;

But, even if we have every piece of work subedited, errors will still be missed. Sometimes, too, it is subjectiveness—it comes down to how an editor chooses to render something that they have heard. There might be another editor who disagrees with how they have rendered that, as well, so there can be some tension there between how the work is produced.<sup>42</sup>

4.50 In answers to questions on notice, DPS provided the following information about the Hansard error rate since 2007-08:

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38 Answer to question on notice, received 30 January 2015, p. 5. A 'chamber turn' refers to the 7.5 minute period that a Hansard editor is in the chamber and is subsequently produced as a Hansard.

39 Answer to question on notice, received 30 January 2015, p. 5.

40 Answer to question on notice, received 30 January 2015, p. 5.

41 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 14.

42 *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2014, p. 15.

Accuracy								
Type of transcription	Service Standard	Error rate						
		2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Chamber proceedings	5 or less errors per 100 pages transcribed	3 errors	2.7 errors	2.6 errors	3.9 errors	2.9 errors	4.4 errors	2.5 errors
Committee hearings	5 or less errors per 100 pages transcribed	1.4 errors	0.7 errors	1.3 errors	6.2 errors	11 errors	9.3 errors	7.4 errors

**Table 1: Hansard error rates 2007-08 to 2013-14<sup>43</sup>**

### *Committee view*

4.51 The committee understands that it may be hard to pin-point the cause of the low morale in Hansard. In fact, it is probably a mistake to attribute the low morale to a single cause. It seems evident to the committee that high staff turnover, necessitating the need for a significant increase in the number of trainee editors, in combination with a heavy workload and the pressure on resources impacting on the subediting of Hansard, would potentially lead to a general sense of unhappiness.

4.52 The committee is of the view that when the current 20 trainees have completed their training this should ease some of the strain within Hansard. Until that time the committee would encourage Hansard management to engage with the Hansard forum in order to put in place initiatives to help improve the current challenges.

4.53 In order to keep the committee informed of progress in this area, the committee is recommending that DPS provide information on Hansard staffing and operations, including the work of the Hansard forum, prior to each estimates hearing.

### **Recommendation 10**

**4.54 The committee recommends that prior to each estimates hearing, DPS provide the committee with the following information:**

- **the total number of editors employed by Hansard and a breakdown of those numbers into trainees and trained editors;**
- **the breakdown of the number of editors who are employed full-time, part-time and casual;**
- **the total number of chamber and committee turns transcribed by Hansard since the previous estimates update and the number of those turns which were subedited;**

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43 Answer to question on notice, 30 January 2015, p. 4.

- **where there has been a decision not to subedit turns, the reasons for that decision; and**
- **an update on the work of the Hansard forum.**

4.55 The committee has decided not to address the term of reference on the future of Hansard within DPS. This matter is more appropriately considered during the course of the independent structural review which is underway.

### **Visitor Services**

4.56 The committee received eight (identical) submissions from Visitor Services Officers (VSOs) regarding the proposed restructure of the staffing model and the roster for VSOs. The new roster would require VSOs to work an 8.5 hour shift, instead of the current 4.25 hours:

[The proposal for 8.5 hour shifts] discriminates against older VSOs and it removes work life balance, especially impacting parents and carers...

...

[The] proposed restructure is yet another repeated attack on VSO's conditions of work. The Visitor Services Section has been reviewed every two years over the last ten years. This creates a very uncertain and stressful working environment for VSOs.<sup>44</sup>

4.57 The VSOs' submissions also commented on the consultation which had taken place on the changes:

Information about the proposal was presented to VSOs in one hour-long session (5.30-6.30pm) on 18 September 2014. The closing date for comments from VSO's was set for 7.00pm on 2 Oct 2014.

In this period VSOs were given only one hour meeting time on 30 September 2014, that is 48 hours before [the] closing time [for comments]. Moreover, these two weeks fall within an extremely demanding work period for the VSOs. [The] Visitor Services Section is experiencing an acute shortage of staff, the new recruits are being trained on the floor by the VSOs and the two weeks set for consultation covered Parliamentary sitting days...

[The] proposed restructure constitutes a major change to working conditions of VSOs and as such requires [an] informed and considered response. [The proposed] timeframe is unacceptable.<sup>45</sup>

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44 *Submission 6*, p. 1. The submission by VSOs discusses an 8.5 hour shift, the DPS supplementary submission discusses the proposal in terms of a 7.5 hour shift.

45 *Submission 6*, p. 1.

4.58 In conclusion, the VSOs' submissions stated:

This ongoing and repeated erosion of workplace rights and conditions and the manner in which these plans have been implemented, with little genuine interest in seeking input amounts to work place bullying and harassment.<sup>46</sup>

4.59 DPS responded to the VSOs' submissions with a supplementary submission specifically addressing this issue. DPS stated that the 4.25 hour shifts worked by VSOs 'is out of step with other institutions that operate visitor services models'.<sup>47</sup> To illustrate this point DPS provided the following information:

The visitor services model at Parliament House is unusual in that there are no full-time permanent [VSOs]; instead all VSOs work part days and are either permanent part time or casual. Currently the mix is 17 permanent part time and 18 casual staff, all of whom work 4.25 hr shifts. [Other institutions] have a mix of permanent full- and part-time staff working full and part days with limited reliance on casual staff.<sup>48</sup>

4.60 DPS explained the background to the VSO restructure and roster changes:

Due to the additional funding received in the May 2014 Budget to cover [the 2014-15] financial year and the following three financial years, DPS is now in a position to look at reinstating services that were reduced in the 2008/09 budget cuts, including expanding our tour offerings to schools and visitors. DPS is therefore also considering expanding its range of employment options for VSOs to include a core of permanent full-time staff supported by permanent part time staff and some casual staff, with the majority of staff working full days. This initiative also supports the Parliamentary Service Employment Principles (within the Parliamentary Service Act) which states that the usual basis for engagement is as an ongoing Parliamentary Service employee. Further, DPS is aware that some VSOs have a number of part time jobs with different employers, and may welcome the opportunity to obtain permanent full-time employment with DPS.<sup>49</sup>

4.61 DPS explained the benefits of the change:

The proposed model creates a core of full-time staff supported by permanent part time staff and reduces our reliance on casual staff. Full-time staff would work 37.5 hours per week consistent with all DPS full-time employees. DPS believes that if there is a core of full-time positions, career opportunities will be enhanced through access to increased training opportunities. The proposed model also involves staff working full days as this will enhance efficiency of operations, as well as continuing our commitment to enhancing the visitor experience at Parliament House by offering more tours and programs...

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46 *Submission 6*, p. 1.

47 *Supplementary Submission 1*, p. 1.

48 *Supplementary Submission 1*, p. 1.

49 *Supplementary Submission 1*, p. 1.

In addition to expanding the range of employment opportunities for VSOs, the proposed model would achieve the following efficiencies:

- currently in order to cover a full day of operations, two VSOs each work a shift of 4.25 hours, totalling 8.5 paid hours. The proposed 7.5 hour full-time shift would achieve a 11.76% productivity in comparison to current model;
- improved operations through less changeover of staff on a daily basis, providing continuity in service delivery and enhanced communication within the team;
- increased learning and development opportunities to give sufficient time for VSOs to learn new tour products[;]
- reduction in overtime expenditure; and
- streamlined staff management and work practices through the reduced duplication in administration and training.<sup>50</sup>

4.62 DPS stated that 'no final model has been decided upon'. However:

A group of 13 casual VSOs are currently trialling full day work and this will inform consultation with staff, and any final decision on a staffing model.<sup>51</sup>

4.63 In terms of the timeframe for change:

DPS is keen to allow a transition period for those staff that want to work full-time and full days but who will need time to make changes to their personal arrangements to enable them to do so.<sup>52</sup>

4.64 DPS also addressed the concerns raised about the consultation process on these changes. DPS noted that there was an initial two weeks of consultation, with comments due by 2 October 2014:

At the end of the 2 week consultation period on 2 October, 23 written responses had been received. Responses were mixed and covered a range of issues. Some staff welcomed the opportunity to obtain full-time work; some had concerns that working full days would affect their personal arrangements, others had concerns regarding the physical demands of working a full day.<sup>53</sup>

4.65 DPS indicated that it had extended the consultation period, with a further consultation meeting with staff held on 22 October 2014:

At that meeting staff requested more detail regarding the implications of moving to full day shifts and what it would mean for their personal

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50 *Supplementary Submission 1*, pp 1-2.

51 *Supplementary Submission 1*, p. 2.

52 *Supplementary Submission 1*, p. 2.

53 *Supplementary Submission 1*, p. 2.



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circumstances. As a result of that meeting the next steps in the consultation process will include:

- a representative group of VSOs contributing to a risk assessment of full day shifts;
- developing a typical daily roster so that VSOs could see the range of tasks they would be required to undertake over the course of a full day;
- indicative salary calculations for full-time and part-time positions;
- call for expressions of interest to assess the actual interest in working full-time;
- additional development and costing of models or variations of the proposed model and roster; and,
- continue to trial full day shifts by new casuals, with an evaluation to occur at the end of December 2014.<sup>54</sup>

### *Committee view*

4.66 In the committee's view, DPS has acted with undue haste to try and change the conditions of employment for VSOs. While the committee appreciates DPS' argument that some VSOs may want to move to full-time employment, clearly that is not the case for all VSOs.

4.67 The committee shares the concerns raised by VSOs during the consultation regarding the physical demands of a full day shift. The committee would not like to see VSOs feeling pressured to leave the position because DPS will only offer full day shifts. Nor would the committee like to see the move to full day, full-time shifts impacting on personal arrangements, such as caring arrangements, that VSOs may have in place.

4.68 DPS claim that no final model has been decided on, but clearly DPS are strongly in favour of moving the VSO work force to full day, full-time positions, and are focussed on assisting staff to do this. The committee saw little evidence of consultation or assistance to staff who, for whatever reason, are unable to transition to a full day, full-time role.

4.69 The committee will follow this matter through the estimates process. In order to facilitate discussion of this topic at the next estimates hearing, the committee would like to be provided with the evaluation from the trial of full day shifts (which was to occur at the end of December 2014) by 1 October 2015.

### **Recommendation 11**

**4.70 The committee recommends that DPS provide the committee with the evaluation of the trial of the full day shifts by 1 October 2015.**

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54 *Supplementary Submission 1*, pp 2-3.

