

Bills Digest
No. 78 2000–2001

Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill
(No. 2) 2000-2001

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I N F O R M A T I O N A N D R E S E A R C H S E R V I C E S

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Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2)
2000-2001

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Law and Bills Digest Group
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Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2000-2001

Date Introduced: 29 November 2000

House: House of Representatives

Portfolio: Finance and Administration

Commencement: Royal Assent

Purpose

To authorise the Minister for Finance to issue \$500,000 from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF), in addition to funds appropriated by the *Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No. 1) 2000-2001*, for the operation of the Parliamentary Departments during 2000-2001.

Background

The 2000-2001 budgets for the parliamentary departments have been prepared using an accrual basis and provide funding for departmental outcomes, administered expenses and capital items.

Since 1982, the appropriations for the parliamentary departments have been effected by a separate Bill. This followed the Fraser Government's consideration of the Report of the Senate Select Committee on Parliamentary Appropriations and Staffing which was tabled on 18 August 1981.

Under current arrangements, the executive government maintains control over the contents of the Bill as introduced. In theory however, as the Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill is not for the ordinary annual services of the government, it may be amended by the Senate.

The *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* provides that the administration of the Parliament is undertaken by five Parliamentary Departments - the Department of the Senate, the Department of the House of Representatives, the Joint House Department, the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff and the Department of the Parliamentary Library.

Warning:

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The Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate are responsible for providing procedural advice, information and administrative support to Members and Senators respectively. The Joint House Department performs building management and maintenance services, and provides a range of commercial support services and facilities in Parliament House. The Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff provides broadcasting, transcription and information technology services to the Parliament, and the Department of the Parliamentary Library is responsible for the provision of information services, research and policy analysis.

The primary source of funds for each of the parliamentary departments is the annual Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill, supplemented as required by a second bill introduced with the government's supplementary appropriation bills, known as the additional estimates.

The *Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Act (No. 1) 2000-2001* appropriated a total of \$154.492 million for all five departments for the 2000-2001 financial year. The Schedule to the Act deals with the allocation of expenditure for each Department. Appropriations for 2000-2001, with the previous year's figures in brackets, are as follows:

House of Representatives	\$27.165 m	(\$27.841 m)
Senate	\$29.185 m	(\$31.471 m)
Joint House Department	\$39.245 m	(\$41.009 m)
Parliamentary Reporting Staff	\$42.398 m	(\$42.222 m)
Parliamentary Library	\$16.499 m	(\$16.553 m)
Total	\$154.492 m	(\$159.096 m)

In addition to appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, certain money receipts may be credited to a Parliamentary department's operating expenses. That is, these receipts are deemed to have been appropriated. Departments are able to credit receipts from, for example, proceeds of the sale of parliamentary and educational materials, and resources received free of charge, such as from the National Library of Australia or the Australian National Audit Office.

The additional appropriations sought by this Bill for the Parliamentary Departments for 2000 - 2001 are:

House of Representatives	\$433,000
Senate	\$67,000
Total	\$500,000

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The rationale given by the Government in the Second Reading Speech for seeking the additional appropriations is that the increases sought are required for:

- Funding for the Departments of the Senate and the House of Representatives for the Citizenship Visits program, and
- The House of Representatives for holders of public office, and to refund the new secretariat role for matters raised by the Auditor-General and the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit.

The Citizenship Visits program is a subsidy scheme to assist school groups, located more than 1,000 kilometres by road from Canberra, to visit the Houses of Parliament and to participate in a parliamentary education program. The total funding for this program is \$1.0 million in 2000-2001.¹ The additional estimates will provide an additional \$67,000 for each of the Departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate in respect to the Citizenship Visits program. The Government states that the increase in funding is due, in part, to increasing community awareness of, and interest in, parliamentary processes along with promotion of the Centenary of Federation.²

In respect to the House of Representatives, the additional estimates will provide an additional \$138,000 for holders of public office and \$228,000 for the transfer of functions from the Department of Finance and Administration (DoFA). The Government has stated that the additional amount for holders of public office is required to meet the cost of additional non-current liabilities relating to accrued long service leave and other leave entitlements of staff of certain office holders.³

In respect to the transfer of functions from DoFA, the Government has stated that the additional amounts is required to fund the functions transferred to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit which occurred in 1999 and that the \$228,000 represents reimbursement of expenditure of \$117,000 in 1999-2000 and an ongoing provision of \$111,000 per year.⁴

Main Provisions

Clause 7 provides that for Departmental items, the Finance Minister may issue from the Consolidated Revenue Fund amounts that do not exceed that listed in the Schedule to the Bill and that such funds must be used for the departmental expenses of the Parliamentary Department. Where the amount is for remuneration or allowances payable under the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973* or the *Remuneration and Allowances Act 1990*, the Minister for Finance must issue the amount.

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For administered expenses, **clause 8** provides that the Finance Minister may issue the lesser of the amount specified in the Schedule to the Bill in relation to a Parliamentary Department.

For administered capital items, **clause 9** provides that the Finance Minister may issue amounts that do not exceed, in total, the amount specified in the Schedule to the Bill in relation to a Parliamentary Department .

For departmental capital items, **clause 10** provides that the Finance Minister may issue amounts that do not exceed in total that specified in the Schedule to the Bill in relation to a Parliamentary Department.

The responsible Presiding Officer/s will be able to increase the amount allocated to an item to a total maximum of \$200 000 for both the House of Representatives and the Senate (for these Departments this power is exercisable by the Speaker for the House of Representatives and by the President for the Senate) and to a total maximum of \$200 000 for all the remaining Departments combined (exercisable jointly by the Speaker and President)(**clause 12**).

Clause 13 is similar to clause 12 but deals with increases in items due to unforeseen circumstances. The maximum increase under clause 13 is a total of \$300 000 for the Senate; \$300 000 for the House of Representatives; and a total of \$1 million for the other Departments combined.

Clause 16 will formally appropriate the funds for the Bill

Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/dept/PAES2000.pdf>
- 2 <http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/dept/PAES2000.pdf>
- 3 Department of the House of Representatives, *Portfolio Additional Estimates Statement 2000-2001*, November 2000, p. 14.
- 4 Department of the House of Representatives, *Portfolio Additional Estimates Statement 2000-2001*, November 2000, p. 14.

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