

Procedure Office

Outputs

Provision of advisory services and procedural support to non-government senators.
 Provision of drafting services to non-government senators.
 Provision of secretariat support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and Scrutiny of Bills Committee.
 Provision of research services and delivery of parliamentary information to the community.
 Provision of training to senators, staff, public servants and officials from other parliaments; and support for inter-parliamentary relations.
 Provision of parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students.

Performance information	Performance results
Procedural advice is accurate and timely, and support is provided to the satisfaction of senators.	Senators and their staff continued to acknowledge the accuracy and value of procedural advice.
Amendments and bills are drafted promptly, are legally sound, and are provided to senators in time for their use in the Senate chamber or elsewhere.	Legislative amendments and bills were accurate, and were prepared within required timeframes and to the satisfaction of senators.
Advice, documentation and publications are accurate, of a high standard and produced to meet the timeframes set by the Senate and the committees.	Advice and documentation provided to, and publications prepared for, the scrutiny committees were accurate, of a high standard and provided within the timeframes set by the committees.
Parliamentary research is accurate, timely and comprehensive.	Accurate and comprehensive parliamentary research was provided within required timeframes.
Seminars, lectures and public information projects are provided to the satisfaction of target audiences, increasing their awareness of the work and role of the Senate and its committees.	All seminars and lectures were held on time and in accordance with the programmed schedule. Public information projects were delivered in accordance with the required timeframes.
Training is provided to the satisfaction of target audiences, increasing their awareness of the work and role of the Senate and its committees.	Training was provided to the satisfaction of target audiences, demonstrated by consistently favourable feedback from evaluation processes.
Inter-parliamentary functions are supported to the satisfaction of stakeholders.	Inter-parliamentary functions were carried out to the satisfaction of stakeholders, demonstrated by consistently favourable feedback.
Education Centre teaching and other Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) projects accurately reflect the Parliament and its work.	PEO website and publications were promptly updated to ensure accuracy and to accommodate electoral and other events.
PEO teaching programs held on time and in accordance with booking schedule.	PEO teaching programs were consistently conducted in accordance with the booking schedule.

PEO projects delivered according to programmed schedule.

PEO programs were managed and delivered in accordance with current implementation plans.

Overview

The Procedure Office is led by the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and has four functional areas, as shown in figure 11. The Clerk Assistant (Procedure) also performs duties as a clerk at the table in the Senate chamber and is a member of the department's executive responsible for a range of governance matters.

Figure 11 Elements and responsibilities of the Procedure Office

Executive and Legislative Drafting		
<i>Bronwyn Notzon, Clerk Assistant</i>		
Procedural advice, support and training		
Drafting of legislative amendments and private senators' bills		
Public information and parliamentary research	Parliamentary education	Legislative scrutiny
<i>David Sullivan, Director, Research Section</i>	<i>Simon Harvey, Director, Parliamentary Education Office</i>	<i>Toni Dawes, Secretary, Scrutiny of Bills Committee</i>
		<i>Ivan Powell, A/g Secretary, Regulations and Ordinances Committee</i>
Publications, seminars, public lectures, exhibitions and research on parliamentary matters	Parliamentary education services and resources for schools, teachers and students	Secretariat, advisory and administrative support to the committees
Production of <i>The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate</i>		

The Procedure Office provides a range of advisory, support and information services closely aligned with the role and work of the Senate.

The office directly supports the parliamentary work of senators by providing procedural advice and support; and drafting legislative amendments and private senators' bills. It also provides secretariats for the Senate's legislative scrutiny committees, the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, which examine bills and legislative instruments against certain rights and accountability criteria.

The Research Section develops, manages and delivers publications, resources and programs which inform a wide range of audiences about the role and operations of the Senate and the Parliament.

The Parliamentary Education Office (PEO), jointly funded with the Department of the House of Representatives and administered by the Department of the Senate, produces educational programs and resources—including experiential learning programs, publications and a comprehensive website—for school students, teachers and others.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Procedure Office in 2010–11 was 33 (the same as in 2009–10).

The cost of providing the services of the Procedure Office in 2010–11 was \$6.0 million (\$5.8 million in 2009–10).

Procedural support

In 2010–11, the office assisted non-government senators and their staff by providing procedural advice, both written and oral, relating to the role and work of the Senate and its committees. There was strong demand for such advice, particularly during sitting periods. Advice was sought on many issues including Senate procedure, but also ranged more broadly to include, for instance, the elements of the provisions in section 53 of the Constitution in the context of legislation, precedents for ordering documents to be laid on the table, and the disallowance process for delegated legislation.

Staff of the office ensured the accuracy of advice by consulting other departmental officers—principally the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk—and researching appropriate precedents. In keeping with parliamentary service values, advice was non-partisan, consistent and provided to senators and their staff in a timely fashion.

In 2010–11, the office prepared an average of 13 procedural scripts per sitting day for senators' use in the chamber and elsewhere. This was significantly higher than the 2009–10 average of eight scripts per day. The scripts typically related to procedural matters, such as orders for the production of documents, the referral of matters to committees, and unanswered questions on notice.

The office also received a number of requests from senators and their staff, to check material for procedural accuracy. The advice provided was accurate and provided in time to enable senators to use the material in the Senate and elsewhere.

Legislative drafting

In 2010–11, the office provided legislative support to senators' work by drafting amendments to bills and drafting private senators' bills, in response to instructions from senators and their staff. Notwithstanding the unpredictable levels of demand for legislative drafting and finite resourcing, the office met all timeframes for the drafting of amendments and private senators' bills.

This work was undertaken primarily for non-government senators. Occasionally, the office drafted amendments to inform committee processes and demonstrate the implementation of committee recommendations.

The office drafted and circulated 79 sets of 'committee of the whole' amendments, containing 587 individual amendments—these are amendments proposed to the text of bills dealt with by the Senate. A significant number of these related to the national broadband network bills. The number of sets of circulated amendments is low compared with 2009–10 (see table 2), reflecting the break in parliamentary sittings over the election period. However, the office also drafted over 160 amendments that were *not* circulated, because, for example, they related to bills not dealt with by the Senate over the year or they were drafted for use outside the chamber to inform negotiations between parties.

Where amendments were framed as requests to the House of Representatives, in accordance with section 53 of the Constitution, the office also produced statements explaining the applicability of section 53 and the precedents of the Senate. These ensured senators were able to meet procedural requirements and demonstrate that their amendments were constitutionally sound.

The office also prepared and circulated 19 'second reading' amendments—these are proposed resolutions which comment on or affect the passage of bills, but do not propose specific changes to the text of bills.

Private senators' bills continued to be used as vehicles for individual senators and non-government parties to advance debate across areas of interest. In 2010–11, the office drafted 54 private senators' bills that were finalised and processed for introduction in the chamber, two of which were passed by the Senate.

A number of other bills were drafted to different stages of development, for introduction at a later date or for use by senators outside the chamber.

Table 2 summarises senators' use of the office's legislative drafting and procedural services over the past four reporting periods.

Table 2 **Legislative drafting and procedural advice services provided to senators, 2007–08 to 2010–11**

Service	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11
Committee of the whole amendments circulated	423	859	476	587
Second reading amendments circulated	56	25	29	19
Private senators' bills introduced	19	23	31	54
Procedural scripts prepared	304	394	441	497

Together these services form a substantial part of the support provided by the department to the legislative work of senators and the Senate. The 2011 biennial senators' survey reported high levels of satisfaction with these services. Informal feedback also confirmed this.

Support for legislative scrutiny committees

During the year, the office provided secretariat, research and administrative support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, assisting them to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the Standing Orders.

The committees examine all bills and disallowable instruments within their terms of reference. In 2010–11:

- the Regulations and Ordinances Committee secretariat processed 1,809 instruments (2,468 in 2009–10)
- the Scrutiny of Bills Committee secretariat processed 232 bills (258 in 2009–10) and the committee commented on 98 bills (160 in 2009–10).

The secretariats, assisted by the committees' legal advisers, completed the necessary administrative tasks to enable the committees to undertake their work.

The secretariats also prepared material arising out of the work of the committees, for use in the Senate chamber and for publication elsewhere. This included preparation and verification of disallowance notices, and publication of:

- the required reports and alert digests and the *Delegated Legislation Monitor* (each Senate sitting week)

- the *Disallowance Alert*, the *Scrutiny of Disallowable Instruments* and the *Senate Disallowable Instruments List* (updated online as required)
- biannual volumes of committee correspondence.

At the commencement of 2011, the Scrutiny of Bills secretariat established a database of comments from the *Alert Digests* and *Reports* that allows them to be sorted by subject matter. Due to technical constraints, the database is currently only for secretariat use. The secretariat is also backcapturing *Alert Digest* and *Report* information from previous Parliaments.

After the election and in anticipation of its 30th anniversary in November 2011, the Scrutiny of Bills Committee re-established the inquiry into its future role and direction.

Staff from both secretariats briefed several international delegations about the role and operations of the Senate legislative scrutiny committees. Staff from the Regulations and Ordinances Committee secretariat conducted a training seminar for public servants on delegated legislation and the Senate.

Public information and parliamentary research

In 2010–11, the Research Section:

- coordinated and delivered seminars and professional training programs for senators, senators-elect and their staff, parliamentary staff, Australian Public Service officers and others
- produced publications and exhibitions, and arranged lectures, each with a focus on the work and role of the Senate and the operations of the Parliament
- managed an internship program and a research partnership with the Parliamentary Studies Centre at the Australian National University
- coordinated a conference marking the 40th anniversary of the Senate's legislative and general purpose standing committee system
- coordinated the biennial Parliament House Open Day.

The aim of these programs is to ensure that senators and their staff are supported in their legislative work, and that other audiences are able to develop appropriate levels of knowledge and awareness of the Senate and its work. In addition, the office contributed to the redevelopment of the Commonwealth Parliament website.

The office also responded in a timely manner to requests for information and research support from a range of sources, including senators; the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Clerks Assistant; and members of parliamentary associations, the academic community and the general public.

Seminars and training programs

During 2010–11, the department's seminar series continued to provide members of the public service and others with comprehensive training in the operations of the Senate and its committees, and the accountability to parliament of the executive and government departments and agencies. A total of 1,177 people attended 37 seminars.

The seminar series remained an integral part of graduate training programs in the public service. A large number of graduates enrolled in both the full-day 'Introduction to the Senate' seminar and a range of half-day seminars, including a new two-hour seminar, 'Delegated Legislation and the Senate'. Senior officers of the department also conducted half-day seminars for Australian Public Service Senior Executive Service officers, on parliamentary privilege and accountability.

The section organised seminars tailored to the needs of individual government departments and other interested groups, including the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; the Department of Finance and Deregulation; the Treasury; the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency; the Law Council of Australia; the Defence and Industry Study Course; the Rural Leadership Program; and a group of Indigenous graduates. The section also participated in the Australian Defence Forces Parliamentary Program.

During 2010–11, training and information programs were offered to senators' staff in the form of one-on-one sessions and group seminars, delivered by senior officers, explaining the operations and procedures of the Senate and its committees.

Occasional lectures

The section arranged 12 lunchtime lectures during 2010–11, as part of the well-attended occasional lecture series. Topics ranged from an examination of Australian federalism and Commonwealth-State relations today, to the life of Sir John Downer, one of the primary architects of the Australian Constitution.

The department published lecture transcripts in its free journal *Papers on Parliament* and made MP3 audio and WMV video files available on the Senate website. Lectures were filmed and some were selected for broadcast on television and the internet by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Australian Public Affairs Channel, increasing the audience for, and accessibility of, the lectures.

Publications

The Research Section edited and published two editions of *Papers on Parliament* during 2010–11:

- issue 54, published in December 2010, contained transcripts of the proceedings of the conference to mark the 40th anniversary of the Senate's legislative and general purpose standing committee system
- issue 55 largely comprised papers in the Senate occasional lecture series.

The *Senate Briefs* series was revised to reflect changes resulting from the 2010 federal election and reissued. In October 2010 the section created a new webpage with photographs and biographical details of the 12 senators-elect.

Volume 3 of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, dealing with the lives and careers of senators and clerks who left the Senate between 1962 and 1983, was published in late 2010. Publication was marked by an official launch at Parliament House in August. The preparation of volume 4, covering the period between 1983 and 2002, is continuing, and more than half of the biographical entries required have been received. Preparation of the online edition of the dictionary continued. It is expected that the content of the first two printed volumes will be published on the internet in the next 12 months.

The section continued to issue a range of publications aimed at raising awareness of the Senate and parliamentary processes. Details of the publications available in 2010–11 are provided in appendix 4.

Exhibitions

The Research Section commenced work on an online version of the 'Women in the Federal Parliament' exhibition located in the Presiding Officers' display area. The exhibition is being expanded to include a descriptive summary of the parliamentary career of every woman who has been a member of parliament.

Throughout the year, existing exhibitions in the public display areas were updated to reflect changes resulting from the 2010 federal election. Work continued on the next stages of the ‘Acting Wisely’ exhibition, which will examine the ways in which representation and accountability are reflected in the work of the parliament. The booklet, *Australia’s Magna Carta*, has been popular, with over 1,200 copies sold since its publication in May 2010.

Senate committee conference

The Research Section coordinated a major conference at Parliament House and Old Parliament House in November 2010 to mark the 40th anniversary of the Senate’s legislative and general purpose standing committee system. Over 180 participants, including senators, former senators, a senator-elect, public service officers, Commonwealth, State and Territory parliamentary staff, community groups and members of the general public attended sessions on the history of the committee system, lessons learnt and insights gained. Conference proceedings were published in *Papers on Parliament* and the MP3 audio and WMV video files are available on the Senate website.

Partnership with the Australian National University

The department runs the Australian National Internships Program in partnership with the Australian National University. Although there were no parliamentary placements in the second half of 2010 due to the federal election, in all during 2010–11, 16 students completed parliamentary internships and 53 students were placed in other departments and agencies. Interns continued to see Parliament House as an excellent placement. The Research Section coordinated an induction seminar for each group of interns, and organised some of the functions associated with the program.

Parliamentary education services

During 2010–11, the PEO delivered an extensive range of high-quality educational services to schools, teachers and students. It also worked closely with members and senators to identify and address their parliamentary education service needs and involve them in PEO parliamentary education programs.

Through its Education Centre at Parliament House, the PEO delivers a very popular experiential learning program which involves students in simulations of chamber and committee proceedings of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

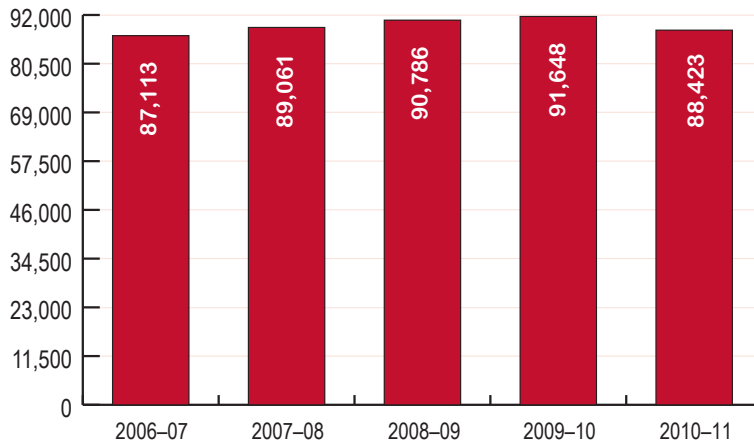
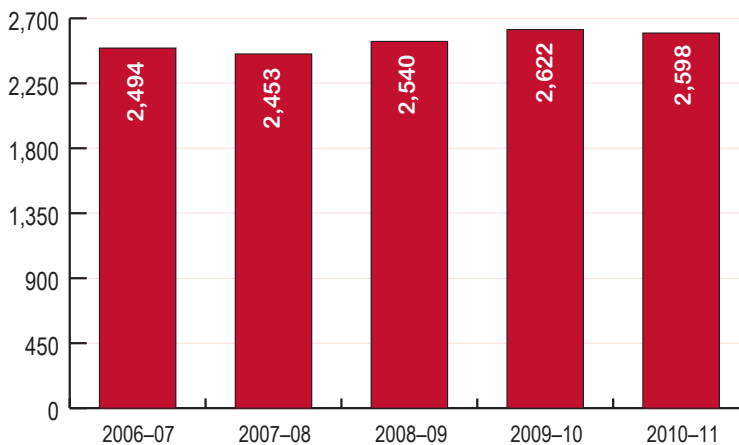
Through its comprehensive outreach program, the PEO provides parliamentary education opportunities for students and teachers who may not be able to visit Parliament House in Canberra. By analysing a range of data, the PEO is able to identify students from areas that less frequently participate in the PEO's Parliament House programs. To supplement this strategy, the PEO produces an extensive range of materials and resources on its website, on CD and in print.

The PEO also undertakes joint ventures, builds professional networks and invests in a range of training and development activities for teachers and trainee teachers. In addition, the PEO monitors curriculum developments in the area of civics education.

During 2010–11, the PEO continued to work with and report progress to the PEO Advisory Committee, chaired by the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, and worked closely with relevant stakeholders in the other parliaments, parliamentary departments, government departments and educational institutions.

Education Centre activities

During 2010–11, education programs were delivered to 88,423 students in 2,598 groups at the Education Centre at Parliament House. There was a small drop in student numbers for the year, which is primarily a consequence of the 2010 election. The number of groups attending was also marginally down on the previous year, similarly a consequence of the 2010 election. Figures 12 and 13 show the number of students and the number of groups that visited the Education Centre in the years 2006–07 to 2010–11.

Figure 12 Students who visited the Education Centre, 2006–07 to 2010–11**Figure 13** School groups that visited the Education Centre, 2006–07 to 2010–11

Programs delivered in the Education Centre continued to explore the four key functions of the parliament using role-play methodology, featuring the legislative process. Overall, this learning model is attractive to teachers and students alike and successfully supports studies of civics and citizenship in particular. A perennial challenge for the PEO is to maintain

currency and freshness in its programs. This is achieved in part through the work of the PEO script management team who constantly review, rewrite and edit the suite of scripts available to visiting school groups.

The Education Centre continues to enhance the quality of its visual aids and resource material. This year has seen the introduction of improved electoral mapping information in Parliament House venues and for outreach activities.

Outreach

Each year, less than 3 per cent of all school-age students undertake a PEO education program and a visit to Parliament House, leaving many teachers and schools to seek alternative parliamentary education to support their curriculum requirements. The PEO conducts research to determine which schools and regions are less represented in the statistics of schools visiting Parliament House. Analysis of this information guides the development of the annual PEO outreach activity, taking its education program ‘on the road’.

On four occasions in the reporting period, the PEO took its education program ‘on the road’, working in partnership with local senators and members to deliver *Parliament Alive* in schools in their area. This very successful program combines a PEO facilitated role-play program with an opportunity for students and teachers to meet and discuss the nature of the work of an elected representative with their local member and/or senator.

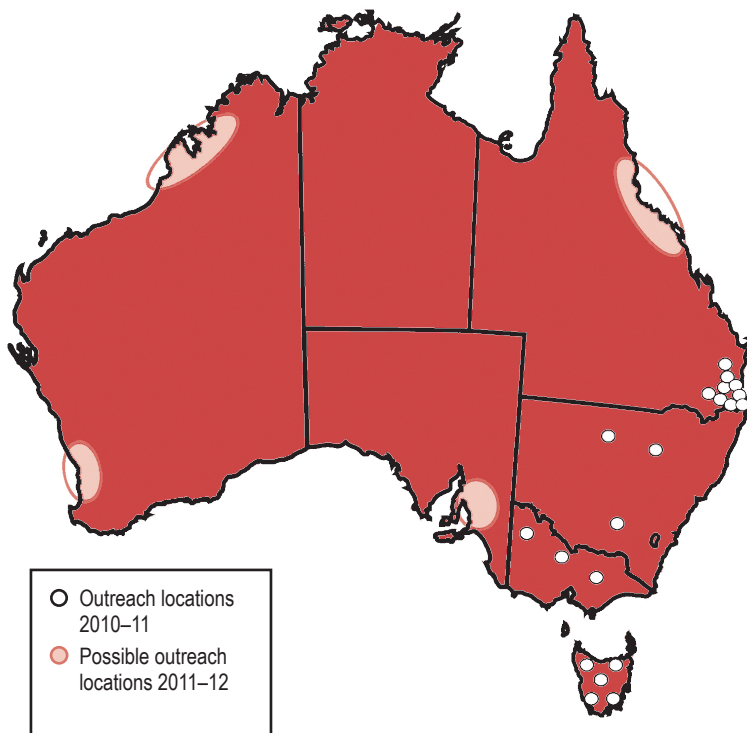
In 2010–11, *Parliament Alive* conducted programs in the locations shown in table 3, involving a total of 6,074 students over a period of six weeks.

Table 3 **Locations by electorate of PEO outreach activities in 2010–11**

New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	Tasmania
Calare	Indi	Bowman	Bass
Parkes	Murray	Dickson	Braddon
Riverina		Fadden	Denison
		Fairfax	Franklin
		Forde	Kingston
		Lilley	Lyons
		Longman	
		Oxley	

Preliminary planning for outreach activities during 2011–12 has commenced. Figure 14 shows the geographical spread of outreach activities in 2010–11, and the possible outreach locations in 2011–12.

Figure 14 Locations of PEO outreach activities, 2010–11 and 2011–12



Website and other resources

To address the parliamentary education needs of all students and teachers, particularly those who are unable to travel to Canberra, the PEO devotes considerable resources to expanding the range and quality of its online and multimedia services and resources, as well as its capacity to produce quality educational resources in various formats, including print and video.

During the year, the PEO:

- completed and implemented the results of a review of the interactive website tool *Assignment Assistant* (launched in May 2009), which assists students completing projects or homework on parliament and offers one-on-one contact with parliamentary educators

- continued the ongoing enhancement of the in-house video production unit and development of additional material for the online video series *About Parliament*, including videos on parliamentary committees, the Senate and the House of Representatives
- developed new promotional materials including bookmarks, notepads and a PEO brochure
- arranged for the production and sale to schools and other interested persons of replica despatch boxes which contain all the props and materials required for the conduct of parliamentary role-plays
- enhanced its website after completing a review of most web content and updated the site to reflect the 2010 federal election, as well as planning for the introduction of a content management system
- enhanced its ability to engage secondary students through the development of expanded and better-targeted content
- continued to investigate new communication technologies, including 3D applications, social media and the potential use of interactive whiteboards, for the delivery of its education programs.

The PEO also continued to produce and update the educational materials listed in appendix 4.

A key achievement in 2010–11 was the development of a new edition of *Australia's Constitution* (pocket edition), which was launched by the President of the Senate and the Attorney-General. The new edition includes a revised and comprehensive overview prepared by the Australian Government Solicitor. This popular publication is used extensively in parliamentary education programs conducted at Parliament House and as a reference resource by external training providers, including government departments and agencies.

The effectiveness of the PEO's magazine-style resource for upper primary and lower secondary students, *Get Parliament*, has been enhanced by the development of a suite of comprehensive worksheets. These worksheets allow teachers to engage students in practical activities to unpack the detailed information contained in *Get Parliament*.

In 2010–11, the PEO conducted a variety of member and senator liaison activities including face-to-face briefings about new education resources, welcome packs for new members and senators and a survey. The survey, which was conducted at the request of the PEO Advisory Committee, gauged member and senator familiarity and satisfaction with the PEO

services. Results were positive, with a 96% satisfaction level being recorded.

The parliamentary education allowance program continues to provide members and senators with resources and promotional items to use when working with schools in their communities. Allowance inclusions have been updated to provide additional quantities of the redesigned bookmark as well as the new PEO brochure. The PEO remains committed to providing high quality services, information and education resources for members and senators.

In 2010–11, there was again a significant growth in demand for PEO publications and resources and in visits to the PEO website. The website recorded more than 542,000 sessions and more than 4.71 million page views, an increase of 3 per cent and 9 per cent respectively since 2009–10. These figures indicate that more people are accessing the PEO website and that users are viewing more content during their visits. These results are key objectives of the PEO's outreach strategy.

Joint ventures and other programs

As in past years, the PEO has been actively involved in a number of joint venture activities. For example, the PEO contributed significantly to the National Youth Science Forum sponsored by the Australian National University. The forum provides a summer study program for outstanding senior secondary school science students from all states and territories. As part of their experience, the students undertake a specially designed learning program at Parliament House. In 2010–11, 288 students took part, examining legislative work and Senate committee processes through role-play.

The PEO also worked closely with Rotary International to run the Rotary Adventures in Citizenship program in May 2011. The five-day program gave Year 11 students from across Australia a unique opportunity to experience the work of the Parliament, meet members of parliament and participate in an intensive parliamentary learning program.

In 2010–11, the PEO also:

- coordinated student attendance at the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics hearings examining the Governor of the Reserve Bank
- hosted senior citizen and indigenous groups on visits to Parliament House during which they attended question-time, participated in a role-play program and met with members and senators

- launched the Venture into Parliament program which allows small groups of adults to tailor a program that provide them with a behind-the-scenes insight into the federal parliament.

Professional associations

The PEO seeks to maintain good relationships with parliamentary educator colleagues, both within Australia and internationally, and succeeded in advancing those relationships during 2010–11. In addition to hosting visits by staff from civic and cultural institutions in Canberra and state and territory parliamentary educator colleagues, the PEO attended and made presentations to the Australasian Parliamentary Educators Conference hosted by the Parliament of New South Wales in November 2010. PEO staff also made several visits to ACT-based civic and cultural institutions for the purposes of observing their programs and improving complementary activities.

The PEO also liaised with the Australian Secondary Principals' Association and helped to coordinate meetings of the association at Parliament House.

Staff training and development

To maintain the effectiveness and relevance of its parliamentary education services and products, the PEO invested heavily in training and development for its staff. During 2010–11, staff attended numerous parliamentary training programs conducted by both chamber departments and participated in several professional and technical development courses, including in the areas of project management and video production.

Many PEO staff members engage on a regular basis in face-to-face education activity which requires a high level of professional skill and commitment. All new educators therefore undertake a comprehensive training program that equips them to cater for a wide range of student aptitudes, interests and special needs.

The PEO's publishing capability was enhanced in 2010–11 with the recruitment of a replacement publishing manager and publishing officer. Publishing staff also focused heavily on training and development, particularly through the use of online training technologies and their attendance at courses which enhanced their ability to use new and developing web technologies.

International activities

During 2010–11, the department engaged in a range of activities with other parliaments and assisted in the development of parliaments in the region.

The department supported the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) by funding the attendance of a delegation at the 123rd IPU Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland in October 2010 and at the 124th IPU Assembly in Panama City, Panama in April 2011. The secretary to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport served as secretary to the delegation to Panama, providing administrative support and guidance to delegation members on the procedures and practices of the IPU prior to and during the assembly.

Seminars and training programs were provided for parliamentary officers visiting from overseas parliaments. In particular, comprehensive programs were provided for delegations from the Kenyan National Assembly and for members of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (the Dewan Perwakilan Daerah). The Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, conducted jointly with the Department of the House of Representatives in March 2011, provided training for officers from overseas parliaments in countries such as Argentina, China, Ghana, India, Namibia, Malaysia, Tonga and Tuvalu. An officer from the Western Australian Parliament also participated in the program.

The department, with the Department of the House of Representatives, jointly funded the Parliamentary Relations Office, re-named the International and Community Relations Office (ICRO) with effect from 1 October 2010. ICRO is administered by the Department of the House of Representatives and provides parliamentary relations support to both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Many of the programs administered by ICRO involve significant contributions from officers of the Department of the Senate. An account of the performance and activities of ICRO is contained in the annual report of the Department of the House of Representatives.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

The demand for procedural and legislative services is substantially driven by the requirements of senators and the Senate chamber. Factors influencing demand include the frequency of sittings, the number of bills dealt with by the Senate and the legislative priorities of the Government and others. The composition of the Senate is also a factor: a situation in

which no one group controls Senate outcomes typically leads to a strong demand for these services. The work of the secretariats of the legislative scrutiny committees is similarly driven by the requirements of those committees.

The PEO's education programs at Parliament House remain very popular and operate at near capacity. The popularity of the program is reflected by forward bookings for the remainder of 2011 significantly exceeding bookings levels for the first half of the year in previous years.

Increasingly, schools make bookings for the program many months in advance. While some success has been achieved in encouraging schools to visit earlier in the school year when the demand for PEO education programs is lower, demand continues to exceed available spots during peak teaching periods.

To better address the parliamentary education needs of all students and teachers, particularly those that are less able to travel to Canberra, the PEO continues to devote considerable resources to expanding the range and quality of its online and multimedia services and resources. In 2010–11 visits to the PEO website increased and the demand for PEO publications and resources also increased.

Evaluation

The main vehicle for evaluating the services provided by the office is the survey of senators, which is undertaken every two years. The 2011 survey reported continuing high levels of satisfaction with the services provided by Procedure Office.

The Procedure Office also monitors levels of satisfaction with its performance through formal and informal channels such as letters, emails, phone calls, seminar evaluation forms and direct advice from senators and their staff and members of the public. This continuous performance appraisal assists the office to make timely and responsive adjustments to the ways in which it delivers its services.

The PEO in particular monitors feedback on its activities and resources from senators and members and recently conducted a survey (see Website and other resources section above). In addition, feedback is regularly provided by its target audiences of students and teachers.

Performance outlook

In 2011–12, the Procedure Office will continue to provide its procedural and legislative services to meet the requirements of the Senate and

senators and to support the work of the legislative scrutiny committees. Training and seminar programs will continue, with an initial focus on preparing and delivering orientation programs for new senators in mid July 2011.

The Research Section will further develop its information resources, with work continuing on volume 4 of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, as well as commencing online publication of volumes 1 to 3. The section will also publish an 'A to Z' reference work on the Parliament which will be available in print and online. Work will continue on additional segments of the 'Acting Wisely' exhibition exploring the themes of representation and accountability.

The Research Section will also continue its association with the Parliamentary Studies Centre (PSC) at the Australian National University. Half-day workshops examining the themes of minority government, the new composition of the Senate, and other parliamentary matters will be organised together with the Department of the House of Representatives and the PSC for 2011–12.

The Scrutiny of Bills Committee secretariat and the Regulations and Ordinances Committee secretariat will continue to examine information technology options to improve the management of the large volumes of information received by the committees.

In 2011–12, the PEO will finalise the introduction in the Education Centre of new improved role-play scripts, including introduction of concept-based role-plays.

In addition to facilitating role-play classes at Parliament House for thousands of young Australians, the PEO will continue to review, update and improve the material on its website to enhance its accessibility and relevance. Emphasis will continue on interactivity and development of an expanded range of material will be completed and fielded, for primary and secondary students. Publications will be updated as necessary and republished, and a number of outreach programs involving senators and members are planned.

