Report on Performance

Performance overview

In 2009–10, the department successfully delivered its outcome: advisory and administrative support services to enable the Senate and senators to fulfil their representative and legislative duties. In particular, the department:

- provided comprehensive, timely, high-quality and cost-effective support to senators, the Senate chamber and committees, as well as prompt and accurate procedural advice and legislative support

- published a range of materials on the work of the Senate and the Parliament

- produced and delivered effective education and information programs

- initiated a structural review to consider the best arrangements to deliver the current mix of services

- continued to review and revise a range of departmental policies and procedures, and completed negotiations for a new enterprise agreement.

This overview of performance in 2009–10 summarises the key factors, events and trends that influenced the department's progress towards its outcome; the degree of satisfaction expressed by senators and others who used the department's services; and the department's results against key performance indicators.

The following chapters in the 'Report on performance' cover the role and performance of each of the department's five offices in more detail. The department's financial performance in 2009–10 is detailed in the 'Financial statements' chapter and the summary of resources tables in appendix 1.

Factors influencing performance

Demand for the department's services is substantially driven by the requirements of senators, the Senate chamber and committees. Each year, significant factors include:

- the political composition of the Senate

- the number of days and hours, and distribution, of the sittings of the Senate

- the legislative workload of the Senate

- the Senate committee structure, and the workload of committees

- the point in the election cycle.

Generally, demand for services in 2009–10 was consistent with expectations for a year towards the end of the electoral cycle.

The number of sitting days decreased slightly to 52, from 56 in 2008–09. The total does not reflect three 'hidden' days (27 November and 1 and 2 December 2009) on which the Senate sat as a continuation of the previous sitting days. Although it is not unusual for the Senate to extend a sitting day to the next day, it is unusual to have two consecutive extensions. (The inclusion of these hidden days does not account for the reduction in the number of sittings days, as the Senate also sat for two hidden days in 2008–09.)

The overall level of demand for services related to the operations of the chamber and committees was similar to that in 2008–09. As in previous years, the workload was characterised by:

- peaks in demand for services—for example, to complete the legislative program before the end of a sitting period

- competing timetables—for example, to enable senators to participate in multiple committees hearing budget estimates

- tight deadlines—for example, to complete and report on committee inquiries.

The department applied a range of strategies to offset these factors and maintain consistent high levels of performance, including:

- use of information technology

- tactical deployment of ongoing and non-ongoing staff to areas of greatest need

- effective communication with senators, ministers and their staff, staff of other departments and members of the public.

Demand for the department's research and education services was also similar to that in 2008–09. The programs delivered by the Parliamentary Education Office continued to operate at or near capacity. Some success was achieved in encouraging schools to schedule their visits outside peak times.

The department works with the other parliamentary departments—in particular, the Department of Parliamentary Services—to deliver its full range of support services to the chamber, committees, senators and departmental staff and to ensure that the interests of the Department of the Senate are represented in the development and implementation of parliament-wide policies and projects.

The department commenced a review of its organisational structure in February 2010. All staff had the opportunity to contribute suggestions about how the department could best meet the requirements of the chamber, senators and their staff. The department expects to finalise the review, and begin to implement its findings, in 2010–11.

Satisfaction with services

The principal medium for formally evaluating the services of the department is the biennial survey of senators' satisfaction. As discussed in last year's annual report, the survey conducted in early 2009 revealed high levels of satisfaction among senators, both with specific services and with the department's services overall. The next survey will be conducted in 2011.

Much of the department's work involves direct contact with senators and their staff. This presents an ongoing opportunity to receive informal feedback about services. Across the department, this feedback was positive in 2009–10. The detailed performance reports include examples of favourable comments from clients. In the small number of cases where questions or complaints about services were received, they were handled promptly and generally resolved.

Senators' comments about the department and its performance, made during chamber proceedings, including comments made when a committee's report is tabled or debated, are another form of evaluation. In 2009–10, senators were highly positive in their comments on the performance of committee secretariats. Informal feedback from witnesses also indicated satisfaction with their dealings with secretariat staff.

To ensure that high levels of service are maintained and that there are no areas of major concern, the department also monitors its performance through formal and informal channels such as letters, emails, phone calls, seminar evaluation forms and outputs from various management information systems. This continuous performance monitoring assists the department to make timely and responsive adjustments to its service delivery. High levels of positive feedback were received in 2009–10.

Performance summary

The department's performance in achieving its outcome is assessed using indicators for quality, timeliness, quantity and price, as defined in the portfolio budget statements.

The performance summary in table 1 shows the department's performance against its targets over the past three reporting periods. Each office's report on performance begins with a similar table, setting out the performance of that office against its targets for 2009–10.

Table 1   Performance summary—Outcome 1

Outcome

Advisory and administrative support services to enable the Senate and senators to fulfil their representative and legislative duties.

2009–10 results	2008–09 results	2007–08 results
Quality: The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the accuracy, quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.		
Feedback from the President, Deputy President, committee chairs, committee members and other senators indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of advice and the achievement of key tasks, consistent with the results of the 2009 senators' survey. All advices, documents and publications were of a high standard.	Feedback from the President, Deputy President, committee chairs, committee members and other senators indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of advice and the achievement of key tasks. The department's biennial survey of senators, the main formal feedback mechanism, was conducted in the first quarter of 2009. The results confirmed high levels of satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of support. All advices, documents and publications were of a high standard.	Feedback from the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators about the quality and timeliness of advice and the achievement of key tasks indicated ongoing high levels of satisfaction, consistent with the results of the 2007 senators' survey. All advices, documents, publications and draft reports remained of a high standard and none was shown to be inaccurate.
Timeliness: Advice or material given on request of a senator in time to be used for the purpose for which it was required. Key business documents for the Senate and its committees, including minutes, agendas, messages and schedules of amendments and reports, produced in accordance with predetermined requirements and the requirements of the Senate and its committees.		
All business documents were produced and advices were given in accordance with predetermined requirements and agreed timeframes in time to serve the purposes for which they were prepared.	All business documents were produced and advices were given in accordance with predetermined requirements and agreed timeframes in time to serve the purposes for which they were prepared.	All business documents were produced, and advice was given in accordance with predetermined requirements and agreed timeframes in time to serve the purposes for which they were prepared.
Quantity: Number of sitting days on which the department would expect to support the Senate, on the basis of recent experience, and support for committees in accordance with their requirements.		
Indicator: 65 sitting days Result: 52 sitting days[a]	Indicator: 65 sitting days Result: 56 sitting days[a]	Indicator: 60 sitting days Result: 36 sitting days[ab]
Price: The total resourcing for the department.[c]		
Estimated: $21.0 million Result: $21.4 million[d]	Estimated: $20.6 million Result: $22.3 million[d]	Estimated: $40.0 million ($25.6 million departmental) Result: $35.2 million ($22.0 million departmental)

a   These figures do not reflect any hidden sitting days—one hidden sitting day in 2007–08, two in 2008–09, three in 2009–10.

b   The low number of sitting days was caused by an extended election period.

c   The price estimates and results for 2008–09 and 2009–10 do not include administered items or departmental resources received free of charge from other Commonwealth agencies.

d   In 2008–09 and 2009–10, the department incurred a deficit (which was funded from cash reserves), due to various factors including increased employee and supplier expenses.

Clerk's Office

Provision of sound and timely advice on proceedings of the Senate and its committees and provision of leadership and strategic direction for the department.

Provision of secretariat and advisory support to the Procedure Committee, the Committee of Privileges and the Committee of Senators' Interests.

Provision of procedural information and related services to senators and the Senate department.

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.	Comments by senators in the Senate or in committees indicated very high levels of satisfaction with advice and other services provided by the Clerk's Office.
	Advice, documentation, publications and draft reports are accurate and of a high standard.	All advice, documents, publications and draft reports remained of a high standard and none was shown to be inaccurate.
Timeliness	Meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committee, as relevant.	All the indicators relating to timeliness were met to the satisfaction of senators.
	Odgers' Australian Senate Practice updated each six months; new printed edition produced regularly.	Two supplements to the 12th edition of *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice* were produced. They were tabled in the Senate on 11 August 2009 and 2 February 2010.
	Procedural Information Bulletin produced two days after end of sitting fortnights.	The *Procedural Information Bulletin* was produced within the specified timeframe following all sitting periods and estimates hearings.
	Other procedural resources updated and augmented as required.	The *Annotated Standing Orders of the Australian Senate*, a new reference work, was published in August 2009. The online version with additional illustrative material was published in April 2010.
Quantity	As required, on request, or proactively, to facilitate proceedings.	The demand for written advice was comparable with 2008–09.
		Sufficient printed copies of all reports and documents were available immediately on publication or tabling, and all publications were made available online as soon as possible.

Overview

The Clerk's Office consists of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and their executive assistants.

The Clerk is the administrative head of the Department of the Senate and, in accordance with the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, is responsible, under the President of the Senate, for managing the department. The Clerk is also the principal adviser to the President and senators on proceedings in the Senate, parliamentary privilege, committee proceedings and their outcomes in the chamber, and other parliamentary matters. The Deputy Clerk supports the Clerk in these roles and chairs the department's Audit and Evaluation Committee.

The former Clerk of the Senate, Harry Evans, retired on 4 December 2009 (see the 'Clerk's review') and the current Clerk, Rosemary Laing, was appointed to the position from 5 December 2009. The Deputy Clerk's position is currently filled on an acting basis until the end of the 42nd Parliament by Cleaver Elliott, pending the outcome of a review of departmental structures and operations that commenced in February 2010.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Clerk's office in 2009–10 was 4, consistent with the long-term average.

The cost of the office for 2009–10 was $1.1 million ($1.2 million in 2008–09).

Procedural advice

The primary function of the Clerk's Office is to provide procedural and constitutional advice. The office gives oral and written advice but records only written advice because of the difficulty of quantifying oral advice. The office may provide the advice proactively or on request.

Figure 3 shows the number and kinds of written advices provided during 2009–10, and each kind as a proportion of the total. The total number represents a continuation of last year's trend, which saw a strong return to normal levels, consistent with the fluctuations in demand that occur during an electoral cycle.

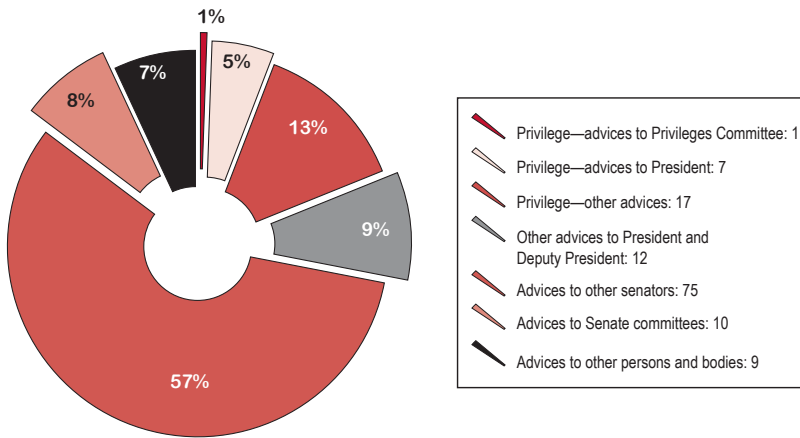**Figure 3   Types of written advices provided by the Clerk, 2009–10**

Legend:
- Privilege—advices to Privileges Committee: 1
- Privilege—advices to President: 7
- Privilege—other advices: 17
- Other advices to President and Deputy President: 12
- Advices to other senators: 75
- Advices to Senate committees: 10
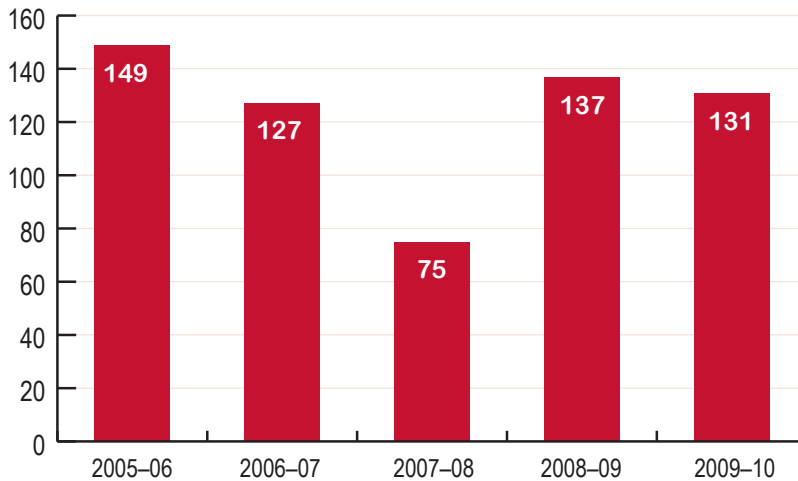- Advices to other persons and bodies: 9

Figure 4 shows the number of written advices that the Clerk's Office has provided each year over the past five years. The figures for the past two years also reflect the return of the Senate to a situation where no party has a majority.

Figure 4   Number of advices provided by the Clerk's Office, 2005–06 to 2009–10

While the figures for most categories of advice were comparable with last year's figures, there was an increase in the number of advices relating to issues of parliamentary privilege. Some of these were related to the work of the Committee of Privileges while others concerned issues that arose in the Senate or other committees, or were in response to queries from other jurisdictions. One matter concerning individual senators was the issuing of subpoenas for senators to appear as witnesses in court on a sitting day. Following advice, the subpoenas were not issued and, in the end, the

senators were not required to give evidence. The treatment of witnesses by third parties remains a matter of perennial concern and was the subject of references to the Committee of Privileges.

Advice also covered numerous other subjects. The application of section 57 of the Constitution to the package of carbon pollution reduction scheme bills prompted a significant number of advices, as did the disallowance of certain items in the General Medical Services Table made under the *Health Insurance Act 1973* and steps taken to address the resulting gap in Medicare coverage for cataract surgery. Another much revisited subject was the application of the Senate's order of 13 May 2009 on raising and dealing with claims of public interest immunity, and the power of the Senate to require witnesses to appear before its committees. Most witnesses appear by invitation but on rare occasions, for particular reasons, witnesses are either summoned by committees or ordered by the Senate to attend committee hearings. On two occasions during the year, the Senate's powers were applied to require the appearance of agency heads at estimates hearings.

The Clerk made submissions to the following inquiries:

- Senate Committee of Privileges, provisions of the Tax Laws Amendment (Confidentiality of Taxpayer Information) Bill 2009
- Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills, the future direction and role of the committee
- Queensland Parliament, Committee System Review Committee, review of the committee system of the Queensland Parliament
- Joint Committee on Publications, electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series.

Departmental officers contributed substantially to the last three listed submissions.

Committees

The office is responsible for the administration of three Senate standing committees.

Procedure Committee

The Clerk of the Senate served as secretary to the Procedure Committee, which responds to references from the Senate or the President by evaluating, and recommending improvements to, Senate procedure.

The committee met four times in 2009–10, in relation to numerous matters, and presented four reports. The order of the Senate of 13 May 2009 in relation to claims of public interest immunity required the committee to monitor and review the operation of the order. The committee reported to the Senate on this matter in its third and fourth reports of 2009. It also reported further on the modified rules for question time, adopted in November 2008, and recommended that the trial continue with a further modification for the remainder of the Parliament and the first two sitting weeks of the next parliament. This recommendation was adopted by the Senate on 25 November 2009. The committee considered a proposed amendment to the standing order on visitors, designed to accommodate the occasional need for senators to care for infants in the chamber, but agreed that the amendment was not desirable. The committee also considered possible procedures to deal with private senators' bills and bills relying substantially on delegated legislation for their effect. Finally, the committee sought feedback from senators on the inclusion of an Indigenous 'Welcome to Country' ceremony to precede openings of parliament (dealt with in the first and second reports of 2010). Although views were divided, the Senate adopted a resolution of continuing effect on 23 June 2010 supporting the inclusion of such a ceremony before openings of parliament.

Committee of Privileges

The Deputy Clerk served as secretary to the Committee of Privileges. The committee protects the integrity of Senate and committee proceedings by considering matters possibly amounting to contempt of the Senate. Those matters, which are a result of concerns raised by other committees or individual senators, are referred to the committee by the Senate. The Committee of Privileges also administers the right-of-reply mechanism for people seeking to respond to adverse comment made about them in the Senate.

The committee had a busy year, meeting 20 times in 2009–10 (four times in 2008–09) and presenting nine reports (an increase from three in 2008–09).

The committee considered three contempt matters, resulting in two reports. Two of these matters were complex and difficult, requiring 14 meetings to consider them. Six applications under Privilege Resolution 5 were received and the committee agreed to recommend the incorporation of a right of reply in all cases.

The committee also conducted an inquiry into the provisions of a bill which raised important matters of principle relating to parliamentary privilege. In the course of this inquiry, the committee received 11 submissions and held one public hearing, its first for some years. The committee presented its report on this matter out of sitting to provide the Senate with sufficient time to consider the issues before dealing with the bill. Although the bill had not been dealt with by the end of the year, the Government had circulated amendments to give effect to the committee's recommendations.

Committee of Senators' Interests

The Deputy Clerk also served as secretary to the Committee of Senators' Interests, and helped senators to fulfil the requirements of Senate resolutions relating to declarations of pecuniary interests and gifts.

In 2009–10, the committee met three times (twice in 2008–09), and presented its annual report as required by its terms of reference. The committee also presented a report proposing that statements of senators' interests be published on the internet from the commencement of the 43rd Parliament. The secretariat and the department's information technology staff began preparations for this, with the outcome to be reported in next year's annual report.

The secretariat continued to provide access to the register of senators' interests and to make copies of statements available on request. Sixty requests for access were facilitated during the year.

As required under the relevant resolution of the Senate, senators continued to register alterations to their statements of interests. Volumes of alterations and new statements were prepared by the secretariat and tabled on 25 November 2009 and 23 June 2010. Departmental Senior Executive Service (SES) officers' statements of interests were tabled on the same dates.

A declaration of a gift intended for the Parliament was tabled on 23 June 2010.

Procedural information

Two six-monthly supplements to *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice* were produced by the Clerk to record procedural developments up to 30 June 2009 and 31 December 2009. These were tabled in the Senate on 11 August 2009 and 2 February 2010. The 2010 supplement was produced in a slightly different format to assist readers in identifying the

new material. The supplements covered changes to the structure of the committee system, amendments to the standing orders on questions without notice, the trial of new procedures for question time, lack of progress (subsequently overcome) in the resolution of the dispute over ordinary annual services of the Government, and the new order on handling claims of public interest immunity.

The Clerk produced issues of the *Procedural Information Bulletin* after each sitting period or period of estimates hearings. These bulletins covered all major procedural developments and issues of procedural interest arising in the proceedings of the Senate or during estimates hearings.

As foreshadowed in last year's report, the *Annotated Standing Orders of the Australian Senate* was published in August 2009. It was launched by the President of the Senate at a function held on the 106th anniversary of the adoption of the Senate's Standing Orders on 19 August 1903. Former Presidents Ferguson, Reid, Beahan and Sibraa were also in attendance. While the book contains an institutional history of Senate procedures, it also traces the development and rationale of each standing order now in use, thus providing essential background and context to inform future changes.

Immediately after publication of the book, work began on the online version and on the identification of additional illustrations to accompany the online entries. This work was completed and the full online version was published in April 2010.

Information about Senate officers' presentations and papers appears in appendix 4.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

Demand for written advice was on a par with demand in 2008–09, which reflected a return of the Senate to a situation where no party enjoyed a majority of seats. The number of sitting days was well under the long-term average but, with committees meeting on most other days, there was a constant demand for the advisory services of the Clerk's Office.

Most of these are now provided by electronic means and are therefore available very quickly to the senators or others requesting them. As in previous years, advices were frequently published by their recipients and therefore subjected to public scrutiny. None was shown to be deficient or inaccurate.

The committees supported by the office were also more active during the year than earlier in the electoral cycle. In particular, the Privileges Committee dealt with three contempt matters, two of them arising from hearings of the Economics Legislation Committee in June 2009 in relation to the so-called 'Utegate affair'. In March 2010, the committee received its first reference of a government bill (and only its second bill inquiry) when the Senate referred provisions of the Tax Laws Amendment (Confidentiality of Taxpayer Information) Bill 2009 for investigation of possible conflict with the *Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987*. The Clerk provided a submission to this inquiry.

Evaluation

While the principal medium for the formal evaluation of services provided by the Clerk's Office, the biennial survey of senators, was not conducted in 2009–10, feedback was received from senators making comments in the Senate or relying in committees on advice provided by the office. In particular, senators paid extensive tribute to the retiring Clerk on 19 November 2009 and also welcomed the announcement on 29 October 2009 of his successor.

The immediate testing of advice provided by the office during estimates hearings and other proceedings of the Senate also continued, with senators seeking and relying on such advice on numerous occasions during 2009–10.

Performance outlook

Once the election is called during the next reporting period, the office is likely to experience a downturn in demand for written advices that is characteristic of this point in the electoral cycle. It is also expected that the committees supported by the office will be less active during that time. Consequently, opportunities will be taken to complete, evaluate and implement the review of departmental structures and operations and to prepare for a new parliament. Work will commence on preparing the next edition of *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice* (the 13th) and on reviewing the range and effectiveness of procedural resources for senators and staff.

Table Office

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.	Informal feedback and direct contact between senators and staff indicated continued high levels of satisfaction, consistent with the results of the 2009 survey of senators.
	Key business documents are accurate and of a high standard.	Business documents remained of a high standard, with none shown to contain significant inaccuracies.
Timeliness	*Notice Paper* for the current day and *Journals of the Senate* for the previous day available prior to sittings; statistical and other documentation available as required or in accordance with predetermined requirements.	The *Journals of the Senate* and the *Notice Paper* were available as required. The *Dynamic Red* was updated in a timely manner during each sitting day and the *Senate Daily Summary* was published promptly after each sitting day. Requests for statistics were responded to promptly. Statistical summaries were produced after each sitting week and comprehensive statistics were published on the website after each sitting period. *Business of the Senate* and *Questions on Notice Summary* were tabled biannually, in accordance with agreed timeframes.
	Order of Business finalised and distributed prior to sittings and advice prepared proactively or as required.	The *Order of Business* was distributed in advance of all sittings. Advice was given proactively or as required.

Timeliness	Running sheets available as soon as practicable; proposed amendments distributed in accordance with requirements; schedules of amendments and prints of bills available in accordance with predetermined requirements.	Running sheets were available for use in the chamber as required.
		Government amendments were distributed as required.
		Schedules of amendments, prints of Senate bills and legislative support documents were available as required.
	All inquiries answered and documents stored or distributed on a timely basis.	All documents were distributed in a timely manner.
	Meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committee, as relevant.	Committee meetings were held, and documents and reports were provided, within agreed timeframes.
Quantity	As required to facilitate proceedings; quantities meet predetermined distribution requirements or are accessible electronically or both.	All distribution and publishing targets were met.

Overview

The Table Office is led by the Clerk Assistant (Table) and has three functional areas, as shown in figure 5. The Clerk Assistant (Table) and the Director, Legislation and Documents also perform duties as a clerk at the table in the Senate chamber.

Figure 5   Elements and responsibilities of the Table Office

Executive and Programming	
Maureen Weeks, Clerk Assistant	
Procedural advice	
Business programming	
Production of the Senate *Order of Business*	
Secretariat support to the Selection of Bills Committee	
Legislation and Documents	**Journals and Notice Paper**
Sue Blunden, Director	*Bronwyn Notzon, Director*
Processing of legislation and preparation of supporting documentation Processing and custody of Senate records Inquiries and document distribution services Secretariat support to the Publications and Joint Publications committees	Production of the *Notice Paper*, the *Journals of the Senate*, the *Dynamic Red* and the *Senate Daily Summary* Collection and dissemination of statistical information Processing of questions on notice and petitions Secretariat support to the Appropriations and Staffing Committee

During 2009–10, the office consolidated its staff numbers through several recruitment processes. For the fourth quarter, the full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing level for the office was 16, due to ongoing selection processes. The staff numbers were complemented in sitting weeks by employing additional staff to assist the office to maintain the high standard and output of the office.

By 30 June 2010, staff were working in their substantive positions and training for new staff was underway. The average FTE for 2009–10 remained at 17.

The cost of the office for 2009–10 was $2.5 million ($2.8 million in 2008–09).

Work of the office

During 2009–10, the office provided effective support for the Senate chamber by:

- providing procedural and programming advice and documentation to facilitate and expedite chamber proceedings
- processing legislation and producing documents to assist in the legislative process
- preparing and publishing formal and informal records of Senate business, including the *Notice Paper*, the *Journals of the Senate*, the *Order of Business* (daily program) and the associated *Dynamic Red*, the *Senate Daily Summary* and a range of statistical records
- processing and archiving tabled papers and other Senate records
- responding to inquiries and undertaking document distribution services.

The Table Office provided secretariat support to three domestic committees. It also supported Senate committees generally by liaising with Senate and joint committee chairs and secretariats to facilitate interaction between the chamber and those committees.

Staff in the Table Office continued to be involved in the department's education activities.

Projects with the other parliamentary departments were initiated and progressed. The business case for the redevelopment of the document production system was prepared jointly with staff of the Department of the House of Representatives. Work was also undertaken with the other parliamentary departments on the Tabled Papers Register.

All staff in the office contributed positively to the structural review being conducted in the department. Two half-day meetings were held and attended by all in the office to put forward suggestions as to how it could continue to meet the requirements of the chamber, senators and their staff and other sections of the department. Staff in the office also contributed in other fora.

A number of the staff in the office also participated as bargaining representatives in the negotiations on the new enterprise agreement to establish the terms and conditions of employment following the expiration of the collective agreement made in 2006.

Requirements for advice, statistics and documentary support for the Senate are determined largely by the sittings of the Senate. Specific factors include:

- the number of days and hours of the sittings of the Senate
- the nature of the proceedings undertaken in the Senate, and the scheduling of those proceedings
- the legislative workload, including the number of bills passed, the number and complexity of amendments to bills and the complexity of negotiations between the Houses
- the number of documents tabled
- the number and intricacy of questions and notices from senators
- the number and difficulty of inquiries and requests for information from clients.

The Table Office supported the Senate on 52 sitting days in 2009–10, a decrease compared with 56 in 2008–09. The distribution of sitting days was again skewed towards the first half of the reporting period—the Senate sat on 28 days from August to December 2009 and 24 days from February to June 2010. In the number of days represented in the first half of the reporting period, there are three hidden days (27 November and 1 and 2 December 2009) on which the Senate sat as a continuation of the sitting day of 26 November and 30 November 2009, respectively. It is not unusual for the Senate to extend a sitting day to the next day. However, two consecutive extensions are unusual. These three extended days do not account for the reduction in the number of sittings days, as the Senate sat for two hidden days in the first part of the previous year.

Programming and procedural support

The Table Office provided support for the operation of the chamber, and met the needs of senators and others for accurate and timely documentation and assistance, by:

- providing procedural advice to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Manager of Government Business in the Senate and other ministers, government senators, party whips and committee chairs

- preparing 1,192 procedural scripts for use in the chamber, an average of 23 each sitting day (which is the same as in 2008–09)

- preparing draft and final editions of the *Order of Business* (the daily program) to assist whips and other senators before and during the sittings of the Senate

- providing a broadcasting captioning service for Senate proceedings

- liaising with committee chairs and secretariats to facilitate interaction between the Senate and its committees

- maintaining the roster of temporary chairs of committees.

Staff also arranged for the presentation of documents by ministers, the Auditor-General and committees when the Senate was not sitting. This procedure has become an increasingly useful avenue for the timely publication of material of interest to the Parliament.

In 2009–10, 440 documents were presented this way—a 9 per cent increase on the 2008–09 total of 404. This partly reflects an increasing trend for Senate legislation committees to be required to report on bills prior to the commencement of a sitting period. It also reflects the full-year operation of the orders of the Senate requiring information on departmental and agency appointments, vacancies and grants to be provided prior to the scheduled estimates hearings.

The timely provision of advice to the Manager of Government Business and other senators assists the efficient conduct of the business of the Senate and therefore is an important aspect of the work of the Table Office. During the year, advice was provided on a range of matters, including ways to deal with bills expeditiously given the time available for debate (including the application of standing order 142, colloquially known as the guillotine), condolence motions, orders for the production of documents and motions to vary the routine of business. Staff provided this advice, both in response to requests and proactively, in a timely

manner. Staff also produced accurate, high-quality documents on or ahead of time.
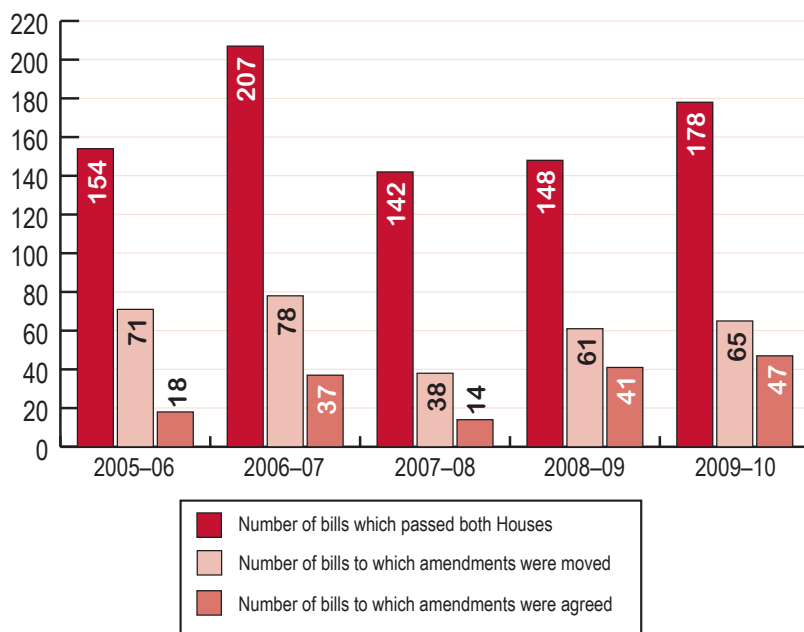
Legislation

The office responded to the requirements of the Senate and the needs of senators and others concerning legislation and related information by:
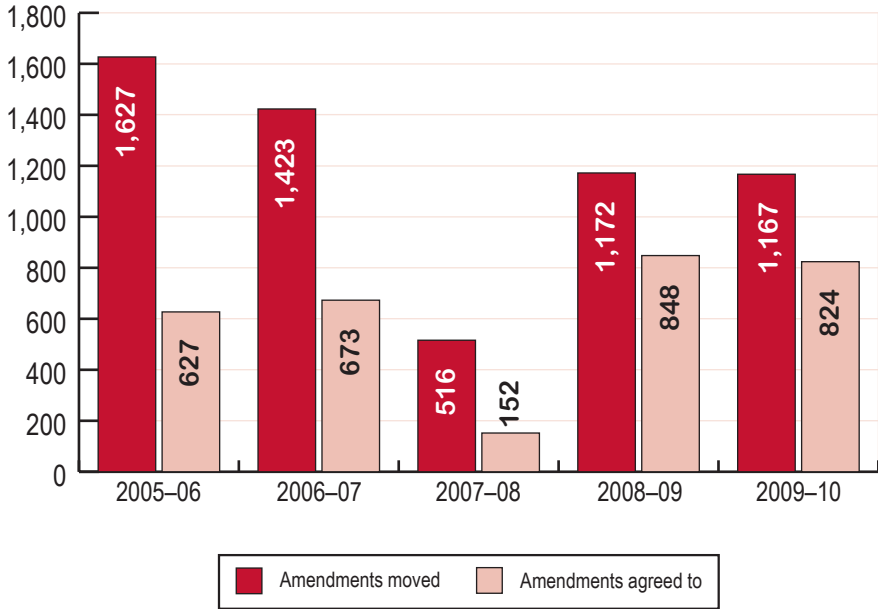
- processing all bills considered in the chamber
- preparing legislative documents, including procedural scripts, running sheets, schedules of amendments, third reading prints and messages
- recording the progress of legislation
- preparing assent and Act prints, and processing assent messages and proclamations.

The charts in figures 6 to 8 indicate the levels of legislative activity in recent years.

Figure 6   **Senate legislative activity, 2005–06 to 2009–10**

Legend:
- Number of bills which passed both Houses
- Number of bills to which amendments were moved
- Number of bills to which amendments were agreed

Data:
| Year	Passed both Houses	Amendments moved	Amendments agreed
2005–06	154	71	18
2006–07	207	78	37
2007–08	142	38	14
2008–09	148	61	41
2009–10	178	65	47

Figure 7   Amendments moved and agreed to by the Senate, 2005–06 to 2009–10

Note: The figures for amendments also include requests for amendments and proposals to omit clauses or items from bills.

Figure 8   Running sheets, 2005–06 to 2009–10
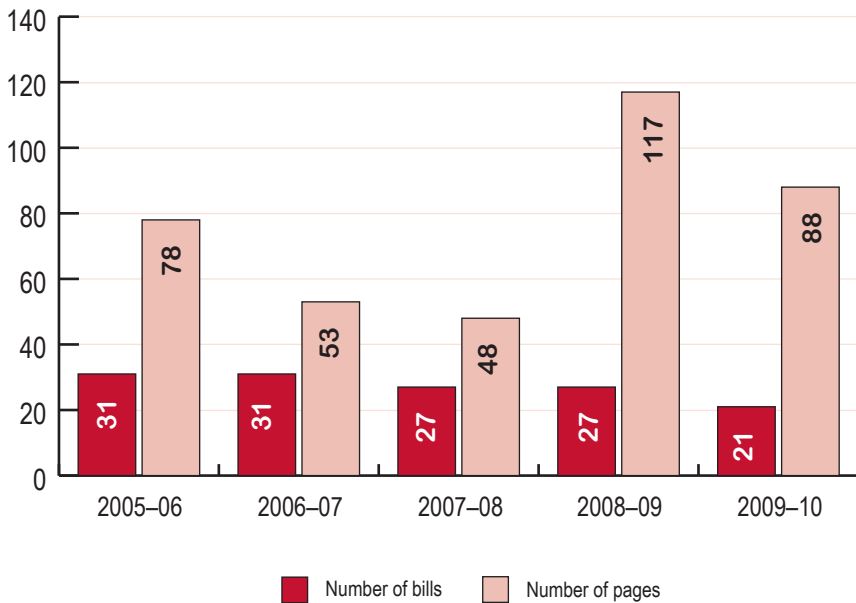
The number of amendments moved was almost identical to the number moved in the previous period. The number of amendments agreed to was also comparable. A quarter of the amendments moved (301) and agreed to (202) related to the second consideration of the carbon pollution reduction scheme bills introduced by the Government in late 2009. This number of amendments generates a demanding workload for the legislation subsection. As well as preparing running sheets to facilitate the consideration of these bills in the chamber (see below), the subsection checks and proofreads each amendment in preparation for possible inclusion in schedules of amendments. Although this work was completed in anticipation of the bills passing the Senate, the bills were finally negatived at the third reading stage in December 2009 and the schedules were not required.

Of the total number of amendments agreed to (824), 89 per cent (733) were amendments moved by the Government. This may reflect the Government's willingness to negotiate with the Opposition and the minor parties to progress its legislative program.

Running sheets facilitate the orderly and efficient consideration of all circulated amendments in committee of the whole. They are prepared when more than one set of amendments from more than one source are circulated for consideration. Running sheets are revised when further amendments are circulated after a running sheet is published. They are also revised to include outcomes and minor revisions when the consideration of a bill is complex and carries over a number of sitting days. Running sheets are provided electronically through hyperlinks in the *Dynamic Red*.

The number of bills for which running sheets were prepared in 2009–10 remained relatively constant with the historical average. The number of pages prepared decreased compared to the previous year (88 compared with 117). One-third of the running sheets were prepared for consideration of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Bill 2009 [No. 2] and the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2009 [No. 2].

The office is responsible for preparing the formal 'messages' by which the two Houses communicate on legislative and other activity. In 2009–10, 205 messages were prepared (181 in 2008–09). Of those messages, 193 related to the passage of bills, and 12 were administrative in nature (for example, relating to joint committee membership).

Bills system

The bills system is a document management system that enables bills and associated documents to be loaded to ParlInfo Search (to bills homepages), and metadata to be collected that reflects the progress of bills through both chambers.

The system is jointly administered by the table offices of the chamber departments and supported by the Bills System Advisory Group (BSAG). Staff from the chamber departments and the Department of Parliamentary Services are members of the group.

The group met for the first time in September 2009 and has met on two occasions since. The group's main focus is to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the system and to implement changes as required. The secretariat for the group will alternate between the chamber departments. The Department of the House of Representatives undertook that responsibility for the remainder of the 42nd Parliament.

The bills system has proven to be reliable and effective. When an unanticipated demand was placed on the system on two occasions in 2009–10—to accommodate a second identical print of certain bills—the developer was supportive in providing a short-term workaround. The advisory group has recommended that the system be changed to readily accommodate two identical prints of bills in future.

Version 12 of the system, including the homepage revision, went into production in mid-October 2009. Considerable work was undertaken by staff to revise the presentation of bills homepages. Staff are now concentrating on 'backcapturing' data for the system. This involves inputting the data for events and identifying the appropriate documents to be loaded. As a number of the documents are not available in electronic format, BSAG has been requested to implement a change to enable PDF versions to be loaded through the system. Reasonable progress has been made on the backcapture due to assistance being provided by a staff member from another subsection in the office. Further progress will be made during the upcoming election period.

The legislation subsection has continued to endeavour to meet the high expectations of users of the bills homepages. In 2009–10, 6,423,042 queries were made of the bills and legislation collection through ParlInfo Search. This represents 21 per cent of the total queries made through ParlInfo Search during that time.

Questions on notice, notices of motion and petitions

Senators continued to use questions on notice—written questions to ministers on the administration of public policy—as an important accountability mechanism.

During 2009–10, staff processed 1,083 questions on notice. The *Questions on Notice Summary* records statistics and other information relating to these questions, including response times. Figure 9 shows the trend in the numbers of questions on notice in recent years.

Figure 9   Questions on notice, 2005–06 to 2009–10
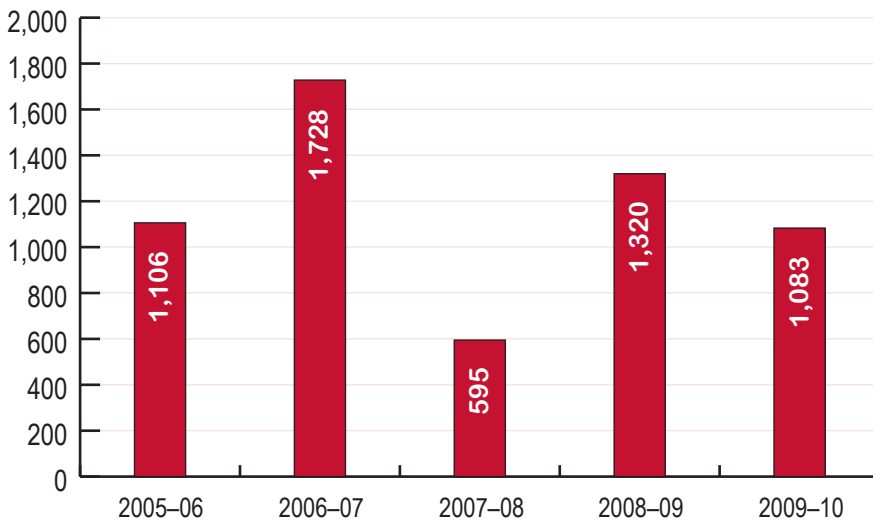
Notices of motion (used by senators to indicate their intention to move particular motions on specified days) are drafted by senators, the Table Office and the Procedure Office. In 2009–10, Table Office staff drafted or edited and processed 486 notices of motion, which were then included in the *Notice Paper* and the *Journals of the Senate*. This is a slight decrease compared to 500 in 2008–09.

During 2009–10, senators presented 43 petitions (45 in 2008–09), collectively representing 136,083 signatories. The office continued to provide advice to senators and members of the public on whether proposed petitions, including electronic petitions, conformed to the requirements of the Senate Standing Orders. All conforming petitions were processed promptly and presented in the Senate.

Formal and informal records of business

The office met the needs of senators and others for accurate and timely records by:

- producing and publishing the *Notice Paper* and the *Journals of the Senate*
- maintaining the *Dynamic Red* and publishing the *Senate Daily Summary*
- compiling and publishing statistical information relating to the Senate
- responding to requests for statistics on the work of the Senate
- maintaining information systems to help produce Table Office documents.

Formal records

The Table Office publishes the Senate's principal parliamentary documents online—both on the department's website and through ParlInfo Search—and in hard copy.

The *Notice Paper*, the formal agenda of Senate proceedings, provides essential information on the current and future business of the Senate and committees. Two versions of the *Notice Paper* were published before each sitting day: an abridged printed version, averaging 74 pages (51 pages in 2008–09), and a 'full' online version. The *Notice Paper* expands during the course of each parliament as unfinished business accumulates and the number of unanswered questions on notice increases.

The *Journals of the Senate* are the official record of decisions made by the Senate. During 2009–10, proof *Journals* were published online shortly after the end of each sitting day, and printed versions were distributed the next morning. Staff produced and published 52 proof *Journals*, each averaging 30 pages (27 pages in 2008–09).

Informal records and statistics

The *Dynamic Red*, available on the department's website, provides real-time information on the progress and outcomes of business on each sitting day. Relevant bills homepages, amendments and running sheets can be accessed via the *Dynamic Red*. The *Dynamic Red* is a valuable tool to monitor the proceedings of the chamber and attracts a wide audience including senators, parliamentary staff, government departments and agencies, and the general public. It continues to receive favourable feedback from users.

Information transferred from the *Dynamic Red* assists with the timely production of the *Senate Daily Summary*, a more considered review of the previous day's proceedings. The summary contains links to primary sources such as the *Journals of the Senate* (which records, among other things, changes to committee memberships), Hansard and committee reports. It is an essential tool for those who work in, or observe, the Senate. The *Senate Daily Summary* is also produced during estimates hearings, providing links to committee programs and other information.

Statistical summaries of business conducted by the Senate were produced after each sitting week. A more comprehensive set of statistics was also maintained online, providing timely access to the most commonly sought statistics on the work of the Senate. Staff also produced biannual volumes of *Business of the Senate*, which has recorded statistics on the work of the Senate for more than 30 years.

The office has noticed that the number of statistical inquiries it receives is decreasing as awareness of the online statistical collection increases. However, in 2009–10, information not available on the website was still sought by senators, parliamentary staff and other clients, and these requests were dealt with promptly. The Table Office produced statistics on matters such as:

- allocation of time for government business
- suspensions of standing orders
- time spent on the consideration of government documents and open-ended adjournment debates
- successful rearrangements of government programming.

Inquiries

Copies of all documents presented to the Senate are made available through the inquiries and distribution services provided by the office. The office also responds to inquiries relating to the work of the Senate and acts as an information 'hub' for senators, their staff, government departments and agencies and the general public.

Statistics collected by staff answering inquiries indicate that 6,762 inquiries were responded to during 2009–10. Most of the inquiries (92 per cent) were responded to within five minutes. The remainder of the inquiries were responded to by staff in timeframes agreed on with clients.

While the majority of inquiries originate from senators, their staff and departmental officers, the services of the inquiries subsection are used

extensively by other government departments and agencies (26 per cent of all inquiries), media representatives and legal organisations (21 per cent) to obtain copies of documents and advice on processes and outcomes from the Senate chamber.

The Table Office continued to use the Document Movement System or 'telelift' (an automated transportation system) to convey large quantities of documents, often simultaneously, throughout Parliament House. This system is essential to the prompt and reliable distribution by the Table Office of documents to senators, members and others in Parliament House, particularly documents required prior to the sitting of the Senate.

A pneumatic tube operates between the chamber and the Table Office. On a sitting day this device, as old-fashioned as it is, plays a vital role in transporting critical documents between the two places of work. The 'tube' and the 'telelift' are efficient means of transporting documents, saving both time and staff resources.
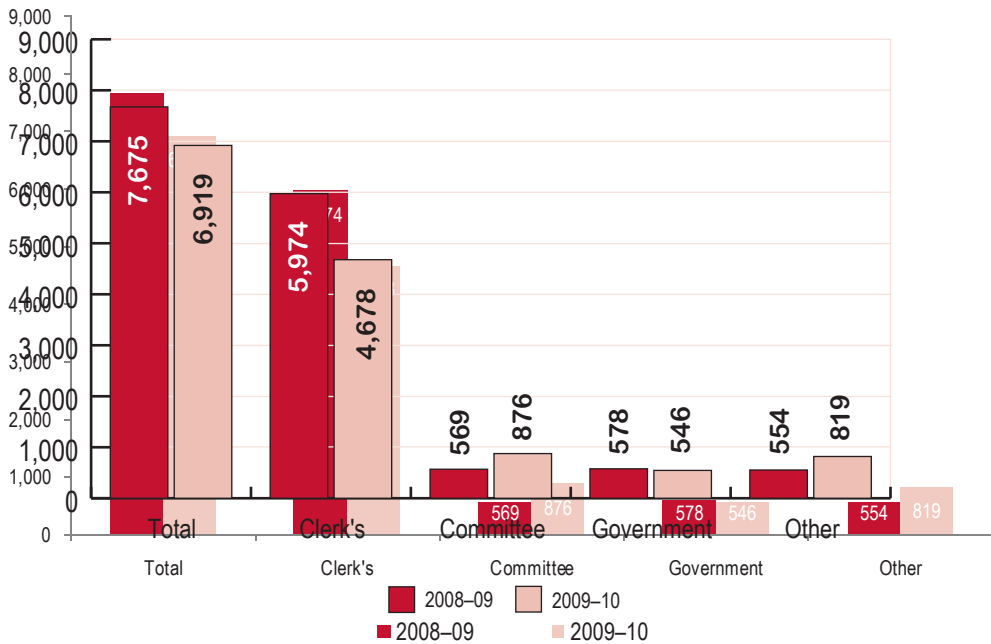
Documents

The Table Office processed the 6,919 documents presented to the Senate during 2009–10, and recorded them in the *Journals of the Senate* and the *Index to the Papers Presented to Parliament*. Figure 10 shows the number and type of documents tabled in the Senate in 2008–09 and 2009–10.

Three trends in relation to documents that were identified in 2008–09 continued in 2009–10:

- the number of Clerk's documents decreased—4,678 documents were tabled in 2009–10, a decrease of 22 per cent (from 5,974 in 2008–09)
- the number of committee reports tabled increased, by 54 per cent (25 per cent in 2008–09)
- the number of miscellaneous documents tabled increased, by 48 per cent (representing an increase of almost 200 per cent since 2007–08).

Figure 10   Documents tabled in the Senate, 2008–09 and 2009–10

Figure 10   Documents tabled in the Senate, 2008–09 and 2009–10

	Total	Clerk's	Committee	Government	Other
2008–09	7,675	5,974	569	578	554
2009–10	6,919	4,678	876	546	819

The papers database is a joint system maintained by the two chamber departments. The database facilitates the processing of documents and generates reports. One of the generated reports enables the production of the *Index to the Papers Presented to Parliament*. The index is published through the Senate website and is printed at the end of each parliament. In response to an approach from the Parliamentary Library, the index now has been made available through ParlInfo Search as the Tabled Papers Register. There is potential for this database to be developed further in future, including the possibility of providing the text of some documents to which the index refers. The development was acknowledged in the Joint Committee on Publications report into the development of a digital repository and electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series.

Digitisation and preservation of tabled papers

The office is using digital imaging to copy, preserve and ensure access to the collection of all documents presented to the Senate. There are two streams of work: making digital images and microfilm of the documents presented to the Senate since 2002 and creating digital images from the microfilm record of the documents from the Senate's first century. The digital images are stored in an electronic 'web repository' available through the department's website.

In 2009–10, the digital imaging team concentrated on resolving a number of technical issues that were delaying the loading of images to the web repository. This work resulted in the documents presented to the Senate in 29 of the 39 parliaments until 2001 being available online. Documents from 2001 until the current parliament are also available online. Of the 5,317,579 images loaded to the repository, 1,241,895 were loaded in 2009–10.

All the original documents presented to the Senate since its first meeting in 1901 are stored in Parliament House under archival conditions. The area available for storing these documents is limited and under increasing pressure as the collection grows. Last year's annual report mentioned a major rationalisation of stock and the acquisition of the former stationery store, which increased the document storage capability. This year the office has acquired another space in the basement, which will be dedicated to the storage of budget-related material such as portfolio budget statements. This will free up considerable space in the main basement document storage area.

Secretariat support for various committees

During the year, the Table Office provided secretariat support for all meetings and prepared the reports of the Selection of Bills Committee, the Senate Publications Committee and the Joint Committee on Publications.

The office provided some secretariat support to the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing. However, because of temporary vacancies further support was undertaken by another office in the department for six months.

The staff in the legislation subsection and the programming section also assisted committees by determining 'time critical bills'. On 13 May 2010, the Senate passed a motion referring time critical bills (those with commencement provisions that could take effect before 1 July 2010) to the relevant committee for consideration. The aim of the motion was to ensure that legislation committees had the opportunity to consider the provisions of bills introduced into the House of Representatives when the Senate was not sitting, prior to the June sittings when the legislation would be required to be passed. The motion expressed the Senate's view that a committee could consider a bill and report to the Senate that no inquiry was warranted. The bills were also considered by the Selection of Bills Committee in accordance with the provisions of the Standing Orders.

The Joint Committee on Publications held an inquiry into the development of a digital repository and electronic distribution of the Parliamentary Papers Series. The report of the committee was tabled on 24 June 2010. The committee recommended that a digital repository be developed within the Parliament, following the preparation of a business case to address issues raised in the report, mainly relating to archive and preservation concerns. The committee further recommended that the repository be ready for implementation in early 2011. Staff from the office will be involved in the development of the business case and subsequent implementation of the digital repository.

All committee meetings were convened, and documents were provided, within agreed timeframes.

Education activities

Staff in the Table Office continued to contribute to the training and development of departmental staff by presenting sessions in the department's training programs and offering 'field trips'.

The field trips are half-day sessions for small groups to give departmental staff and staff from other parliamentary departments the opportunity to learn more about the work of the Table Office. Those who have attended field trips have provided positive feedback that the sessions increase awareness of the services offered by the office.

The contribution by staff in the Table Office to the seminar program administered by the Procedure Office continued throughout the year, despite staffing difficulties.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

Factors influencing workload and staffing levels are set out in the 'Overviews' section.

The effectiveness of the Table Office in supporting the work of senators, the Senate and its committees is heavily dependent on the expertise of staff. The finalisation of various recruitment processes in 2009–10 means that staff are now working in their substantive positions and training for new staff is underway. On-the-job training is a fundamental component of this training and existing staff have been generous in sharing their knowledge, supporting the office to meet its objectives. The usual high standard and output of the office have been maintained.

All staff have also contributed to the initial work for the redevelopment of the document production system and the structural review being undertaken by the department. In various meetings ideas have been shared and discussed, resulting in a strong understanding of the focus the office needs to have to maintain its high standard of service to senators, the Senate and its committees.

Evaluation

The principal medium for evaluating the services of the Table Office is the biennial survey of senators' satisfaction with the services provided by the department. The next survey is due in 2011. As reported previously, the 2009 survey revealed high levels of satisfaction among senators with the advice, documents and services of the Table Office. Satisfaction with the work of the office has remained high across a number of surveys and the office aims to maintain the quality of its service.

To assist the office in evaluating its services, it also monitors its own performance. This monitoring in 2009–10 indicated that the high level of service was being maintained and there were no areas of major concern.

Much of the work of the Table Office involves direct contact with senators and their staff, as well as other clients. This presents an ongoing opportunity to receive feedback about the services provided by the office. Informal feedback continues to be positive and supports the office's self-evaluation.

Performance outlook

In 2010–11, the Table Office will continue its core work relating to the sittings of the Senate. The election break will provide an opportunity for the office to focus on enhancing its operations.

Work undertaken on the redevelopment of the document production system will be furthered in cooperation with staff from the Department of the House of Representatives. It is hoped that work on this project in the next 12 months can progress to the stage of identifying priorities and establishing timeframes within which to achieve those priorities.

The development of an electronic Parliamentary Papers Series may also proceed in cooperation with the other parliamentary departments. Again, this will build on work that commenced this year.

Staff from the departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate will continue to work on the bills system, refining the system so

that it continues to meet the needs of senators and their staff, parliamentary staff and persons outside the Parliament.

The office also plans to use the election period to examine the proposals made in its submission to the department's structural review. Some of these proposals related only to the Table Office, and may be implemented once the review has been completed. One such proposal is to revitalise the public interface of StatsNet.

Finally, following the election, there will be a new parliament and staff in the office will be involved in the preparations for the first sitting day of the new parliament.

Procedure Office

Outputs

Provision of advisory and drafting services to non-government senators.

Provision of procedural advice and training to senators, staff, public servants and officials from other parliaments both within Australia and overseas.

Provision of secretariat support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and Scrutiny of Bills Committee.

Provision of parliamentary information services to the community.

Provision of parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students.

Provision of policy advice and secretariat support for the maintenance and development of inter-parliamentary relations including the Inter-Parliamentary Union, overseas conferences and delegations program for senators.

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.	Feedback from ongoing evaluation processes on levels of satisfaction was consistently high, confirming the findings of the 2009 survey of senators.
	Procedural advice is accurate and covers all foreseeable eventualities.	Senators continued to acknowledge the accuracy and value of procedural advice.
	Amendments and bills are accurate and legally sound.	Legislative amendments and bills were accurate, and were prepared to the satisfaction of senators.
	Public information and parliamentary research is accurate, comprehensive and targeted for particular needs.	Public information resources were updated as required to reflect arrangements and procedural changes in the Senate.
	Education Centre teaching and other PEO projects accurately reflect the Parliament and its work.	The PEO conducted a record number of programs in the Education Centre, which operated at close to full capacity, and expanded the range and improved the accuracy of its website and publications.
Timeliness	Procedural advice is timely.	Procedural advice met all chamber deadlines.
	Scrutiny committee meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committees, as relevant.	All meetings of the scrutiny committees were held as scheduled and documentation was provided within the timeframes set by the committees.
	During sitting periods, amendments drafted as soon as possible after receipt of instructions.	Amendments were drafted in accordance with timeframes set by senators and the Senate.

Timeliness	Seminars and lectures held on time and in accordance with advertised schedule; public information projects delivered according to programmed schedule.	All seminars and lectures were held on time and in accordance with advertised schedules.
	PEO teaching programs held on time and in accordance with booking schedule.	PEO teaching programs were conducted in accordance with the booking schedule.
	PEO projects delivered according to programmed schedule.	PEO projects, including outreach programs, were managed and delivered in accordance with implementation plans.
	Information available on the internet and in publications is up to date and available as soon as practicable.	Information resources were updated as required to reflect changes in personnel and procedures.
		The PEO website was constantly monitored and timely action was taken to implement required changes.

Overview

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) produces educational programs and resources—including experiential learning programs, publications and a multi-modal website—for school students, teachers and others.

The Procedure Office is led by the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and has four functional areas, as shown in figure 11.

Figure 11   Elements and responsibilities of the Procedure Office

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

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Procedure Office in 2009–10 was 33 (34 in 2008–09).

The cost of providing the services of the Procedure Office in 2009–10 was $5.8 million ($6.1 million in 2008–09).

Procedural support

In 2009–10, the office assisted non-government senators and their staff by providing procedural advice relating to the role and work of the Senate and its committees. There was strong demand for such advice, particularly during sitting periods. Topics for advice generally revolved around the requirements of Senate procedure, but also ranged more broadly to include, for instance, the elements of the 'deadlock' provisions in section 57 of the Constitution; precedents for calling witnesses before Senate committees; and the options for the revival of regulations disallowed by the Senate.

Staff of the office ensured the accuracy of advice by consulting other departmental officers—principally the Clerk and 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 2009–10, the office prepared an average of eight procedural scripts per sitting day for senators' use in the chamber and elsewhere. This was higher than the 2008–09 average of seven scripts per day, but consistent with the average in 2007–08. The scripts typically related to procedural matters, such as disallowance motions; orders for the production of documents; and proposals to refer matters to committees.

The office also routinely responded to requests, from senators and their staff, to check material for procedural accuracy. Advice on these requests was accurate and provided in time to enable senators to use the material in the Senate and elsewhere.

Legislative drafting

In 2009–10, 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.

This work was undertaken primarily for non-government senators, but a small number of backbench government senators also used these services. Occasionally, the office drew up amendments to inform committee processes and demonstrate the means of implementing committee recommendations.

The office drafted and circulated 139 sets of 'committee of the whole' amendments, containing 476 individual amendments—these are amendments proposed to the text of bills dealt with by the Senate. Although the number of circulated amendments is low compared with 2008–09 (see table 2), the office also drafted more than 630 amendments that were *not* circulated, because they related to bills not dealt with by the Senate in 2009–10 or because they were drafted for use outside the chamber—to inform negotiations between parties, for instance. The amendments produced for government senators fell into this category.

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. This ensured senators were able to meet procedural requirements and demonstrate that their amendments were constitutionally sound.

The office also prepared and circulated 29 '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.

Despite the unpredictable levels of demand created by the concentration of legislative work within a small number of sitting weeks, the office met all timeframes for the production of amendments.

Private senators' bills continued to be used as vehicles for non-government parties and individual senators to put down policy footprints and advance debate across areas of interest. In 2009–10, the office drafted:

- 31 private senators' bills that were finalised and processed for introduction in the chamber
- a further nine private senators' bills that were published online by senators as exposure drafts, but not introduced.

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 non-government senators, 2006–07 to 2009–10

Service	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Committee of the whole amendments	1,524	423	859	476
Second reading amendments	111	56	25	29
Private senators' bills introduced	20	19	23	31
Procedural scripts prepared	353	304	394	441

Together these services form a substantial part of the support provided by the department to the legislative work of senators and the Senate. The biennial senators' survey has consistently found that senators report high to very high levels of satisfaction with these services. Informal feedback confirmed that this was the case in 2009–10.

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 2009–10:

- the Regulations and Ordinances Committee secretariat processed 2,468 instruments (3,404 in 2008–09)

- the Scrutiny of Bills Committee secretariat processed 258 bills (210 in 2008–09) and the committee commented on 160 bills (111 in 2008–09).

The reduction in the number of instruments processed by the Regulations and Ordinances Committee secretariat reflects changes to the civil aviation legislative framework that resulted in a significant reduction in the number of airworthiness directives made.

The secretariats, assisted by the committees' legal advisers, completed the necessary administrative tasks to enable the committees to undertake their work. The legal adviser position for the Scrutiny of Bills Committee was vacant from January 2010 until mid-April 2010, during which time the secretariat undertook the adviser's workload.

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.

In anticipation of its 30th anniversary in 2011, the Scrutiny of Bills Committee commenced an inquiry into its future role and direction. Information about the inquiry is available on the committee's website.

Staff from both secretariats briefed several international delegations about the role and operations of the Senate legislative scrutiny committees, and conducted a training seminar for public servants. In May 2010, staff from the Regulations and Ordinances Committee secretariat introduced a new training seminar for public servants on delegated legislation and the Senate.

The legislative scrutiny committees hosted the biennial Australia–New Zealand Scrutiny of Legislation Conference on 6–8 July 2009. The conference, opened by the Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia,

the Hon. Robert French, explored the theme of 'Scrutiny and Accountability in the 21st Century'. Staff from the secretariats organised the event and supported the 76 delegates representing legislative scrutiny committees in Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Public information and parliamentary research

In 2009–10, the Research Section:

- coordinated and delivered seminars and professional training programs for senators and their staff, parliamentary staff, Australian public servants 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 formal research partnership with the Parliamentary Studies Centre at the Australian National University.

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.

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 2009–10, 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.

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. During 2009–10, a total of 1,260 people attended 35 seminars.

The seminar series remained an integral part of graduate training programs in the public service. A large number of graduates enrolled in the full-day 'Introduction to the Senate' seminar, and the range of half-

day seminars was also well received. Senior officers of the department also conducted half-day sessions for Senior Executive Service officers.

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 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts; AusAID; the Law Council of Australia; the Defence and Industry Study Course; the Rural Leadership Program; and a group of Indigenous graduates.

Occasional lectures

During 2009–10, the section arranged eight lunchtime lectures as part of the popular occasional lecture series. Topics ranged from the rise of new forms of media and the erosion of democracy, to the political life of former Prime Minister the Rt Hon. Andrew Fisher. The series also featured a reflection by the then Clerk of the Senate, Harry Evans, on changes in the parliamentary institution during his long association with the Senate.

The department published lecture transcripts in its free journal *Papers on Parliament* and made audio recordings available on its website. Lectures were filmed and 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 three editions of *Papers on Parliament* during 2009–10:

- editions 51 and 53 largely comprise papers in the occasional lecture series
- edition 52 commemorates the career of the former Clerk of the Senate, Harry Evans: it contains a selection of his writings and a comprehensive bibliography of his articles from the 1980s to 2009.

In December 2009, the section published an illustrated booklet, *The President of the Senate*, which provides an overview of the role and function of the President, including how the President is elected, and some information on past presidents.

The editing, proofreading and indexing of volume 3 of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate* was completed in early May 2010. This volume, covering senators and clerks who left the Senate between 1962 and 1983, is expected to be published in August 2010. Work has commenced on volume 4, covering senators whose terms ended between 1983 and 2002. Authors have been found for all 109 entries proposed for volume 4, and 38 entries have been received. The section also began preparing for the online publication of the dictionary.

The section also launched a new Senate essay prize named in honour of the first President of the Senate, the Hon. Sir Richard Baker. The prize, which was advertised widely in the print media, is open to secondary school students enrolled in years 10 to 12. It is to be awarded annually to the best student essay in each state and territory on a topic that promotes knowledge of the Senate and its work. A panel of senators selected five winning essays in 2009–10. The authors each received $500 and a certificate.

The section continued to issue a range of free publications aimed at raising awareness of the Senate and parliamentary processes. Details of the publications available in 2009–10 are provided in appendix 4.

Exhibitions

The first part of a new exhibition in the first floor public exhibition area of Parliament House, 'Acting Wisely: The Work of the Australian Parliament', was completed in February 2009.

In August 2009, as the culmination of a coordinated effort between the section and the Department of Parliamentary Services, the Parliament's copy of Magna Carta was incorporated into the 'Acting Wisely' exhibition. The copy was moved from its former location in the Members' Hall to a purpose-built case within the exhibition, with improved lighting, security and interpretive text. The exhibition, which has been enthusiastically received, was officially opened by the President of the Senate in September 2009.

The section also published a booklet entitled *Australia's Magna Carta*, to complement the exhibition. The booklet chronicles the story of how the manuscript came into the Parliament's possession, and includes an account of the preservation work carried out on the manuscript by scientists from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.

Elements of the first stage of 'Acting Wisely', which deals with the Parliament's legislative function, were made available to a wider audience as the 'Making Laws' online exhibition. This followed the publication in July 2009 of an online version of the earlier 'For Peace, Order and Good Government' exhibition.

Work has commenced on the next stages of the 'Acting Wisely' exhibition, on representation and accountability, which will also be produced in both physical and online versions.

In December 2009, the section arranged the installation of an interactive 'Meet Your Senator' touch screen near the senators' portraits in the first floor public area. Together with a similar device in place for the House of Representatives, the screen provides visitors with an engaging and user-friendly introduction to all current senators and members of parliament.

Partnerships with the Australian National University

The department runs the Australian National Internships Program in partnership with the Australian National University. During 2009–10, 39 students completed parliamentary internships and 34 students were placed in other departments and agencies. Interns continued to see Parliament House as an outstanding placement. The office coordinated an induction seminar for each group of interns, and organised some of the functions associated with the program.

The department also continued to play an active role in the Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions research program, which is funded by the Australian Research Council and run by the Parliamentary Studies Centre at the Australian National University. Senate officers participated in workshops which provided feedback to authors who had submitted papers for publication.

In November 2009, the department co-hosted a conference on ethics and integrity in parliament, as part of the research program. The conference investigated the system of self-regulation used in Australia and the integrity systems used in other countries.

Parliamentary education services

During 2009–10, the PEO delivered an extensive range of high-quality educational services to schools, teachers and students.

Through its Education Centre, the PEO delivers an experiential learning program involving simulations of chamber and committee proceedings of

the House of Representatives and the Senate, for students visiting Parliament House.

Through its outreach program, the PEO provides other opportunities for students and teachers to learn about the Parliament. By analysing a range of data, the PEO is able to target students and organisations less able to undertake Parliament House-based programs. To support this strategy, the PEO produces 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 2009–10, the PEO continued to work with and report progress to the PEO Advisory Committee and worked closely with relevant stakeholders in the other parliamentary departments, government departments and educational institutions.

Education Centre activities

Experiential role-playing programs are conducted at the Education Centre at Parliament House during the school term. Role-play programs were delivered to 91,648 students in 2,622 groups during 2009–10.

Current programs focus on four key functions of the Parliament. Evaluation of Education Centre activities has revealed an evolving demand among teacher and student groups to explore the work of the Parliament in greater depth. In 2009–10, the PEO began revising its programs to meet that demand.

The Impressive Teachers Scheme was also introduced during the year, to identify highly motivated teachers who are interested in further exploring the work of the Parliament, and to invite them to develop a professional relationship with the PEO. By affirming achievement and interest, the PEO hopes to gain partners to foster the work of parliamentary education and to encourage others to be similarly committed. The program is expected to provide opportunities for resource trialling, surveying, outreach visits and professional assistance.
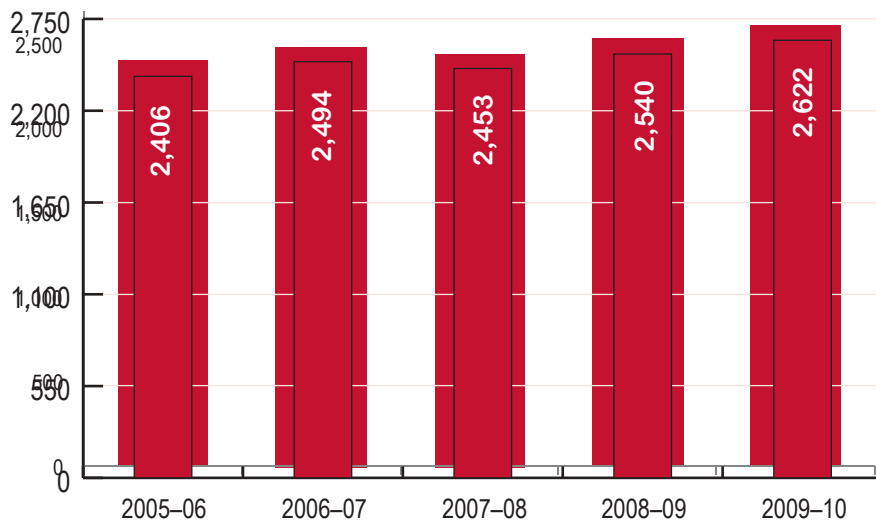
Figures 12 and 13 demonstrate that Education Centre attendances continued to grow in 2009–10. However, there is only limited scope for future growth, as the education facilities at Parliament House are operating at or near capacity. Some success has been achieved in

encouraging schools to visit earlier in the school year when the demand for PEO education programs is lower.

Figure 12   Students who visited the PEO Education Centre, 2005–06 to 2009–10

Year	Students
2005–06	81,072
2006–07	87,113
2007–08	89,061
2008–09	90,786
2009–10	91,648
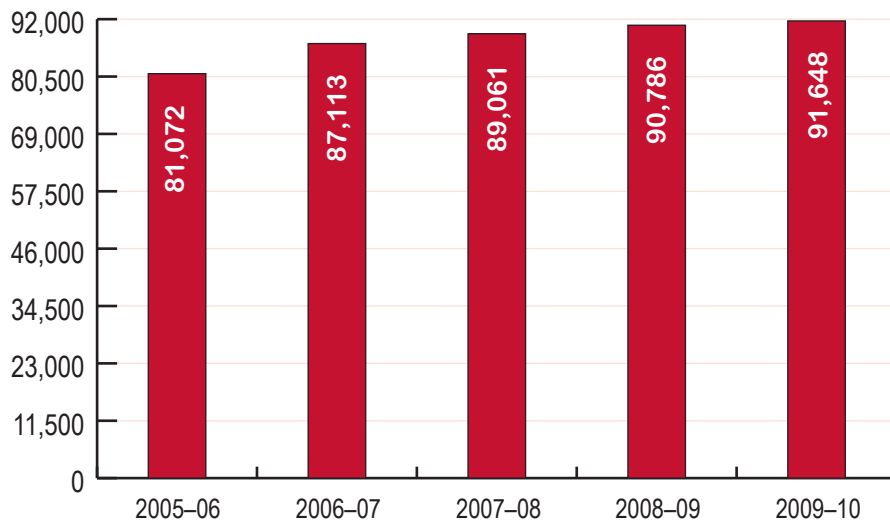
Figure 13   School groups that visited the PEO Education Centre, 2005–06 to 2009–10

Year	School groups
2005–06	2,406
2006–07	2,494
2007–08	2,453
2008–09	2,540
2009–10	2,622

Outreach

Only a small percentage of Australian students are able to make the trip to Parliament House to participate in Education Centre programs. As a result, an important part of the PEO's mission is to provide educational resources for those students and teachers who cannot make the trip to Canberra.

One popular program involves conducting outreach activities across the country, taking the parliamentary role-play and other educational activities 'on the road'. Senators and members often welcome the opportunity to participate when this program is delivered to schools in their electorates.

A wide geographical spread of outreach activities has been achieved in recent years. In 2009–10, the PEO conducted outreach activities in the locations shown in table 3.

Table 3   Locations of PEO outreach activities in 2009–10

Victoria	Queensland	Western Australia	South Australia	Northern Territory
Melbourne (suburbs)	Atherton Ayr Brisbane (suburbs) Cairns Charters Towers Ingham Innisfail Mackay Mount Isa Proserpine Townsville	Armadale Geraldton Joondalup Karratha Northampton Perth (suburbs) Pinjara South Hedland	Adelaide (suburbs) Adelaide Hills Ceduna Gladstone Murray Bridge Orroroo Peterborough Port Elliott Whyalla Yankalilla	Katherine Mataranka Nhulunbuy Tennant Creek Barunga

Plans to deliver outreach activities in regional New South Wales and Victoria and in Tasmania during September and October 2010 have been confirmed, and preliminary planning for visits to several other regions during 2010–11 has commenced. Figure 14 shows the geographical spread of outreach activities in the five calendar years from 2007 to 2011, including possible outreach locations in 2010–11.

Figure 14   Locations of PEO outreach activities, 2007 to 2011
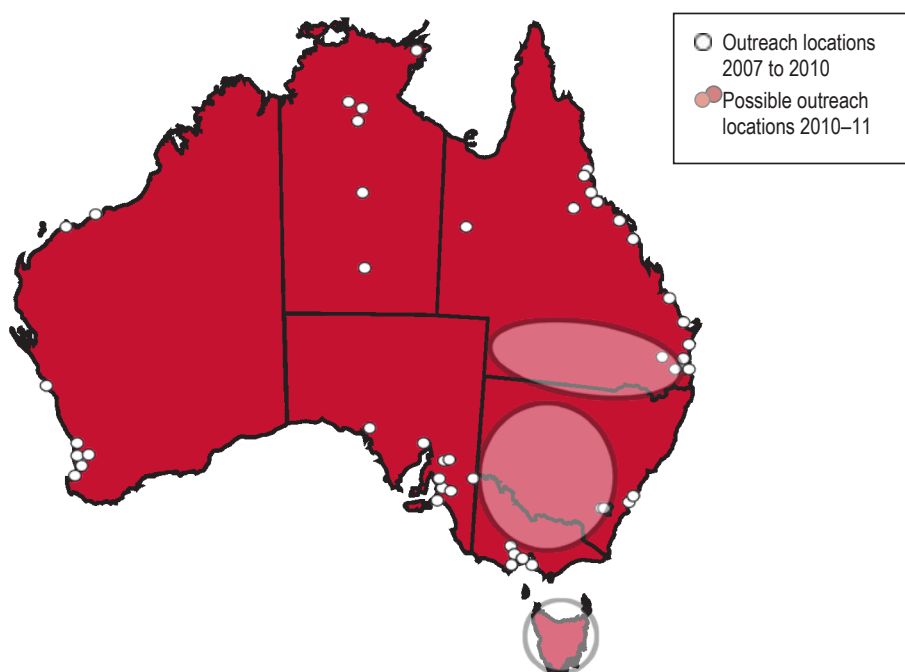
Website and other resources

To better 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 multiple formats.

During the year, the PEO commenced:

- a formal 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

- the ongoing enhancement of the in-house video production unit and development of material for the online video series *About Parliament*

- the enhancement of the PEO website, including a review of all web content and the introduction of a content management system

- a review of the research and development of web 2.0 technologies that will enhance the PEO's ability to engage secondary students

- the investigation of new communication technologies, including video conferencing, for the delivery of PEO programs.

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

A key achievement in 2009–10 was the release of a magazine-style resource, *Get Parliament*, for upper primary and lower secondary students. *Get Parliament* introduces the Parliament and the way it functions, with reference to material on federation, the Australian Constitution and the Parliament at work.

The PEO is committed to providing senators and members and their staff with direct access to parliamentary education information, resources and services. During 2009–10, this included regular email and face-to-face promotions to maintain parliamentarians' awareness of new and existing resources and services, including *Get Parliament*. The department's intranet site provided members and senators and their staff with up-to-date information about school groups visiting Parliament House and details of PEO programs and resources, including customised parliamentary education resource kits.

In 2009–10, there was a significant increase in demand for PEO publications and resources and in visits to the PEO website. The website recorded more than 525,000 sessions and more than 4.32 million page views, an increase of 22 per cent and 18 per cent respectively since 2008–09. This indicates that significantly more people are accessing the PEO website and viewing increased amounts of material, a key aim of the PEO's outreach strategy.

The examples of feedback from the PEO's target audiences shown in figure 15 confirm that the education services and resources were very well received in 2009–10.

Figure 15   Comments on PEO services and resources, 2009–10

From senators and members

We really liked [*Get Parliament*] … Layout is good and clear … The information is well written and communicates complex issues clearly and effectively. The graphics are fun—and overall it should be an effective teaching resource.

Thank you for all the wonderful assistance you have given our office and I know how appreciative the schools that receive these kits are as they write and tell us … we have had two schools actually plan trips to Canberra after receiving a kit. Keep up the great work you all do.

I would like to pass on my gratitude and that of the schools in my electorate to … the PEO, who came to my electorate … and ran Parliament Alive … the feedback from those teachers and schools was overwhelming. [The program] truly benefits young people in understanding how decisions we make here in Parliament House can affect them, their homes and their families.

From teachers

On behalf of Year 7 teachers at our college, I congratulate you on your website. We regularly use the lesson plans—they are well thought out and relevant.

Part of my study as a pre-service teacher involved designing class programs for both primary and secondary aged students. Your website and resources provided myself and our study group with some excellent material for inclusion in our presentation kit.

The program put together by the Parliamentary Education Office was intellectually stimulating and provided the students with an overview of the Australian political system.

From students

Hi. I am an 11 year old kid from Victoria and I just wanted to tell you that your website is great.

Thank you for filling our minds with knowledge and the interesting ways and rules of parliament.

On behalf of the grade six and seven students we would like to thank you for making the very long trip to our school to run a mock parliament and demonstrate to us how parliament is run.

Joint ventures

As in past years, 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 2009–10, 288 students took part, examining legislative work and Senate committee processes through role-play.

The PEO worked with Rotary International to run the Rotary Adventures in Citizenship program in September 2009. The five-day program gave the selected Year 11 students from across Australia an opportunity to experience the work of the Parliament, meet members of parliament and participate in an intensive learning program.

In 2009–10, the PEO also:

- coordinated student attendance at the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics hearings examining the Governor of the Reserve Bank

- provided assistance, including tailored role-play programs, for the Oxfam Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Summit and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Heywire* program.

Professional associations

The PEO maintained good relationships with parliamentary educator colleagues, both within Australia and internationally, throughout 2009–10. In addition to hosting visits by staff from the United Kingdom Parliament's Education Service and Outreach Office, the PEO attended and made presentations to the Australasian Parliamentary Educators Conference hosted by the Parliament of Victoria in September 2009.

The PEO also:

- built on its relationships with the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and the Australian Electoral Commission's National Electoral Education Centre, which share common subject matter and target audiences with the PEO

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

Staff training and development

The PEO invested heavily in training and development for its staff. During 2009–10, this included staff attendance at parliamentary training programs and professional and technical development courses.

Most PEO staff members engage in face-to-face education activity which requires a high level of professional skill and commitment. All new educators undertake a comprehensive training program that ensures they are well equipped to cater for a wide range of student aptitudes, interests and special needs. Several new educators were recruited and trained in 2009–10.

The PEO's publishing capability was expanded in 2009–10 with the recruitment of a publishing manager, who is supported by a dedicated web developer and a publishing officer. Publishing staff focused also on training and development, particularly the use of new web technologies, improved interface and application design, usability and accessibility.

International activities

During 2009–10, 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 119th IPU Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, in October 2009. The Director, Journals and Notice Paper, served as secretary to the delegation, providing administrative support and guidance to delegation members on the procedures and practices of the IPU prior to and during the assembly.

The Usher of the Black Rod served as secretary to a delegation to European parliaments and institutions in April 2010.

The Deputy President of the Senate and the then Deputy Clerk attended the 40th Conference of Presiding Officers and Clerks, held in Kiribati in July 2009.

Seminars and training programs were provided for parliamentary officers visiting from overseas parliaments. In particular, comprehensive programs were provided for delegations from India, Indonesia and Vietnam, continuing a long-term engagement with those countries' parliaments. The Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, conducted jointly with the Department of the House of Representatives in March 2010, provided training for officers from overseas parliaments in countries such as Bhutan, China, Finland, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mongolia, New Zealand, Samoa, Thailand and Tonga.

The department signed a memorandum of understanding with the Indonesian Upper House, the Dewan Perwakilan Daerah (DPD), in September 2009. This partnership agreement provides for the sharing of skills and experiences through training activities, and is designed to improve the support provided to senators of the DPD.

The department also provided joint funding to the Parliamentary Relations Office (PRO), which is administered by the Department of the House of Representatives. The PRO provides parliamentary relations support to both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Many of the programs administered by the PRO involve significant contributions from officers of the Department of the Senate. The performance of the PRO is detailed in the annual report for 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 continue to operate at near capacity, with schools often making bookings for the program many months in advance. Some success has been achieved in encouraging schools to visit earlier in the school year when the demand for PEO education programs is lower.

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 2009–10, there was a significant increase in visits to the PEO website and in the demand for PEO publications and resources.

Evaluation

The main vehicle for evaluating the services provided by the office is the survey of senators, which is undertaken every two years. As recorded in last year's report, high levels of satisfaction were recorded across the full range of services provided by the office in the 2009 survey.

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 continual performance appraisal assists the office to make timely and responsive adjustments to the way it delivers its services. High levels of positive feedback were received in 2009–10.

The PEO in particular monitors feedback on its activities and resources from senators and members, as well as its target audiences of students and teachers. Figure 15 provides a few examples.

Performance outlook

In 2010–11, 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 a focus on preparing and delivering orientation programs for new senators following the election. Each area within the office will also implement any changes which arise from the department's structural review.

The Research Section will further develop its information resources. A highlight will be the publication of volume 3 of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, and a program to commence publishing extracts of that work online. Another key task will be restructuring the office's other publications for the new parliamentary website that is due to come online in 2010–11.

Work will continue on additional segments of the 'Acting Wisely' exhibition exploring the themes of representation and accountability.

The Research Section will coordinate a major conference to mark the 40th anniversary of the Senate's system of legislative and general purpose standing committees. The section will also coordinate the next Parliament House Open Day, scheduled for September 2010, as well as a range of activities to implement the ongoing Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions project.

In 2010–11, the PEO will seek to complete and consolidate a range of projects and programs. In the Education Centre, the implementation of the recommendations of a review of the role-play program will be completed: the most significant feature will be the introduction of concept-based role-plays, in contrast to the 'chamber-based' programs currently delivered.

In addition to facilitating role-play classes at Parliament House for more than 91,500 young Australians, the PEO will restructure and comprehensively review the material on its website to improve its accessibility and relevance. Increased emphasis will be placed on interactivity and an expanded range of materials will be developed, including new material for secondary students. Several publications will be updated and republished, and a number of outreach programs involving senators and members are planned.

Committee Office

Output

Provision of secretariat support to the Senate legislative and general purpose standing committees, select committees and certain joint committees.

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks. Advice, documentation, publications and draft reports are accurate and of a high standard.	Further to the senators' survey results published last year, formal and informal feedback mechanisms continued to show that senators consider the support provided by the Committee Office to be effective. When debating committee reports, committee chairs and senators recognised the high quality of services provided by secretariats in: • drafting reports • dealing effectively with witnesses and clients • organising committee meetings and hearings • producing quality committee briefings • providing sound procedural advice • liaising closely with senators' offices.
Timeliness	Meetings held, documentation provided and reports produced within timeframes set by the Senate or the committee, as relevant. Tabling deadlines met in all but extraordinary circumstances.	Committee secretariats organised meetings, hearings, briefings and inspections in accordance with committee requirements, within constraints arising from the availability of members. New secretariats were established in time to support the first meetings of new select committees. Reports were drafted and presented to the Senate in accordance with the timeframes set by committees and deadlines set by the Senate.
Quantity	Documentation is sufficient for committee purposes and material for the public is available promptly, electronically or in hard copy.	Committee staff provided committee members, witnesses and others with documents in accordance with secretariat procedures, orders of the Senate and committee requirements. On tabling, reports were promptly made available to senators and others in both printed and electronic formats.

Overview

The Committee Office administers legislative and general purpose standing committee secretariats, select committee secretariats and certain joint statutory committee secretariats. This role includes:

- giving accurate and timely procedural advice and administrative support to facilitate and expedite the work of committees
- arranging meetings and hearings in accordance with committee decisions
- providing comprehensive and timely briefings and research papers
- drafting high-quality reports which accurately canvass and analyse the evidence from submissions and hearings and reflect the requirements of committees
- assisting in the drafting of minority reports
- communicating effectively with witnesses and members of the general public
- being proactive in anticipating requirements of committees and chairs.

The staffing and administrative structure of the office is outlined in figure 16, including the secretaries of the committee secretariats. It is led by the Clerk Assistant (Committees), who also performs duties as a clerk at the table in the Senate chamber and as a committee secretary.

Figure 16   Elements and responsibilities of the Committee Office

Executive
Chris Reid, Acting Clerk Assistant
Roxane Le Guen, Senior Clerk
Procedural advice and training
Planning and coordination
Secretariat staffing and resources
Statistics and records

Legislative and general purpose standing committee secretariats	Joint statutory committee secretariats	Select committee secretariats
Community Affairs *Naomi Bleeser* Economics *John Hawkins* Education, Employment and Workplace Relations *Shona Batge* Environment, Communications and the Arts *Stephen Palethorpe* Finance and Public Administration *Christine McDonald* Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Kathleen Dermody* Legal and Constitutional Affairs *Julie Dennett* Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport *Jeanette Radcliffe*	Australian Crime Commission *Tim Watling* Corporations and Financial Services *Ian Holland* Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity *Tim Watling*	Agricultural and Related Industries *Jeanette Radcliffe* Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities *Hamish Hansford* Fuel and Energy *Penelope Robinson* Reform of the Australian Federation *Ian Holland* National Broadband Network [ceased to exist 17 June 2010] *Ian Holland*

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Committee Office in 2009–10 was 59 (62 in 2008–09).

The typical staff structure of a committee secretariat supporting a legislative and general purpose standing committee comprises a committee secretary, a principal research officer, a senior research officer or a research officer, and an executive assistant. Depending on the workload allocated to a committee, additional resources are often provided to assist with administration or with research, analysis and report writing.

The cost of the office in 2009–10 was $8.6 million ($9.0 million in 2008–09). The 2008–09 expenditure was higher because of a significantly greater workload in that year.

The primary cost in operating a committee is staffing, with a typical secretariat costing about $385,000 this year. The other costs relate to administration and include items such as advertising, venue hire, refreshments at hearings, transport (including flights, charter flights and taxis), accommodation for staff at interstate hearings and report printing. The administrative costs of a typical secretariat for the reporting period was about $67,000.

With the approval of the President of the Senate, access to specialist advice was obtained by one committee secretariat during 2009–10, at a cost of $1,600.

Senators' salaries are not included in the costs of committees, as it is not possible to establish the proportion of a senator's salary that should be attributed to committee work. The flight and accommodation costs of senators attending hearings are paid by the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

Hansard and broadcasting services for public hearings are provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services. The office works with the Department of Parliamentary Services to coordinate and enhance the provision of those services.

Procedural advice and administration

In 2009–10, committee secretaries provided procedural and administrative advice to committee chairs and members as well as to members of the public, including people seeking information about committee activities or participating in committee inquiries. Higher level advice was also provided by the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Clerk Assistant (Committees) and Senior Clerk of Committees.

The advice, oral and written, covered a wide variety of procedural issues, such as:

- the establishment of inquiries, the drafting of terms of reference and the membership of committees
- the interpretation of standing orders relating to the operations of committees

- ways of dealing with adverse reflections on persons, made in evidence to committees
- issues relating to parliamentary privilege
- matters arising from estimates hearings—for example, the definition of an 'officer', restrictions to lines of questioning, and the placing of questions on notice by senators.

In the year since the Senate adopted a new order for dealing with claims of public interest immunity, there is some evidence that the order has worked reasonably well. However, there appears to be an increasing tendency for witnesses at public and estimates hearings to take questions on notice rather than make a claim of public interest immunity.

In addition to procedural advice, the office provided extensive training on committee operations and procedures to new senators and new staff of senators, as well as to new and ongoing departmental staff.

Committee secretaries met regularly throughout the year to discuss management and procedural issues encountered by committee secretariats, and to discuss issues raised in the *Procedural Information Bulletin*.

Under standing order 25(10) the chairs of the committees may meet to discuss any matter relating to the operations of the committees. The Chairs' Committee is chaired by the Deputy President. The Clerk Assistant (Committees) is the secretary. During 2009–10, the committee met on two occasions, and considered issues such as the behaviour of the media at committee hearings; 'watermarking' the broadcast footage of Senate committees; and a statistical summary of committee activity in 2009–10.

Activity levels

As was the case in 2008–09, the Senate referred a high number of matters to committees for inquiry in 2009–10.

Legislative and general purpose standing committees

The Senate has eight pairs of legislation and references committees established pursuant to standing order 25 as permanent committees. Permanent committees continue for the life of a parliament and are re-established at the commencement of each new parliament.

During 2009–10, the Senate referred 130 matters to standing committees, 96 of which were bills or packages of bills. As shown in table 4, the committees tabled 157 reports, excluding reports on estimates, compared to 160 reports in 2008–09.

Table 4   Activities of committees, 2007–08 to 2009–10

	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Meetings (number)			
Public	90	307	227
Private	207	313	435
Inspections/other	3	7	9
Meetings (hours)			
Public	445	1,671	979
Private	70	109	104
Matters referred			
Bills/provisions of bills (as packages)	50	90	96
Other	24	29	34
Reference of annual reports automatically	15	16	16
Reports presented[a]	101	160	157
Submissions received	3,905	6,296	9,116
Witnesses	1,165	2,556	2,659
Extensions of time granted	25	79	95

a   Excludes estimates; includes reports on annual reports and other non-bill references.

Table 5   Referral of bills inquiries, 2007–08 to 2009–10
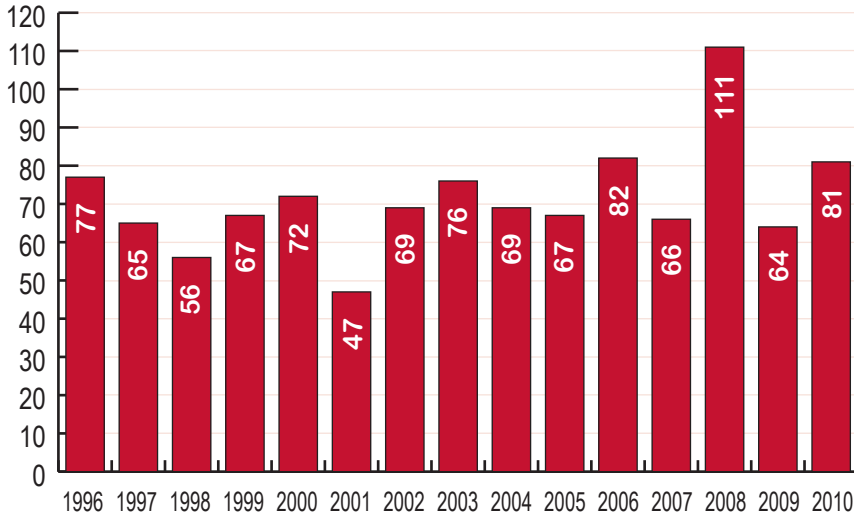
	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Number of bills introduced into parliament	197	235	226
Number of individual bills referred	65	129	114
Proportion of total individual bills referred	33%	55%	50%
Packages of bills referred	50	90	96

In 2009–10, bills referred to committees had an average reporting deadline of 41 working days. This compares to an average of 35 working days in 2008–09.
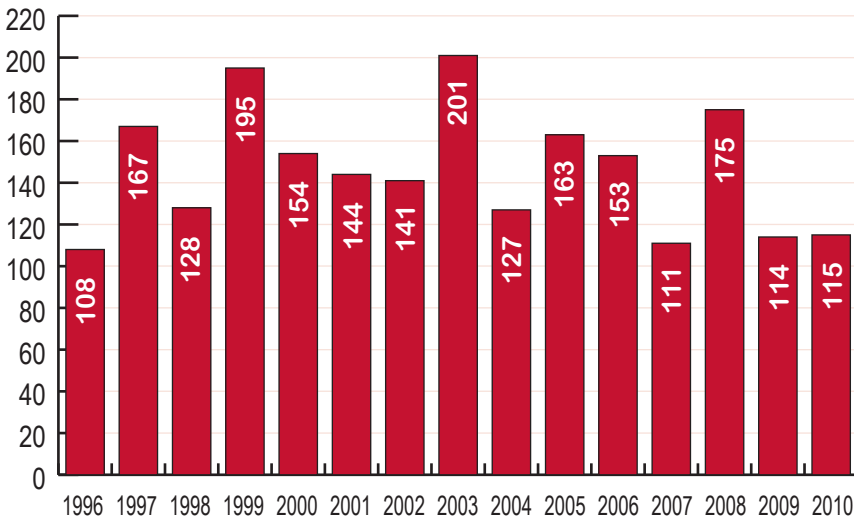
The results in tables 4 and 5 for the past three reporting periods show the range in workloads of Senate committees in the previous parliament (in which the Government held a majority in the Senate) and the current parliament (in which the Government does not hold a majority in the Senate). To gain a better understanding of the fluctuations in workload

across parliaments and election cycles, it is necessary to look at the statistical history, as shown in figures 17 and 18.

Figure 17   **Number of Senate committee references, 1996 to 2010**

Figure showing number of Senate committee references by year: 1996: 77, 1997: 65, 1998: 56, 1999: 67, 2000: 72, 2001: 47, 2002: 69, 2003: 76, 2004: 69, 2005: 67, 2006: 82, 2007: 66, 2008: 111, 2009: 64, 2010: 81.

Figure 18   **Number of Senate standing committee hearings, 1996 to 2010**

Figure showing number of Senate standing committee hearings by year: 1996: 108, 1997: 167, 1998: 128, 1999: 195, 2000: 154, 2001: 144, 2002: 141, 2003: 201, 2004: 127, 2005: 163, 2006: 153, 2007: 111, 2008: 175, 2009: 114, 2010: 115.

As shown in table 6, the usual cycle of estimates hearings was conducted during the year, commencing in October 2009 with a week of supplementary hearings for the 2009–10 Budget. A week of additional estimates hearings was held in February 2010. The initial estimates hearings for the 2010–11 Budget took place between 24 May and 4 June 2010.

The requirement to hold an additional day of estimates hearings into Indigenous matters, which affects all the portfolios with budget expenditure or responsibility for Indigenous issues, is now well established and appreciated by senators with an interest in this policy area. In addition, the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee reconvened on 17 June 2010 to hold a further hearing into the estimates of the Department of Finance and Deregulation in relation to government advertising.

Table 6 **Activities of committees considering estimates, 2008–09 to 2010–11 budget cycles**

Budget cycle	Hours of budget estimates hearings		Hours of additional estimates hearings	Total hours	Witnesses	Pages of evidence
	May–June[a]	*October– November*[b]	*February*			
2010–11	329	–	–	329	1,710	3,997
2009–10	332	189	177	698	3,156	7,119
2008–09	322	176	166	664	5,758	10,191
2007–08	333	*Not held*	183	516	1,832	4,004

a   Main hearings.

b   Supplementary hearings.

Overall, the 2009–10 budget cycle estimates involved 698 hours of hearings, a slight increase on the 2008–09 budget cycle. Committees prepared and tabled 16 reports on estimates, eight following the additional estimates held in February 2010 and eight after the budget estimates held in May–June 2010.

The activity of committees considering estimates generates considerable administrative effort for committee secretariats. Scheduling the hearings is particularly complex because:

- all departments and statutory bodies of the Commonwealth are involved
- ongoing coordination is required to ensure that ministers are in attendance to take responsibility for answering questions
- many senators wish to attend hearings of more than one committee, and so secretariats spend much time coordinating and adjusting programs and timetables to facilitate this.

An example of the last point occurred during the budget estimates in May 2010, when the Secretary of the Treasury could only appear before the

Economics Legislation Committee on a day on which four other committees were scheduled to hold estimates hearings. As the Standing Orders allow only any four of the eight committees to meet at the same time, agreement was reached for the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee to postpone its estimates public hearings on that day until after the Economics Legislation Committee had completed and adjourned its hearing.

In the course of the estimates public hearings, senators place many questions on notice. Secretariats follow up and publish the answers to those questions. Typical numbers of questions placed on notice in the last budget estimates hearings range from 168 questions for the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee to 617 questions for the Economics Legislation Committee.

Select committees

A select committee is an ad hoc committee established by the Senate to inquire into and report on a specific matter or matters. In most cases, a select committee ceases to exist when it presents its final report. Often, select committees also present interim reports.

Five select committees operated during 2009–10. One of those, the Select Committee on the National Broadband Network, presented its final report to the Senate on 17 June 2010 and then ceased to exist.

The Committee Office continues to provide secretariat support for:

- the Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries—this committee has two inquiries and is due to report on 13 August and 23 August 2010

- the Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities—this committee is due to report every six months and to present its final report on 30 September 2010

- the Select Committee on Fuel and Energy—this committee is due to report on 30 August 2010

- the Select Committee on the Reform of the Australian Federation—this committee is due to report on 17 November 2010.

During 2009–10, select committees held 109 meetings (public and private), for a total of 309 hours. They received 310 submissions and heard 606 witnesses. The corresponding figures for 2008–09 were 139 meetings (public and private), for a total of 390 hours, 8,620 submissions and 789 witnesses.

Joint committees

Joint committees comprise senators together with members of the House of Representatives. They are established by resolution of each House and, in the case of statutory committees, in accordance with the provisions of the relevant Act.

During 2009–10, the Committee Office supported three statutory joint committees: Corporations and Financial Services, the Australian Crime Commission, and the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity.

The committees held 84 meetings (public, private and inspections) for a total of 173 hours. They received 389 submissions and heard 184 witnesses. The corresponding figures for 2008–09 were 96 meetings, 148 hours, 392 submissions and 188 witnesses.

Community engagement

Committee members place considerable value on engaging with a broad range of people as they conduct each committee inquiry. Committee secretariats assist committees to achieve this, through a variety of strategies:

- advertising all inquiries in the national media and on the internet
- corresponding directly with groups known to be interested in the subject matter of an inquiry
- travelling interstate, including to regional centres and remote areas, to have hearings with witnesses and visit the sites of matters under investigation
- conducting hearings through telephone and video conferences, including with witnesses overseas.

Senate committee secretariats supported 934 meetings and hearings during the year, an increase compared with 862 in 2008–09. These statistics include estimates hearings held by committees. A breakdown by location of the committee meetings and hearings in 2009–10 appears in figure 19.

Figure 19   Committee meetings and hearings by location, 2009–10

ACT: 662
ACT (Estimates): 70
NSW: 59
Victoria: 51
Queensland: 34
WA: 30
SA: 11
Tasmania: 8
NT: 9
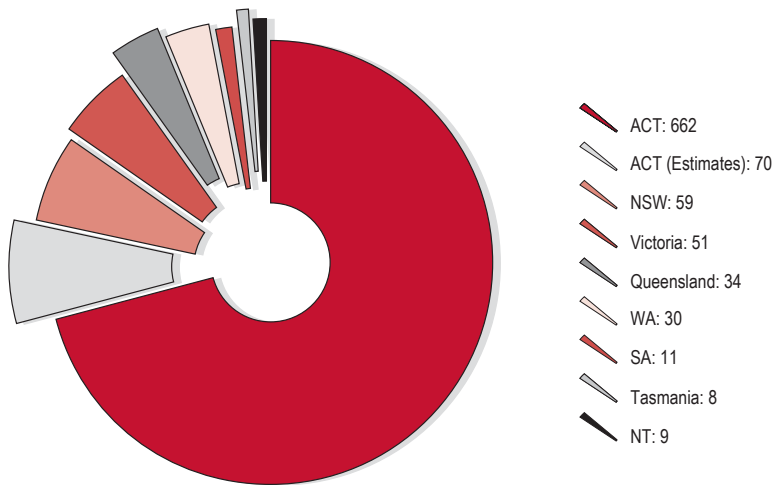
Use of technology

The Senate Centralised Information Database assists committee secretariats to quickly and accurately handle the large volumes of information used to support committee inquiries. The database includes capacity:

- for members of the public to enter submissions directly
- for secretariats to rapidly collate data, such as addresses for mail-outs
- for information to be transferred electronically from witnesses to secretariats.

The database was completed in May 2010 and is now used by all standing committee secretariats. It is improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the office by saving staff time, enabling staff to transfer seamlessly between secretariats, and enhancing the office's management of the large numbers of submissions received by committees.

Two innovations foreshadowed in last year's report were implemented in 2009–10:

- Acknowledging that video footage of hearings is increasingly being broadcast on television, the Chairs' Committee resolved to require a Senate 'watermark' (that is, a logo) to appear on all broadcast footage of Senate committee hearings. All television media outlets have complied with the requirement since it was introduced in December 2009.

- The office has long advocated the broadcasting of interstate public hearings just as public hearings held in Parliament House are broadcast. By June 2010, the Department of Parliamentary Services had commenced implementation of such a service, by using 'away kits' to provide instant audio broadcast of interstate public hearings. The introduction of full telecast and webcast of committee hearings from anywhere in Australia remains a priority for the office.

The office also continues to investigate strategies to support committee inquiries by enhancing accessibility to committee material held on the Senate's website. The committee section of the website attracts substantial interest. As in 2008–09, more than 13 million page views were recorded in 2009–10, indicative of the usefulness of the committee material made available by the office. The content and presentation of committee material on the website will be further developed in 2010–11.

Education activities and other contributions

In 2009–10, Committee Office staff also contributed to the department's outcome by:

- serving as secretaries to parliamentary delegations
- acting as presenters in the department's training and seminar programs
- providing briefings about Senate committee work for visiting parliamentary delegations—briefings about estimates hearings continued to be of particular interest to international visitors.

The office also contributed to the reviews of the committee systems of the parliaments of Victoria and Queensland (including a formal submission by the Clerk of the Senate to the Parliament of Queensland in May 2010).

In both 2009 and 2010, two participants in the Working in the Senate Development Program were attached to various committee secretariats, providing administrative and research support to Senate committee inquiries.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

As was the case in 2008–09, the high committee secretariat workloads were the significant feature of 2009–10, particularly the large number of inquiries referred by the Senate (which is covered in the 'Activity levels' section).

The trend of the Senate to set very short reporting timeframes, often referring several bills to a committee for report within a week or a fortnight, has made it difficult for committee secretariats to complete the necessary administrative preparations, including making arrangements for Hansard and broadcasting services and calling for submissions from the public. It also limits the resources available to secretariats to analyse evidence and draft reports.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Committee Office in 2009–10 was 59 (62 in 2008–09). The decrease resulted from the reduction in the number of select committees in 2009–10 and the more effective utilisation of staff across the office. Several long-serving officers retired during 2009–10, a significant loss of committee working experience. The positions were filled by a combination of internal promotion and external appointment.

In 2009–10, the office's strategies to effectively manage its workload included:

- deploying staff from committee secretariats experiencing lighter workloads to assist busier committee secretariats
- securing secondments from executive departments to assist with specific tasks, including serving as a committee secretary or assisting with research
- requesting committee staff to work additional hours (noting that this strategy cannot be sustained in the long term).

Evaluation

The principal formal means of evaluating the performance of the Committee Office in supporting Senate committees and certain joint committees is the biennial senators' survey. The last survey was conducted in 2009, with the next one due in 2010–11.

Comments made in the chamber when a committee's report is tabled or debated are another source of evaluation. As in 2008–09, senators were highly positive in their comments, some of which are listed in figure 20. Informal feedback from witnesses also indicated satisfaction with their dealings with secretariat staff.

Figure 20   Senators' comments on Committee Office secretariats, 2009–10

I want to put on record my appreciation to the secretariat and my appreciation for so many people who gave their time to tell us their stories—again reinforcing the value of the committee system in this place. We now have those issues in front of us …

But, as usual, we could not have done it without the brilliant and diligent supporting work of the secretariat and the staff … our thanks to all the work that goes on behind the scenes.

Firstly, I thank the secretariat for the work that they did in preparing the report. It was quite a lengthy period of inquiry and their attention to detail in working with the committee was very much appreciated. I again thank the secretariat and my colleagues on the committee for the work that went into the inquiry.

I thank the committee secretariat for its work in providing an overview of the very important area of Australia's role as an education provider in our world.

Performance outlook

The election period is likely to reduce the level of committee activity during the next 12 months. The timing and the result of the election will determine committee activity in 2010–11 and beyond.

The key resource that the office provides to committees is its people. In 2010–11, the office will adopt a structured approach to consolidate institutional and procedural knowledge among new and more experienced staff, manage limited resources and enhance the office's technological capability, to ensure that its services to committees remain of the highest order. This will include the implementation of any relevant recommendations arising from the department's structural review.

Black Rod's Office

Outputs

Senators' services

Provision of office, chamber and committee room support; information technology, payroll and ceremonial services; and security advice for senators and Senate office-holders in Parliament House.

Provision of financial management, human resource management, records management and information technology services to the department.

Provision of support services, in conjunction with the Department of the House of Representatives, to the Former Members' Association.

Administered items

Payment of parliamentary salaries and allowances to senators and office-holders of the Senate.

	Performance indicators	Performance results
Quality	The degree of satisfaction of the President, Deputy President, committee members and senators, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of advice and support and the achievement of key tasks.	Favourable feedback received during this year about the provision of support services confirmed the high levels of satisfaction shown by the 2009 survey of senators. No complaints were received from senators in relation to payment of salaries and allowances and queries were addressed as they arose. Positive feedback was received from senators following accommodation moves undertaken as a result of office-holder changes.
	Advice, documentation and publications are accurate and of a high standard.	Satisfaction with the quality of advice, documentation and publications provided by the office remained high.
Timeliness	All support services delivered in a timely manner.	Salaries and allowances were delivered to senators and office-holders on time. The office successfully completed ten accommodation moves for senators (as a result of office-holder changes) and other minor moves during the year. While some projects were delayed because of the department's dependence on the Department of Parliamentary Services to provide support in delivering those projects, there was a noticeable improvement compared to the previous year.
Quantity	All support services and supplies delivered in accordance with entitlements on request.	All support services were delivered on request, in accordance with relevant legislation and the Standing Orders.

Overview

The primary function of the Black Rod's Office is to provide support services to the Senate chamber and committees and to senators when they are using their Parliament House offices.

The Senators' Services Section:

- assists the President and Clerk on ceremonial and other occasions
- supplies services including messengerial support to the chamber, deliveries, committee room servicing, transport, accommodation, assets management, printing and desktop publishing.

The Information Technology Section provides senators with information technology support services in their Parliament House offices and limited support services and equipment when they are away from Parliament House. The section also supports the department and its staff.

The Human Resource Management Section delivers human resource management services for the department, including payroll services for senators and departmental staff. The section also administers the department's human resource management information system and records management.

The Financial Management Section delivers the department's financial management, accounting and budgeting services. The section also administers the department's financial management information system, provides secretariat support to the Audit and Evaluation Committee, manages the internal audit contract and develops and maintains the risk management framework.

The Black Rod's Office is led by the Usher of the Black Rod and has five functional areas, as shown in figure 21.

Figure 21   Elements and responsibilities of the Black Rod's Office

Executive
Brien Hallett, Usher of the Black Rod
Procedural, ceremonial, security and administrative advice
Membership of the Security Management Board
Advice to the Presiding Officers' Information Technology Advisory Group and to the House and Broadcasting committees

Senators' Services	Information Technology	Human Resource Management	Financial Management
Glenn Krause, A/g Deputy Usher of the Black Rod	*Joe d'Angelo, Chief Information Technology Officer*	*Anthony Szell, Director Human Resource Management*	*Joe d'Angelo, Chief Finance Officer*
Accommodation	Information technology equipment	Recruitment and staffing	Budget management and advice
Assets management, purchasing and disposals	Internet publishing	Pay and conditions	Financial reporting and systems management
Chamber support	Support for departmental information technology applications	Workforce planning	Accounting policy development and advice
Committee room support		Learning and development	
Desktop publishing	Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on information technology matters	Occupational health and safety	Accounts processing, general ledger maintenance and advice
Fire and emergency warden administration		Rehabilitation coordination	
Mail and freight		Industrial relations	Strategic procurement advice
Office equipment		Performance management	
Printing and photocopying		Corporate planning	Support for senior management decision making
Protective security		Records management	
Coordination and liaison with other parliamentary departments on facilities, security, projects and maintenance matters			
Travel and fleet management			
Comcar shuttle			

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Black Rod's Office for 2009–10 was 46, the same as in 2008–09.

The cost of providing support services to the Senate chamber, committees and senators in their Parliament House offices in 2009–10 was $3.4 million ($3.1 million in 2008–09).

Senators' services

During the year, the Senators' Services Section continued to provide a wide range of services to senators and the department. This included assisting the President to respond to requests to conduct activities within the parliamentary precinct.

Ceremonial support services

No major ceremonial events were supported during 2009–10. However, planning is underway for the expected opening of a new parliament prior to the end of 2010.

Office services

During 2009–10, the section:

- reconfigured the Senate wing car park to address occupational health and safety concerns of media tenants and to install additional bike racks
- managed the refurbishment of nine sets of senators' furniture
- completed:
  - eight refurbishments of senators' offices and departmental areas
  - ten accommodation moves for senators and departmental staff
- completed the replacement of inefficient instant boiling water units with more energy efficient equipment
- installed:
  - three compactus units, two for records management storage and one for Table Office storage
  - new meeting tables for various meeting spaces, including shadow ministers' suites (the first purchase under the department's furniture replacement project)
  - eight photocopier multifunction devices (for party leaders in March 2010, a shadow minister in May 2010 and general circulation areas in June 2010)
- provided support services to committee room users, including:
  - the Australia–New Zealand Scrutiny of Legislation Conference in July 2009
  - Senate estimates hearings in October 2009, February 2010 and May–June 2010

  – media 'lock-ups' before the release of the Budget and the final
    report of the Australia's Future Tax System review, in May 2010

• delivered general office support, equipment and furniture
  maintenance, classified waste removal and stationery services.

Printing and delivery services

The section provided high-quality reprographic and delivery services for
the department and, under contract, other parliamentary departments.
Turnaround times were met consistently, ensuring that printed
information was available when required, even at short notice, and
assisting committees to meet their tight deadlines for delivery of reports.

During 2009–10, the section completed 1,267 printing jobs. Of these, 327
were for committees, 688 were in direct support of Senate chamber
activities and senators, and nine were for other parliamentary
departments. The total value of work produced was $514,719, of which
$219,741 was attributed to committee work. This was a decrease of
$87,616 on the previous year's total, reflecting a reduction in work for the
other parliamentary departments and some improvement in the accuracy
of job costings.

In 2009–10, the office purchased additional finishing equipment,
including a punch binding machine, a scoring machine and a laminating
machine. This has enhanced in-house capability to produce certain items
that were previously outsourced, such as business cards, manuals and
pamphlets, thereby improving the cost-effectiveness of the printing unit.
A broken guillotine was also replaced, improving workplace safety.

The planned review of the methodology and software tool used for the
management and costing of printing and desktop publishing work was
deferred because other priorities intervened during the reporting period.
However, it is expected that the review will be undertaken in 2010–11.

The section continued to provide a high standard of delivery services to
senators, their staff and departmental staff. Scheduled run times were met
for all deliveries, including internal stationery deliveries. The efficiency
of the mail run schedule was improved by replacing a regular run at 8.00
pm on sitting days with on-demand mail pick-ups.

The new mailroom, which was completed in August 2009, has achieved
the aims of co-locating staff and improving efficiency. It integrates well
with the building design and its visual impact on the general circulation
area is minimal.

Whole-of-parliament activities

In 2009–10, the office continued to work cooperatively with the other parliamentary departments. In particular, it:

- coordinated departmental aspects of infrastructure projects administered by the Department of Parliamentary Services, including the refurbishment of Senate chamber gallery seating completed in February 2010
- developed and implemented departmental security management and business continuity plans, and continued to provide significant support to the development of whole-of-parliament strategic, security and continuity plans.

Information technology

Publishing and testing activities dominated the activities of the Information Technology Section in 2009–10.

Many departmental documents and exhibitions were published online. Notable examples are:

- the online version of the *Annotated Standing Orders of the Australian Senate*
- the 'For Peace, Order and Good Government' online exhibition
- the 'Making Laws' online exhibition.

Two updated interfaces were released for the Committee Office's Senate Centralised Information Database, for internal and external users of the system. Both changes delivered significant usability and efficiency improvements.

Updating desktop software and commencing the rollout of a new standard operating system to departmental users generated a significant amount of testing and planning work for the section.

The section also replaced 120 desktop computers located in senators' Parliament House offices and departmental offices.

Other information technology activities in 2009–10 included:

- commencing virtualisation of test and production servers
- commencing a project to update the Table Office document production system

- reviewing and updating departmental information technology security and risk management policies and procedures
- continuing to monitor metadata and World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines compliance on the Senate website
- implementing 3G technology to enable Committee Office staff to maintain mobile phone network access while travelling to remote locations
- implementing an online solution to keep users up to date with the status of their network access requests.

The section also continued to provide input to parliament-wide information technology projects managed by the Department of Parliamentary Services, such as the new parliamentary website, network faxing and wireless projects.

Human resource management

During the year, the Human Resource Management Section was responsible for monthly pays for senators and fortnightly pays for departmental staff. The section participated in an internal audit of its payroll services that reported favourably on the controls in place and the services delivered.

The section revised or created human resource policies and procedures for:

- salary packaging
- outside employment/voluntary work
- gifts and benefits
- use of departmental resources
- attendance and leave
- travelling to, and working in, regional, remote and overseas locations
- recruitment and selection
- dealing with suspected breaches of the Parliamentary Service Code of Conduct
- dealing with whistleblowers' reports
- health and safety management arrangements
- house sitting allowance, committee allowance and special additional leave
- rehabilitation.

Updated human resource authorisations and delegations were also issued and a quick reference guide for users was developed.

The section also provided administrative support to 31 externally-advertised recruitment activities for the department and continued to support managers and staff in relation to matters requiring human resource management technical support and guidance.

Work continued on an e-recruitment solution for the department's employment vacancies. The e-recruitment solution offered as part of the department's current human resource management information system could not be fully implemented in 2009–10, because of software and hardware issues. Implementation and testing is expected to be completed in 2010–11. This will enable prospective applicants to apply for departmental positions online.

Significant section resources have been used during the development and negotiation of a new enterprise agreement for non-Senior Executive Service staff of the department. Eight negotiation meetings were held with bargaining representatives.

The section also prepared a report on the feasibility of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Service Commissioner's 2008 *Review of Implementation of the Amalgamation of the Former Joint Departments*.

Records management

The records management subsection is responsible for:

- creating, sentencing and disposing of departmental files
- managing and maintaining the department's record-keeping system
- providing advice and assistance on recordkeeping to departmental staff.

The department continued to revise its record-keeping policy and procedures in 2009–10. The revised policy and procedures will be completed in 2010–11.

During 2009–10, 1,162 files were created, 1,418 files were requested or returned, 1,142 files were sentenced and disposal action was completed on 763 files. The annual registry file census was conducted in July 2009. The census confirmed that files are easily located and registry procedures are well controlled.

In April 2010, new retention schedules for administrative records were issued by the National Archives of Australia through the revised Administrative Functions Disposal Authority. The office modified the Total Records and Information Management (TRIM) system to implement the new schedules.

An upgrade to the TRIM system to accommodate the department's new standard operating system was also implemented in 2009–10 and will be rolled out in 2010–11. The upgrade will also provide the department with the functionality to file documents electronically.

Financial management

The Financial Management Section ensures that the department meets its external reporting responsibilities; manages the department's budget; develops and applies financial management policies; and maintains appropriate governance structures. The section also delivers accounting services. During 2009–10, the section:

- reviewed:
  - the department's financial delegations and authorisations and risk management framework
  - the Clerk's Instructions and Financial Management Guidelines
  - third-party drawing rights in relation to special appropriations administered by other Commonwealth departments
- coordinated the internal budget process
- developed new monthly financial reports
- prepared the 2008–09 annual financial statements (which received an unqualified audit report from the Australian National Audit Office) and the department's portfolio budget statements for 2010–11
- met all monthly reporting requirements via the Commonwealth Budget Management System
- upgraded the department's financial management information system.

Factors, events and trends influencing performance

The key management, assets management and stationery systems implemented in 2008–09 continued to assist with effective administration of these areas.

The Black Rod's Office continued to work with the Department of Parliamentary Services to ensure that the interests of the Department of

the Senate are represented in the development and implementation of parliamentary projects and that effective support is received from the Department of Parliamentary Services.

Evaluation

Much of the work of the office involves frequent direct contact with senators, their staff and other clients, presenting an ongoing opportunity to receive feedback on the office's services. This informal feedback continued to be very positive. The more formal biennial survey of senators' satisfaction is scheduled for early 2011.

Section heads met weekly with the Usher of the Black Rod to review operational matters relating to the whole office, and also met regularly with their teams to consider performance and work-related issues.

Outputs are evaluated through reports from the various management information systems.

Performance outlook

The Black Rod's Office will coordinate the planning for the opening of the 43rd Parliament, expected in 2010–11. Although the election period enables the department to undertake new project work, the Black Rod's Office will continue ongoing activities and projects to support the department. Projects of particular note for 2010–11 include the replacement of furniture for departmental and senators' staff and the improvement and rationalisation of departmental storage facilities.

Each area within the office will also implement changes arising from the department's structural review.