

# Black Rod's Office

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## Outputs

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Provision of office, chamber and committee room support, ceremonial services and security advice for senators and Senate office-holders.

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

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### Performance information

Services are provided to the satisfaction of the President, other office-holders, Senate committees and senators so that they are able to fulfil their roles.

Services are of a high standard, are provided promptly and are accurate.

### Performance results

Positive feedback from senators, their staff and parliamentary office-holders was received throughout the reporting period.

Services were delivered promptly and accurately.

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## Overview

The primary function of the Black Rod's Office is to provide support services to the Senate, to Senate committees and to senators when they are at Parliament House, and to deliver administrative services to the department and its staff. The office is led by the Usher of the Black Rod and has three operational areas, as shown in figure 12. The Usher of the Black Rod undertakes formal and ceremonial roles in the Senate chamber, assisted by three senior staff.

A major focus for the Black Rod's Office for this reporting period was the organisation of ceremonial arrangements for the opening of the 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament on 12 November 2013. The office also provided ceremonial support for the swearing in of the Governor-General, an event that, while not a proceeding of the Senate, took place in the Senate chamber on 28 March 2014.

The Usher of the Black Rod worked closely with all parliamentary departments, through participation in the Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group, the Security Management Board and the Heritage Advisory Board (which was disbanded on 30 June 2014), and as required in the management of the parliamentary precincts. The Usher of the Black Rod also administered the Presiding Officers' Rules for Media Related Activity in Parliament House and its Precincts on behalf of the President.

The Black Rod's Office maintained its high level of service and support to the Senate, senators and committees during this reporting period.

## Figure 12 Elements and responsibilities of the Black Rod’s Office

### Executive

#### Rachel Callinan, Usher of the Black Rod<sup>1</sup>

Procedural, ceremonial, security and administrative advice  
 Membership of the Security Management Board  
 Advice to the House Committee and Broadcasting Committee

| Senators’ Services                 | Human Resource Management              | Financial Management                                       |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>John Baczynski, Director</b>    | <b>Anthony Szell, Director</b>         | <b>Michelle Crowther, CFO</b>                              |
| Accommodation                      | Recruitment and staffing               | Financial management and advice                            |
| Assets management                  | Pay and conditions                     | Financial reporting and systems management                 |
| Chamber and committee room support | Learning and development               | Accounting policy development and advice                   |
| Comcar shuttle                     | Work health and safety                 | Accounts processing, general ledger maintenance and advice |
| Delivery services                  | Rehabilitation coordination            | Strategic procurement advice                               |
| Fleet management                   | Industrial relations                   | Support for senior management decision making              |
| Office equipment                   | Information technology security advice |  |
| Printing and desktop publishing    | Performance management                 |  |
| Project board membership           | Records management                     |  |
| Security advice and support        | Project board membership               |  |

1. Ms Bronwyn Notzon held the position from 2 September 2013 – 18 May 2014. Mr Brien Hallett held the position from 1 July – 1 September 2013 and 19 May – 27 June 2014. The current Usher, Ms Rachel Callinan, commenced in the role on 30 June 2014.

The regular work of the office involves frequent and direct contact with senators, their staff, parliamentary office holders and other clients, all of whom provide regular informal feedback which is generally positive.

More formally, three Senate committees reviewed services provided by the department, and in particular the Black Rod’s Office: the Senate House Committee (for which the Usher of the Black Rod provides secretariat support) met once during the reporting period; the Usher of the Black Rod joined the Clerk in appearances before the Appropriations and Staffing Committee; and the department appeared at estimates hearings of the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Black Rod’s Office for 2013–14 was 32 (35 in 2012–13) and the cost of running the Office was \$2.4 million (\$2.4 million in 2012–13).

## Senators' services

The Usher of the Black Rod and the Senators' Services Section assist the President and Clerk on ceremonial and other occasions, and also provide chamber and message delivery services to support the work of the Senate. The section also provided resources and advice to assist in the preparation for the opening of the 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament on 12 November 2013, the swearing in of the Governor-General on 28 March 2014 and the presentation to the Governor-General of the Address-in-reply on 16 June 2014. These ceremonial occasions involved coordinating the order of arrangements for each event among other things.

The Usher of the Black Rod and the section also provided security advice and support throughout the year to the President and the department, including through the Black Rod's membership of Parliament's Security Management Board.

The Senators' Services Section provided a range of office services to support senators, their staff and departmental staff, including:

- general office support, asset management, maintenance of equipment and furniture and stationery services
- coordinating transport arrangements and accommodation within the Senate wing
- managing committee room bookings and providing support services to users.

The section provided printing and delivery services for the department and, under contract, to other parliamentary departments. Turnaround times were met consistently, ensuring that documents, including committee reports, were available when required. The section also provided a high standard of delivery services to senators, their staff and departmental staff even at peak times (for example, delivery of the May budget papers). Scheduled run times were met for all deliveries.

The section facilitated numerous accommodation moves for senators as a result of resignations, filling of casual vacancies, reshuffles and the change in government following the 2013 election, which involved 41 suite moves. Staff also provided assistance to 12 retiring senators to vacate their suites by 30 June 2014.

Throughout 2013–14, the Senators' Services Section worked with the other parliamentary departments on a range of activities. In particular, the section coordinated departmental aspects of infrastructure projects administered by DPS; and provided support and advice in relation to security matters within the parliamentary precincts in collaboration with the Office of the Serjeant-at-Arms, DPS Security and the Australian Federal Police.

## Human resource management

The Human Resource Management Section delivers human resource management services for the department, including payroll services for senators and departmental staff.

During the reporting period, the section also carried out some employment related work for the other parliamentary departments including the coordination of work being done to modernise the Parliamentary Departments Staff Award.

In consultation with the other parliamentary departments, support and information was provided in relation to legislative changes made to the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* and its subordinate and related legislation. One such change was made as a result of the introduction of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* and the development of associated procedures. Public Interest Disclosure training was arranged for all parliamentary departments and was delivered by the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office.

Various employment-related supplier contractors were also established or renewed during the period.

## Records management

The Human Resource Management Section, which is also responsible for records management, rolled out electronic recordkeeping for all non-parliamentary records during the reporting period. Digitisation work was also completed on various non-parliamentary records. Work commenced on reviewing the department's Records Authorities (i.e. 1184 and 1185) and discussions were held with the National Archives of Australia about transferring certain records to them in due course.

## Financial management

During the year the Financial Management Section delivered the department's financial management, accounting and budgeting services. It administered the department's financial management information system, provided secretariat support to the Audit and Evaluation Committee, managed the internal audit contract and maintained the risk management framework and fraud control plan.

The section continued to ensure that the department complied with external reporting responsibilities, including audited annual financial statements and procurement requirements.

The section supported the department's budget process, including the preparation of the portfolio budget statements and internal budgets.

The section also prepared the department for the transition from the old financial framework under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* to the new framework under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

## Consolidation of parliamentary ICT

On 1 July 2013, DPS assumed responsibility for the provision of ICT to the Parliament and the parliamentary departments (as reported in the department's previous Annual Report). This consolidation arose out of the recommendations of the Presiding Officers' 2012 Review of Information and Communication Technology for the Parliament.

As part of the consolidation process 3.5 Senate staff positions moved into DPS. Agreed departmental ICT assets were also transferred to DPS, along with \$1.1 million of prior year funding and \$4.1 million of budget and forward year funding.

A joint management committee was established to review and monitor work carried out under the memorandum of understanding between the parliamentary departments and to develop and oversee a service level agreement. The Usher of the Black Rod represents the department on that committee.

## Performance outlook

In 2014–15, the Black Rod's Office will continue its core work, including providing chamber and committee room support, office support to senators, ceremonial services and security advice for senators and the President. The office will also continue to support the department through the provision of human resources and financial advice and services.

Key priorities for 2014–15 include:

- the swearing-in of 12 new senators and facilitating a large number of office moves resulting from these arrivals, the seniority-based review of the allocation of suites and the changeover of Senate office-holders
- implementing new financial administrative arrangements which support the commencement of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*
- the negotiation of a new enterprise agreement with staff.

The Black Rod's Office, like other areas in the department, continues to be affected by budgetary constraints and will continue to look for ways to make its processes even more efficient.