

Departmental overview

The Senate secretariat

The Senate department provides secretariat support for the Senate and its committees, and advice and support to enable senators and others to participate in their meetings. Its work is substantially driven by the requirements of the Senate and senators.

The department provides services and undertakes activities in the following areas:

- Advice about Senate and committee proceedings
- Secretariat support for the Senate
- Secretariat support for committees
- Administrative advice and support for senators
- Public information and parliamentary education
- Capability, governance and accountability.

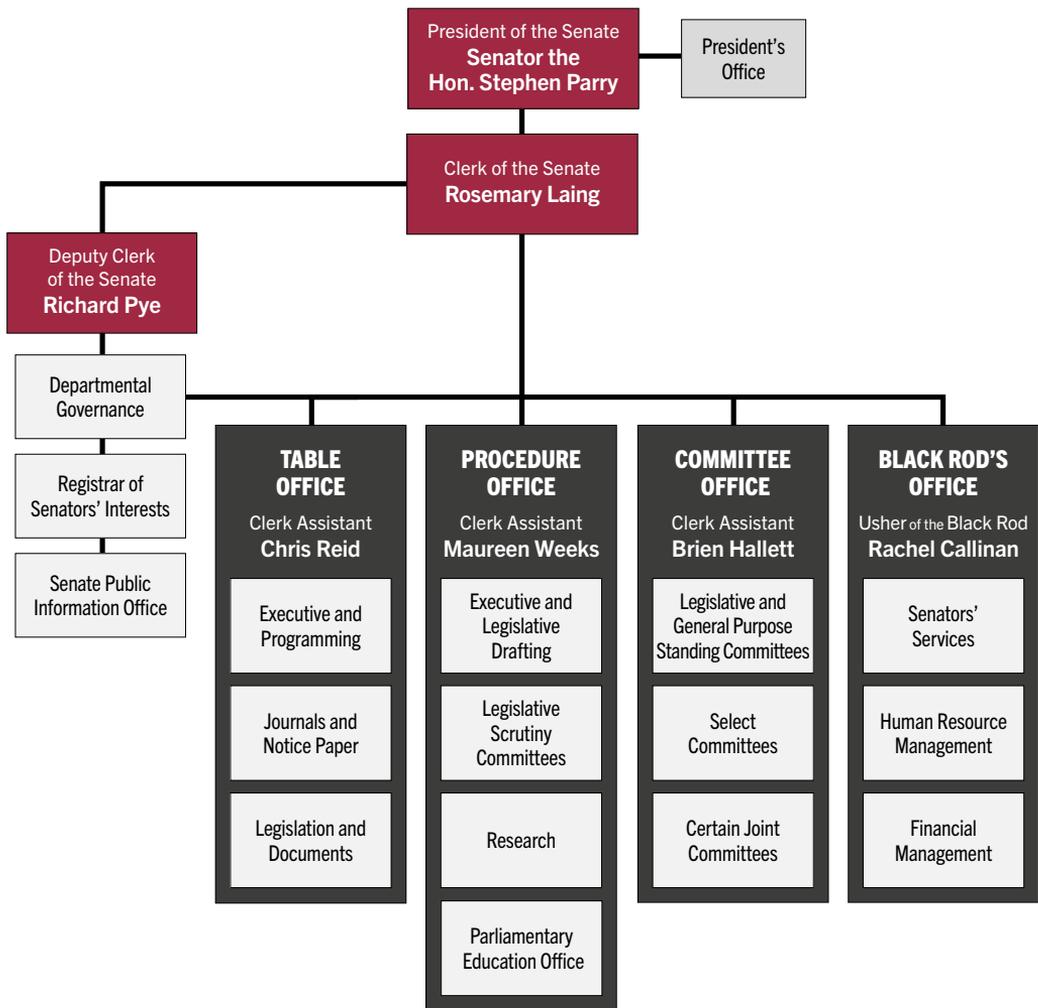
In undertaking its functions the department is responsible not to the government of the day but to the Senate and all senators, maintaining complete impartiality in serving equally senators from all political parties and independent senators.

Before turning to the department's performance during 2015–16, this overview sets out the department's organisational structure, program structure and objectives.

Organisational structure

The department is responsible to the Senate through the President of the Senate, Senator the Honourable Stephen Parry, who was first elected to that position on 7 July 2014. The administrative head of the department is the Clerk of the Senate, Dr Rosemary Laing, who was appointed in December 2009. The department is organised into the Clerk's Office and four other offices, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1 – Organisational structure



Senior staff from across the department provide direct support to the Senate on sitting days as clerks at the table. The following staff performed such duties during the year:

- Rosemary Laing
- Richard Pye
- Maureen Weeks
- Chris Reid
- Rachel Callinan
- Brien Hallett
- Sue Blunden
- James Warmenhoven
- Jackie Morris
- Tim Bryant
- David Sullivan

The Usher of the Black Rod, Rachel Callinan, performs certain formal and ceremonial duties on sitting days. During 2015–16, the following staff assisted with these duties:

- John Baczynski
- Anthony Szell
- Glenn Krause

Outcome and program structure

In order to achieve its outcome, the department's objectives, set out in its corporate plan 2015–2019, are to:

- continue to develop expertise in the constitutional and procedural bases of the Senate and its committees
- maintain and improve services to the Senate, its committees, senators and other users of departmental resources using efficient and up-to-date technology
- ensure the highest standard of accurate and prompt procedural advice
- publish a range of practical, procedural resources on the work of the Senate and the Parliament and maximise awareness of and access to these resources
- produce and deliver effective education and information programs
- ensure our workforce planning, recruitment and staff development practices deliver a highly skilled, knowledgeable and motivated workforce.

The department delivers its outcome through a single departmental program comprising the services provided by its five offices. Figure 2 identifies their responsibilities.

Figure 2 – Office responsibilities

ADVISORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES TO ENABLE THE SENATE AND SENATORS TO FULFIL THEIR REPRESENTATIVE AND LEGISLATIVE DUTIES

Clerk's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice on powers, privileges and proceedings• Strategic direction and governance• Support for Procedure, Privileges and Senators' Interests committees• Procedural information• Senate Public Information Office
Table Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programming and procedural support to the Senate• Processing of legislation and documents• Records of business and proceedings• Document distribution and inquiries services• Support for Appropriations, Staffing and Security; Selection of Bills; and Publications committees
Procedure Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative drafting and procedural support for non-government senators• Support for legislative scrutiny committees• Research services• Parliamentary information for the community• Parliamentary education for schools• Policy support and funding for inter-parliamentary relations
Committee Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support for legislative and general purpose standing committees, select committees and certain joint committees
Black Rod's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chamber, committee room and office support• Ceremonial services• Security advice• Financial management• Human resource management

The department also participates in a range of interdepartmental committees through which the parliamentary departments coordinate common and joint activities. Chief among these are regular meetings of the heads of the four parliamentary departments; the Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group; the Security Management Board; the Parliamentary ICT Advisory Board; and numerous boards managing joint projects and endeavours such as the implementation of the Parliament's Reconciliation Action Plan.

Reporting on performance

This year is a transitional year in the Commonwealth's performance framework, so this year's annual report is something of a hybrid.

During the year the department adopted a new performance reporting framework, better adapted to the requirements of the PGPA Act and, in particular, to the new requirement in subsection 39(1) of that Act to publish an annual performance statement. That framework includes a new statement of the department's purpose, drawn from the department's Corporate Plan for 2015–19. The other main change is the expansion of the four 'interim outcomes' (which previously described the department's main service areas) into the six program components listed at the beginning of this chapter, which better cover its services and activities.

This framework, which is summarised in figure 3, has been used as the basis for the annual performance statement contained in the next part of the report. In that sense, the annual performance statement replaces the performance overview published in previous annual reports.

As it has done for many years, however, the next chapter also contains a performance report for each of the department's five offices, each of which commences with a table reporting results against the criteria contained in the department's portfolio budget statement.