

Table Office

Outputs

Programming and procedural support to the Senate and the legislative process
 Publication of formal and informal records of Senate business
 Dissemination and storage of documents
 Secretariat support to the Appropriations, Staffing and Security; Selection of Bills; and Publications committees.

Performance information	Performance results
<i>Order of Business</i> finalised prior to sitting and progressively updated.	The <i>Order of Business</i> (the 'Red') was distributed in advance of all sittings, and continuously updated online via the <i>Dynamic Red</i> .
Procedural advice and legislative documents are accurate and timely.	Advice was given proactively or as required. Legislative documents were accurate and produced within required timeframes.
<i>Notice Paper</i> and <i>Journals of the Senate</i> are accurately published and meet required timeframes. Other publications and statistics are accurate and timely.	All information resources were accurate and provided according to required timeframes, other than where short delays were caused by technical difficulties.
Tabled documents are accurately processed and stored, and available online wherever possible. Inquiries assistance is effective and supported by online information services.	Senate records were safely stored and documents were distributed in a timely manner. Inquiries were attended to within agreed timeframes.
Advice, documentation, publications and draft reports are accurate and timely.	Committee meetings were held, documents provided and reports prepared within agreed timeframes.

Overview

The Table Office is led by the Clerk Assistant (Table) and has three functional areas, as shown in figure 5.

Figure 6 – Elements and responsibilities of the Table Office

Executive

Chris Reid, Clerk Assistant

Procedural advice, programming support and production of the Order of Business Secretariat to the Selection of Bills Committee

Legislation and Documents

Sue Blunden, Director

Processing legislation
Processing and custody of documents
Inquiries services
Secretariat to the Publications Committee

Journals and Notice Paper

James Warmenhoven, Director

Production of the *Notice Paper*, the *Journals of the Senate*, the *Dynamic Red* and the *Senate Daily Summary*
Collection and publication of statistics
Processing questions on notice and petitions
Secretariat to the Appropriations, Staffing and Security Committee

The Table Office provided support for the Senate on each of its 51 sitting days (including for a rare second session of the Parliament following its prorogation on 15 April 2016). All performance results as outlined in the above table were achieved. Also this year, projects were completed or have continued as forecast together with necessary succession planning.

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 and respond to feedback about the services provided by the office. This feedback has been consistently positive with fewer problems concerning technology reported this year.

Staff numbers remained the same at an average full-time equivalent (FTE) level of 16 for 2015–16. The cost of the office was \$2.8 million (\$2.7 million in 2014–15).

Programming and procedural support

The Table Office supported the operation of the Senate by providing procedural and programming advice to senators, preparing procedural scripts for use in the chamber (1380 in 2015–16) and providing a broadcast captioning service of Senate proceedings.

The *Order of Business* (the program for each day's sitting) was prepared in draft to assist senators (and whips, especially) and published as a final edition prior to each sitting, as expected.

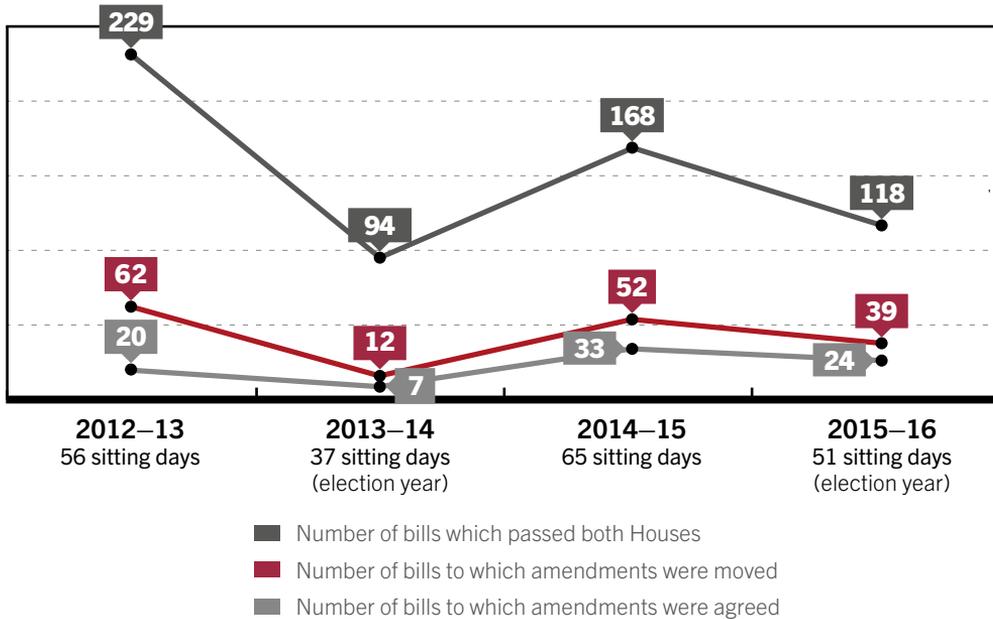
Legislation

The office facilitated the legislative work of the parliament by processing all bills considered in the Senate, preparing legislative documents, preparing third reading and assent prints of bills passed, and processing assent messages.

The office also prepared the formal messages by which the two Houses communicate on legislative and other activity. In 2015–16, 164 messages were prepared, of which 141 related to the passage of bills.

The chart in figure 6 reflects the level of legislative activity in recent years.

Figure 7 – Senate legislative activity, 2012–13 to 2015–16



Formal and informal records

The *Notice Paper* is the formal agenda of Senate proceedings. Two versions were published, before each sitting day: an abridged printed version, and the full, online version. The *Journals of the Senate* are the official record of decisions made by the Senate. Proof Journals were published online shortly after the end of each sitting day, and printed versions distributed the next morning. Official final Journals were produced following thorough checking of source material. In 2015–16, 51 editions of each document were produced.

The office also supported the needs of senators and others for accurate and timely information by publishing the *Dynamic Red*, which provides real-time information on the progress and outcomes of business on each sitting day. The office also produced a range of other legislative and statistical summaries periodically and on request.

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. Throughout the year, 752 questions were asked on notice during the remainder of the first session of the 44th Parliament. Many unanswered questions were resubmitted which, together with new ones, amounted to 320 questions asked during the second session. These were published to an online database and statistical information was published in the *Questions on Notice Summary*, which also includes response times.

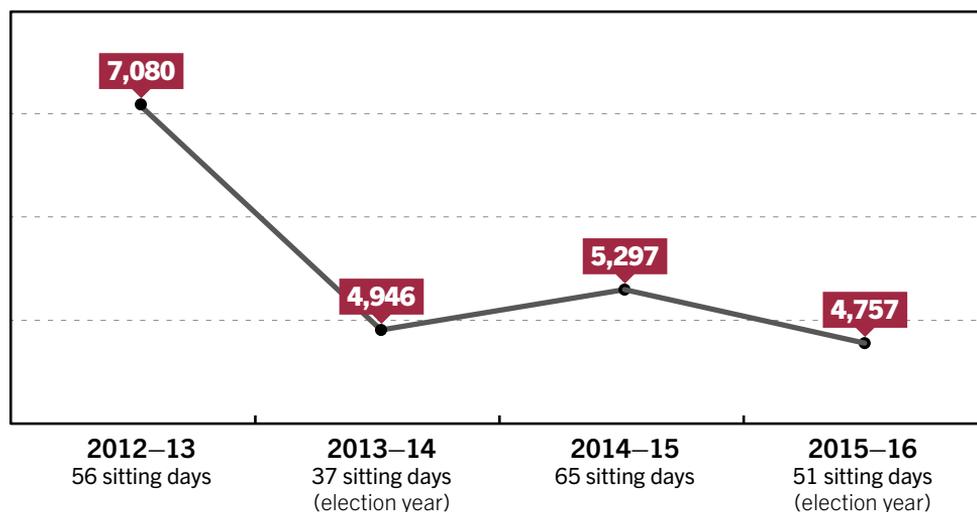
In 2015–16, the office processed and published 588 notices of motion. These signal senators' intention to move particular motions on specified days. The office also processed 30 petitions, from 128,950 signatories, which senators had lodged for presentation to the Senate.

Documents

The office received and processed 4,757 documents for presentation to the Senate during 2015–16, recorded their details in the *Journals of the Senate* and the *Index to the Papers Presented to Parliament* and archived them. Figure 8 shows the number of documents tabled in the Senate in recent years.

Documents from ministers, the Auditor-General and committees may be presented when the Senate is not sitting, although not after the Senate's dissolution. The office administers this procedure, which is a useful avenue for the timely publication of material of interest to, or required by, the Parliament. In 2015–16, 547 documents (or approximately 12 per cent of all documents tabled in the Senate) were presented using this procedure.

Figure 8 – Documents tabled in the Senate, 2011–12 to 2014–15



Inquiries

Copies of all documents presented to the Senate are made available through the inquiries and distribution services provided by the office. In 2015–16, 2,494 inquiries were received (two thirds coming from senators or their staff). Most were responded to within five minutes and the remainder within timeframes agreed with clients.

Digitisation and preservation of tabled papers

Documents presented to the Senate from 1901 to 2013 (which includes documents presented up to the end of the 43rd Parliament) are now available online through the Senate Tabled Papers database. During 2015–16, 387,358 images were added in contributing to a total of 7,156,197 images now stored in the database. Documents presented to the Senate during the 44th parliament are being progressively scanned or downloaded to ParlInfo. That work that will be completed next year.

All the original documents presented to the Senate since its first meeting in 1901 are stored in Parliament House under archival conditions. Documents presented to the Senate in 2015–16 added a further 30.8 metres of shelf space to this archive.

Support for committees

During the year, the office provided secretariat support for, and prepared draft reports of, the Standing Committee on Appropriations, Staffing and Security, the Selection of Bills Committee and the Senate Publications Committee. All committee meetings were convened, and documents provided, within agreed timeframes.

Performance outlook

In 2016–17, the Table Office will continue to serve as a secretariat to the Senate.

A significant development in the coming year will be the introduction in time for the 45th Parliament of a streamlined *Notice Paper*, supported by a comprehensive and versatile online presence. The office will also continue to support online publishing initiatives and be involved in parliament-wide ICT projects such as ParlWork. Using data from existing business systems, ParlWork will enable users to easily access parliamentary information (such as motions, bills and documents) on a range of mobile devices and computers.

The department will work with the Parliamentary Library to improve access to the tabled papers collection through the ParlInfo database, and continue to work towards having the majority of tabled documents available online as soon as they are tabled.

Key position rotations and workflow adjustments within and beyond the Table Office will continue to be made in preparation for the next Parliament and as known staffing changes take effect during the year.