

Procedure Office

Outputs

Advisory services and procedural support to non-government senators.

Drafting services to non-government senators.

Secretariat support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee, Scrutiny of Bills Committee, and Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.

Parliamentary and research information for senators, staff, public servants, officials from other parliaments, and the community; and support for inter-parliamentary relations.

Parliamentary education services to schools, teachers and students.

Performance information

Performance results

Procedural advice is accurate and timely, and support is provided to the satisfaction of senators.

Senators and their staff continued to acknowledge the accuracy and value of procedural advice.

Amendments and bills are drafted promptly, are legally sound, and are provided to senators in time for their use in the Senate chamber or elsewhere.

Legislative amendments and bills were accurate, and were prepared within required timeframes and to the satisfaction of senators.

Advice, documentation, publications and draft reports are accurate, of a high standard and produced to meet the required timeframes.

Advice and documentation provided to, and publications prepared for, the scrutiny committees were accurate, of a high standard and provided within the timeframes set by the committees.

Parliamentary research information is accurate, timely and comprehensive. Seminars, lectures and other parliamentary information projects are provided to increase the awareness of the work and role of the Parliament, in particular the Senate and its committees.

Accurate and comprehensive parliamentary research was provided within required timeframes. All seminars and lectures were held in accordance with the programmed schedule, and public information projects were delivered in accordance with the required timeframes. Training was provided to the satisfaction of stakeholders, demonstrated by consistently favourable feedback from evaluation processes.

Inter-parliamentary functions are supported to the satisfaction of stakeholders.

Inter-parliamentary functions were carried out to the satisfaction of stakeholders, demonstrated by consistently favourable feedback.

Education Centre teaching programs and other Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) projects accurately reflect the Parliament and its work.

PEO teaching programs held on time and in accordance with booking schedule.

PEO projects delivered according to programmed schedule.

PEO role-play programs, website and publications were promptly updated to ensure accuracy and to accommodate electoral and parliamentary events. Teaching programs were consistently conducted in accordance with the booking schedule.

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

Overview

The Procedure Office is led by the Clerk Assistant (Procedure) and has four functional areas, as shown in figure 8.

Figure 9 – Elements and responsibilities of the Procedure Office

Executive and legislative drafting		
Maureen Weeks, Clerk Assistant		
Procedural advice, support and training Drafting of legislative amendments and private senators' bills		
Public information and parliamentary research	Parliamentary education	Legislative scrutiny
Tim Bryant, Director, Research Section Publications, seminars, public lectures, exhibitions and research on parliamentary matters Production of <i>The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate</i>	Simon Harvey (July 2015–May 2016), John Studholme (June 2016) Director, Parliamentary Education Office Parliamentary education services and resources for schools, teachers and students	Toni Dawes, Secretary, Scrutiny of Bills Committee Ivan Powell, Secretary, Regulations and Ordinances Committee Ivan Powell, A/g Secretary, Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Secretariat, advisory and administrative support to the committees

The office provides a range of advisory, research and public information services closely aligned with the role and work of the Senate, including legislative drafting services and support for the Parliament's legislative scrutiny committees. The Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) produces educational programs and resources for schools, students, teachers and others. The office also supports the Parliament's international programs.

The demand for procedural and legislative services is substantially driven by the requirements of senators and the Senate chamber. The work of the secretariats of the legislative scrutiny committees is similarly driven by the volume of legislation coming before the Senate and the requirements of senators.

The Procedure Office 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, educators, students, and members of the public. This continuous performance appraisal assists the office to make timely and responsive adjustments to the ways in which it delivers its services.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Procedure Office in 2015–16 was 28 (29 in 2014–15). The cost of providing the services of the Procedure Office in 2014–15 was \$5.7 million (\$5.6 million in 2014–15).

Procedural support

In 2015–16, the office assisted non-government senators and their staff by providing advice, both written and oral, relating to the role and work of the Senate and its committees, and the Parliament more generally. There was strong demand for such advice, particularly during sitting periods.

Advice was sought and provided on many issues of Senate procedure, but also more broadly to include, for example, the provisions in section 53 of the Constitution, the legislative process and the disallowance process for delegated legislation. The office also provided a range of advice on procedures relating to prorogation and the simultaneous dissolutions of both Houses of Parliament.

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

In 2015–16, the office prepared an average of 12 procedural scripts per sitting day for senators' use in the chamber, typically related to matters such as orders for the production of documents, the suspension of standing orders or other procedural devices, committee references and unanswered questions on notice.

The office also checked material for procedural accuracy on request from senators and their staff. The advice provided was accurate and provided in time to enable senators to use the material in the Senate and elsewhere.

Legislative drafting

In 2015–16, the office provided legislative support to senators by drafting amendments to bills and drafting private senators' bills, primarily for non-government senators.

The office drafted and circulated 119 sets of committee of the whole amendments, comprising 1,158 individual amendments – a substantial increase on the 825 amendments circulated in the previous year, notwithstanding that there were fewer sitting days this year. A further 58 sets of amendments to 33 different bills were also drafted but not circulated, because, for example, they were drafted for use outside the chamber to inform negotiations between parties.

For the two sets of amendments which were framed as requests to the House of Representatives, in accordance with section 53 of the Constitution, the office also produced statements required under Senate procedure explaining the applicability of section 53 and the precedents of the Senate.

The office also prepared and circulated 22 second reading amendments.

Private senators' bills continued to be used as vehicles for individual senators and non-government parties to advance debate across areas of interest. In 2015–16, the office drafted 44 private senators' bills, of which 17 were finalised for introduction. A number of other bills were drafted to different stages of development.

Notwithstanding the unpredictable levels of demand, the complexity of some proposals and finite resourcing, the office met all timeframes for the drafting of amendments and bills. These services form a substantial part of the support provided by the department to the legislative work of senators. Consistent feedback from senators and their staff confirmed the value and quality of the advice provided by the office.

Table 1 summarises senators' use of the office's legislative drafting and procedural services in recent years.

Table 1 – Legislative drafting and procedural advice services provided to senators, 2012–13 to 2015–16

Service	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
Committee of the whole amendments circulated	651	222	825	1158
Second reading amendments circulated	21	24	30	22
Private senators' bills introduced	37	32	30	17
Procedural scripts prepared	529	484	626	593

Support for legislative scrutiny committees

During the year, the Legislative Scrutiny Unit provided secretariat, research and administrative support to the Regulations and Ordinances Committee, Scrutiny of Bills Committee and Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.

The secretariat staff for the committees examine all bills and instruments according to each committee's terms of reference. The committees report each sitting week on the scrutiny review undertaken and also report annually, outlining their work for each year and highlighting the significant matters they have pursued.

In 2015–16 the Regulations and Ordinances Committee secretariat examined 1,976 legislative instruments (1,656 in 2014–15) and drafted 14 *Delegated legislation monitors*. These contained comments on 189 disallowable legislative instruments, raising matters related to the committee's scrutiny principles (86 in 2014–15)

The committee has, in recent years, been concerned about instruments which appear to rely for their authority on section 33(3) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901*, but are not explicitly stated to be made under that subsection. The secretariat identified 337 such instruments this year compared with 236 in 2014–15.

The Scrutiny of Bills Committee secretariat examined 189 bills (228 in 2014–15), 25 of which were introduced in 2014–15. Secretariat staff drafted 13 *Alert Digests* and 13 reports, containing comments on 75 bills (86 in 2014–15), raising matters relating to the committee's terms of reference.

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights secretariat examined 187 bills, (239 in 2014–15) and drafted 15 reports containing comments on 43 bills (78 in 2014–15) raising matters related to the committee’s scrutiny terms of reference. The secretariat also examined and provided comment on five Acts (one in 2014–15) raising human rights matters. The total number of disallowable legislative and exempt instruments received and examined by the secretariat was 2,370 (2,000 in 2014–15), and the secretariat drafted comments on 96 instruments (28 in 2014–15).

The secretariats also produced material arising from the work of the committees for use in the Senate and for publication, including two papers published in the *Papers on Parliament* series.

Public information and parliamentary research

The Research Section helps raise awareness of the role and work of the Senate by coordinating a range of public information activities and producing publications and exhibitions.

Seminars, training programs and lectures

During 2015–16, the section coordinated and delivered seminars and professional training programs for senators’ staff, parliamentary staff, public service officers and others, and a series of lectures for the general public.

Eight seminars were offered to senators’ staff to provide specialised training about the operations and procedures of the Senate and its committees. Two others were scheduled but cancelled following the simultaneous dissolution. Nine bespoke training sessions were also undertaken for the new staff of senators. Staff training seminars were well attended and anecdotal evidence indicates that the subject matter is appropriate and well received.

Eighteen seminars on aspects of Senate practice were provided for approximately 350 public service officers. This was the second consecutive increase in both seminars and attendees since 2013–14. A further seminar was provided to a community group. Staff from across the department contributed to the delivery of the seminar series which successfully met the learning objectives of those participating. Evaluation surveys of participants indicated that 90 percent considered that their learning objectives had been fully met.

The section arranged 7 public lectures during 2015–16 as part of the department’s occasional lecture series on aspects of Australian governance and democracy, attended by approximately 700 people. Lectures are generally live streamed and are available ‘on demand’ on ParView. Transcripts are also made available on the Senate website. In addition, the department convened a new annual lecture, the Harry Evans Lecture, commemorating the service of the longest serving Clerk of the Senate, focusing on the importance of the Senate as an institution, the rights of individual senators and the value of parliamentary democracy. Attendance rates were maintained across the year.

The Research Section also runs the Australian National Internships Program in partnership with the Department of the House of Representatives and the Australian National University, which involved placing 38 students with senators and MPs in their Parliament House offices in 2015–16.

Publications, exhibitions and conferences

The section continued to produce publications and exhibitions with a focus on the work and role of the Senate and its committees and the operations of the Parliament.

Three editions of the department's free journal, *Papers on Parliament*, were edited and published during 2015–16. Work also continued on volume 4 of *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate* containing biographies of senators whose terms concluded by 2002. Seven biographical entries for senators were drafted, 10 verified and 17 edited.

The collaborative project with the House of Representatives to develop 360 degree virtual tours of the Parliament was completed. The virtual tour gives people who are unable to visit Parliament House views of and information about the work of Parliament.

The department took the lead in the coordination of Parliament House Open Day 2015. Approximately 5,100 people attended. In addition, the department co-hosted, with the Rule of Law Institute of Australia, a free public symposium commemorating the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta which was attended by approximately 100 delegates.

Parliamentary Education Office

The PEO delivered a range of educational services to schools, teachers and students and worked closely with all stakeholders, including members and senators, to identify and address individual requirements.

During 2015–16 the acquisition of a second PEO Education Centre teaching space to conduct scheduled role-play programs has enabled the PEO to continue to reliably provide this sought after program to schools visiting Parliament House. To 30 June 2016, 680 role-play programs were conducted in the second centre. The role play program has been enhanced further by the introduction of large-display television monitors to the PEO Education Centre teaching spaces, allowing all education programs to be supported by customised visual media, such as video, still images and graphics.

Other highlights of PEO activities in 2015–16 included:

- development of additional PEO website resources for teachers and students, such as the *Get Involved* video, specifically designed to encourage young Australians to become more active citizens through a better understanding of the work of elected representatives; and complement the Australian Constitution Year 8 Unit of Work
- tailored training programs, briefings and seminars for student teachers from universities and student groups visiting Parliament House, visiting staff from Australian and international legislatures and other visiting groups

- uptake of the *Representing You* resource which increases the capacity of the PEO to support members and senators to more effectively engage constituents in active citizenship.

The PEO works with and reports to the PEO Advisory Committee, jointly chaired by the Deputy President of the Senate and the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, and works closely with stakeholders in other parliaments, parliamentary and government departments and educational institutions.

The PEO continues to support the work of the National Capital Civics Education Group, a forum which brings together education and outreach managers from civic and citizenship institutions in the Parliamentary Triangle. The Group met on four occasions during the year. Through this forum and independently the PEO closely monitored the implementation of the national curriculum in civics and citizenship.

Throughout the year the PEO continued to invest resources in support of members' and senators' educational activities with students. In addition to providing them with an annual allocation of PEO resources and promotional items, the PEO facilitated the involvement of members and senators in PEO teaching programs, both at Parliament House and during outreach programs. The PEO also maintains a range of educational resources, which members and senators can personalise for use in their electorates or States or Territories.

The PEO also prepared a Department of the Senate submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, made a presentation in a 'roundtable' meeting with the committee in July 2015 and appeared before a public hearing in March 2016.

Education Centre activities

The PEO Education Centre provides parliamentary education programs for school students and teachers from around Australia visiting Parliament House. Through its facilitated role-play program, the centre offers the opportunity to explore four key functions of the Parliament: legislation, representation, formation of government and scrutiny.

In 2015–16 parliamentary education role-play programs were delivered to 89,087 students visiting Parliament House. The role-play program remained very popular and operated at or close to capacity for much of the school year. Program demand remained highest between May and November. Teacher satisfaction with the role-play program remained high with the 2016 Education Centre survey conducted in March and April 2016 indicating that 93 per cent of teachers rated satisfaction levels with the program as very high.

Outreach and educational resources

The PEO outreach program 'Parliament Alive' provides an opportunity to deliver parliamentary role-play programs to schools around Australia. Three week-long programs were conducted involving more than 4,000 students from 60 schools. In April 2016, an outreach program visited south-western Sydney suburbs (the electorates of Werriwa, Barton and Watson) with Mr Laurie Ferguson MP participating. The second outreach to

rural and regional NSW (electorates of New England, Cowper and Lyne) was conducted in May. A third outreach in June visited northern Queensland (electorates of Leichhardt, Herbert and Kennedy) with the Hon Warren Entsch MP and Mr Ewen Jones MP participating.

The PEO, in conjunction with SPIO, produced and maintained a wide range of high-quality online and multimedia services and other resources. During the year publications and resources were constantly updated to maintain their currency and reflect significant parliamentary developments, including changes in the membership of the Senate.

To further enhance accessibility of its resources, particularly for rural and remote schools, the PEO continues to develop new ways of providing them. It maintains a strong internet presence at peo.gov.au, providing much audience appeal through an extensive range of resources, including up-to-date information, data, interactives and down-loadable products. During the year it recorded more than 1.3 million visitor sessions, a 50 percent increase on the previous year.

Joint ventures and other programs

In 2015–16 the PEO assisted the National Youth Science Forum, sponsored by the Australian National University, to provide a summer study program for almost 400 outstanding senior secondary school science students from around Australia. The students examined legislative work and Senate committee processes through role-play and a related program of professional development for science teachers was also conducted.

In collaboration with the Parliamentary Skills Centre, the PEO contributed to the development of the Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships Project. PEO officers have written workshop modules and manuals, and made conference presentations for the program which is designed to increase levels of gender awareness within the parliamentary cultures of Pacific nations.

Inter-parliamentary relations

The Australian Parliament’s international program focuses on parliamentary engagement, cooperation and strengthening, with an emphasis on parliamentary relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Activities and projects in 2015–16 were coordinated primarily through the International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO) and the Parliamentary Skills Centre (PSC), with input from all four parliamentary departments. IPRO manages incoming and outgoing delegation programs, membership of inter-parliamentary organisations, and the international interests and travel of senators and members. The PSC is responsible for all parliamentary strengthening and capacitybuilding programs of the Australian Parliament.

The international program is funded jointly by the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives.

Parliamentary engagement

During 2015–16, IPRO coordinated 23 official visits overseas, including: bilateral visits to 11 countries; attendance at eight assemblies, conferences, workshops and seminars; and 11 other visits, including Presiding Officer visits and annual committee visits to New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region. There were seven official visits by parliamentary delegations from other countries as guests of the Australian Parliament and 30 other visits coordinated by IPRO or the PSC, including a range of capacity-building activities.

A priority for the outgoing visits in 2015–16 was establishing, or re-establishing, links with regional parliaments following elections. The visits included a delegation to Australia's largest neighbour, Indonesia, following elections for both houses of its parliament; the first official Australian parliamentary delegation to Fiji in nine years, following the first elections in that country since a military coup in 2006; and an election observer mission to Myanmar to assist that country with its first openly-contested poll since 1990. A member of the Legislative Scrutiny Unit travelled to Myanmar in May 2016 to assist in the design and development of programs sponsored by the United Nations Development Program, in conjunction with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, for the newly elected Myanmar parliamentarians.

Parliamentary cooperation

The Australian Parliament maintained its strong commitment to regional and international parliamentary cooperation. In 2015–16, delegations attended the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, two Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) assemblies, the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth.

Parliamentary strengthening

The PSC continued to coordinate activities under the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships Program and the work of the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project with some assistance provided by the PEO. The major focus of the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program during the year was on capacity-building to support the parliaments of Fiji and Samoa. These initiatives have been made possible by funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

A highlight of professional development activities at the international level was the regular Inter-Parliamentary Study Program, which was coordinated by the PSC and took place over 10 days in February 2016. Senior staff participated from national parliaments in China, Fiji, France, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Nigeria, Solomon Islands and Vietnam as well as the European Parliament.

Performance outlook

In 2015–16, 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 the focus on providing tailored programs to new senators and their advisers.

The Research Section will further develop the *Navigating the Senate* website, which is designed to complement face-to-face training for senators' staff, support the development of an orientation program for new senators, and provide targeted support for senators' staff new to the Senate.

The scrutiny committee secretariats will continue their work and progressively prepare and release detailed notes on the work of the committees. A number of staff from the unit will attend and give papers to the Australia-New Zealand Scrutiny of Legislation Conference to be held in Perth, Western Australia.

Demand for the PEO's education programs is expected to remain strong, as demonstrated by forward bookings for the remainder of 2016 and 2017. The PEO will continue to develop and adapt resources to support the new national curriculum in civics and citizenship and will further explore options to improve the accessibility and delivery of parliamentary education programs to schools and students unable to participate in PEO programs at Parliament House. It is expected that the PEO's video conferencing facility will be fully operational in 2016–17, improving its capacity to reach students and teachers remotely.

As with the second half of 2015–16, incoming and outgoing delegation activity in the first half of 2016–17 will be relatively modest as a consequence of the federal election. A full program of delegation visits will resume from 2017.

Parliamentary strengthening programs administered through the PSC will remain a priority area for the international program, and initiatives and activities established under the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships Program and the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project will continue to be supported, with assistance from staff in the PEO to continue.