

Black Rod's Office

Outputs

Chamber, committee room and office support, ceremonial services, and security advice. Corporate services, including payroll services for senators and departmental staff, and support to the Clerk in meeting public governance, performance and accountability and recordkeeping requirements.

Support services, in conjunction with the Department of the House of Representatives, to the Former Members of Parliament Association (FMPA).

Financial management, human resource management and records management services to the Parliamentary Budget Office.

Performance information	Performance results
Services are provided to the satisfaction of the President, officeholders, Senate committees and senators so that they are able to fulfil their roles.	Services were delivered within timeframes and legislative requirements. Consistently positive feedback from senators, including office holders, and their staff was received throughout the reporting period.
Provision of corporate services facilitates the operations of the Senate and meets accountability obligations under the law and to the Senate.	Services were delivered within timeframes and legislative requirements. Services supported the Clerk as the accountable authority to meet all legislative obligations and the requirements of the Senate.
Services to the FMPA are of a high standard, are provided promptly and are accurate.	Support was provided to the FMPA as required and to a high standard.
Provisions of services to the Parliamentary Budget Office is of a high standard and is in accordance with the memorandum of understanding and service level agreement.	Services were delivered within the agreed timeframes and standards, to the satisfaction of the PBO.

Overview

The primary function of the Black Rod's Office is to provide support services to the Senate, to Senate committees and to senators at Parliament House, and to deliver corporate services to the department. The office is led by the Usher of the Black Rod and has three operational areas, as shown in figure 13.

The Usher of the Black Rod undertakes duties in the Senate chamber, including clerking and ceremonial roles, assisted by three senior staff and the Chamber Attendant team, among others. A major focus for the Black Rod's Office during this reporting period was organising the opening of the 45th Parliament on 30 August 2016.

The Usher of the Black Rod represented the department on a number of cross-parliamentary forums including the Parliamentary Administration Advisory Group, the Security Management Board and the Joint Management Committee (which oversees the provision of ICT services to the parliamentary departments). The Usher of the Black Rod also administered the Presiding Officers' *Rules for Media Related Activity in Parliament House and its Precincts*, as the President's delegate.

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

Figure 13 – Responsibilities of the Black Rod's Office

Executive

Rachel Callinan, Usher of the Black Rod

Procedural, protocol, ceremonial and security advice
 Advice on corporate and certain parliamentary administrative matters
 Membership of the Security Management Board
 Support to the House Committee

Senators' Services	Human Resource Management	Financial Management
John Baczynski, Director, Senators' Services and Deputy Usher of the Black Rod Agency security advice and support Information technology security advice Accommodation Assets management Chamber and committee room support Comcar shuttle Delivery services Fleet management Office equipment Printing and desktop publishing Project board membership	Anthony Szell, Director, Human Resource Management Recruitment and staffing Pay and conditions Learning and development Work health and safety Rehabilitation coordination Industrial relations Performance management Records management Services to the Parliamentary Budget Office	Michelle Crowther, Chief Finance Officer Financial management and advice Financial reporting and systems management Accounts processing Strategic procurement advice Support for senior management decision making Services to the Parliamentary Budget Office

The regular work of the office involves frequent and direct contact with Senate office holders, senators and their staff, and other stakeholders, all of whom provide regular informal feedback which is generally positive. The work of the Black Rod's Office is also subject to scrutiny by three Senate committees: the Senate House Committee; the Appropriations, Staffing and Security Committee; and the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee undertaking estimates hearings.

The full-time equivalent staffing level for the Black Rod's Office for 2016–17 was 34.3 (35.5 in 2015–16) and the cost of running the Office was \$2.9m (\$2.6m in 2015–16).

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, committee room and message delivery services to support the ability of the Senate and its committees to meet in accordance with their requirements. The section also organised the opening of the 45th Parliament on 30 August 2016.

During the period the section continued the provision of office services to support senators, their staff and departmental staff. Printing and delivery services for the Senate and the department were also provided. Over the period, service 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. Scheduled run times were met for all deliveries.

The section also facilitated 59 suite moves for senators following the 2016 election.

Security advice

The Usher of the Black Rod and the Deputy Usher of the Black Rod provide security advice and support to the President, Senate committees, senators and the department. Security matters continued to have an increased profile in Parliament House during the period as a range of physical security upgrades continued.

The Usher of the Black Rod and Deputy Usher of the Black Rod worked with colleagues in the Department of Parliamentary Services' Security Branch, the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office and the Australian Federal Police, providing input into security matters from a Senate perspective.

Human resource management

The Human Resource Management Section delivers human resource management services for the department, including the administration of certain allowances paid to senators and payroll services to departmental staff. During the reporting period, the section also contributed to employment-related work with the other parliamentary departments concerning issues related to the wider parliamentary service.

Support was provided to bargaining representatives negotiating for a replacement enterprise agreement for non-Senior Executive Service employees, with four bargaining meetings held during the period.

Records management

The Human Resource Management Section, which is also responsible for the administration of certain records, completed the digitisation of all paper records.

Financial management

During the year the Financial Management Section delivered the department's financial management, accounting and budgeting services, supporting the Clerk in meeting governance and accountability obligations. The section administered the department's financial management information system, supported the secretary to the Audit Committee, and managed the internal audit contract and the fraud control framework.

The section continued to provide assurance to the Clerk and other senior officers that the department had complied with external reporting responsibilities, including audited annual financial statements and procurement requirements. It also supported the department's budget process, including the preparation of the portfolio budget statements and internal budgets. Work was undertaken to implement a more streamlined acquittal process for officers undertaking official travel and it is expected this will be implemented in the next reporting period.

Corporate services for the Parliamentary Budget Office

The department provided corporate services to the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), including financial management, human resource management and records management services, on a fee-for-service basis, in accordance with a memorandum of understanding and service level agreement.

Performance outlook

Key priorities for 2017–18 include: implementation of the department's Enterprise Agreement 2017–20; and streamlining governance programs and procedures to gain the most benefit from the PGPA Act requirements.