

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2015

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: Library meeting rooms

Question: 28

Hansard Reference p 66; 25 May 2015

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 10 July 2015

Senator McKENZIE: And the meeting rooms—how many meeting rooms do we have in the library?

Dr Heriot: We have a large library conference room that divides into three separate areas: one a kitchen sort of area, one a large conference area and one a small conference area. I have a small meeting room adjacent to my office, which takes about four. We have an internal meeting room that takes eight and another that takes 10. I think that is it but I will confirm that.

Senator McKENZIE: It can be very difficult to book a meeting room here in Parliament House, particularly the larger conference and the small conference rooms—obviously, not your meeting room for four. Are they available to senators and members to book to hold meetings in?

Dr Heriot: They are available for parliamentary committees and for parliamentary purposes but not generally available. We have had some issues—

Senator McKENZIE: Not generally available?

Dr Heriot: Because the library is not an open-access place within parliament and because of our confidentiality requirements, the conference room is located at the very back of the library, there are issues with large numbers of people, particularly non-pass holders, going regularly through the library. We are not there to monitor them in terms of what they may see or overhear. We like to ensure that our confidentiality requirements are met. We had had an occasion, I think, when some senators and members had stretched the envelope of what was a parliamentary purpose and had had perhaps a workshop or something and that caused some issues. We try to make sure that nothing that happens there would compromise our ability to: (a) maintain the privacy of members and senators who may pop up in person; and (b) ensure the confidentiality of our work. I am happy to furnish the committee a copy of the policy, if that will be helpful. I do not have one on me, I am sorry.

Answer

The Library has a large library conference room that divides into three separate areas: one a kitchen, one a large conference area and one a medium conference area. There are two smaller meeting rooms that take eight to 10. In addition there is a small meeting room close to the Parliamentary Librarian's office that seats around four people. As noted in the answer to Senate Estimates question number 27, the Library also has a small shared office that staff from the open plan work area can use.

As the Library is not a general circulation space (due to the confidentiality of its work), access to these facilities by non pass-holders is limited. However, the conference room is available for occasional use by Senators, Members and parliamentary committees when other Parliament House rooms, such as committee rooms, are not available.

The Second Floor Library originally occupied 5253 square metres of space within the Ministerial Wing. In 2012-13 this was reduced to 4922 square metres to accommodate DPS staff (finance and procurement) displaced to accommodate the Parliamentary Budget Office. The Library's footprint includes a front of house area and set of carrels and catalogue equipment for use by Library clients. Of the remaining space, 1041.2 m² is taken up by the Library' collections. (The Library's current collection measures 7999.8 lineal metres (or 1760 m²) and is growing at an approximate rate of 113 lineal meters (24.86 m²) each year.)

The Senators and Members Reading Room (SMRR) originally covered an area of 697 square meters. It now comprises 418.3 square meters. As a result, all Library staff are now accommodated in the second floor Library. The SMRR is staffed on a rotational basis in business hours by one FTE.

The majority of this space is used to house collection resources (287.6 m²). The remaining space is utilised by: the Newspaper Reading Room; chairs and study tables and a small circulation desk.