

# Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2011

## Answers to Questions on Notice

### Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Parliamentary Librarian—HR role**

Question: **5**

Hansard reference **F&PA p.20, 23, 23 May 2011**

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 8 July 2011**

**Senator FAULKNER:** Mr President, you would be aware of commitments that were given at the time of the amalgamation of the departments—the old Joint House Department and the Department of the Parliamentary Library and DPRS. As far as I am aware, there has never been any suggestion that we would not have a full-time Parliamentary Librarian.

**The PRESIDENT:** I think that was before my time in this role, so I would need to go back and look at the commitments that were given. I will take that on notice and get back to you. I suspect it was before my time so I want to familiarise myself with what actual undertakings were made.

...

**Senator FAULKNER:** Has it been reported to the committee that oversights the Parliamentary Library that you have been doing that work?

**Ms Missingham:** I think it was recorded in the last resource agreement that went to the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library, but I have not raised it other than in the resource agreement.

**Senator FAULKNER:** So they are aware of it?

**Ms Missingham:** I have certainly reported it to them in the resource agreement, but I have not spoken to them separately.

**Senator FAULKNER:** So if they read the resource agreement, which you would hope that parliamentarians would do, they might be aware of it.

**Ms Missingham:** Yes.

...

**(Ms Missingham:** Can I just comment that, when we get back to you in detail about that, I will double-check about the library and whether that was included.)

### Answer

1 The role of the Parliamentary Librarian is provided in the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* through amendments passed in 2005. The legislation requires that the Parliamentary Librarian's functions must be performed in a timely, impartial and confidential manner and on the basis of equality of access for all Senators and Members. The legislation requires the Parliamentary Librarian to have professional qualifications in librarianship or information management. The independence of the Librarian is further underpinned by the direct reporting lines between the Parliamentary Librarian and the Presiding Officers and the Library Committee.

2 Subsection 38B(1) of the Parliamentary Service Act sets out the functions of the Parliamentary Librarian as:

- (a) to provide high quality information, analysis and advice to Senators and Members of the House of Representatives in support of their parliamentary and representational roles; and
- (b) to undertake such other responsibilities within the joint Department, consistent with the function set out in paragraph (a), as are conferred in writing on the Parliamentary Librarian by the Secretary of the joint Department with the approval of the Presiding Officers.

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3 The Presiding Officers have agreed to additional responsibilities being allocated to the Parliamentary Librarian at least twice since 2005—consistent with “other responsibilities” as mentioned in 38B(1)(b). These were:

- (a) February 2006—added to the Parliamentary Librarian’s role:
  - (i) Web portal and intranet administration for the whole of DPS, from the Corporate Group (some web functions were already performed in the library);
  - (ii) Media Transcription Service, from Hansard; and
  - (iii) Hansard publishing, from Hansard; and
- (b) September 2009—added reporting of HR Services to the Parliamentary Librarian’s role.

4 The Presiding Officers signed an instrument approving the conferral of HR Services to the Parliamentary Librarian on 9 September 2009.

5 The Parliamentary Librarian’s HR responsibility was not reported to the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library (JSC) in the Resource Agreement. It was reported to the JSC in a Library Report in 2009.

6 The responsibilities of the Parliamentary Library for the HR function ceased in early July 2011, when a new Assistant Secretary Corporate Services commenced duties.