

Parliamentary Departments

2.1 The Committee took evidence from the parliamentary departments on Monday, 12 February 2007.

Department of the Senate

2.2 During a relatively brief examination of the department, members of the Committee and other senators in attendance raised the following issues:

- Citizenship Visits Program;
- Decision to pay deputy chairs of parliamentary committees;
- Workload of Senate committee;
- Advertising for Senate committees; and
- International delegations and senators and members attendance at the UN.

2.3 An item of possible interest to all senators was the Committee's discussion of trends in the referral of bills for inquiry and reporting times for them. The Committee was concerned that recent tight reporting deadlines may have an adverse effect on the health of committee office staff. The Clerk responded:

The problem lies with the very tight turnaround time on bills. Everybody accepts that if legislation is urgent then there has to be an urgent committee inquiry, and people will work on that accordingly. But it is noticeable that very tight turnaround times on quite a number of bills are followed by a lengthy period before they go through the chamber – and there could have been more time spent on the committee inquiry and staff would have been under less strain to meet the deadlines.¹

2.4 The Committee placed a number of questions on notice relating to these issues. The department's response is included in Appendix 3 for the benefit of senators interested in this matter.

Department of Parliamentary Services

2.5 During the examination of the department, members of the Committee and other senators in attendance raised the following issues:

- Water usage in Parliament House;
- Bollards at Parliament House entrances;
- Bound volumes of Hansards;
- Baby centre;

1 *Committee Hansard*, 12 February 2007, F&PA 11.

- Continuous Improvement reviews;
- IT equipment and phones in Parliament House; and
- Current contracts and tender processes in Parliament House.