

OUTCOME 3—EFFICIENTLY
FUNCTIONING PARLIAMENT

05



Finance's third outcome is an efficiently functioning Parliament, which it delivers by providing a range of services and facilities to Senators, Members and their staff.

Highlights for 2000–01 include:

- improvements in the entitlements and accountability reporting framework;
- professional development for staff employed under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984*;
- services provided by COMCAR at key national events.

OUTCOME 3—EFFICIENTLY FUNCTIONING PARLIAMENT

The Department contributes to Outcome 3—an efficiently functioning Parliament—by providing Senators, Members and their staff with a range of facilities and services, including the provision of electorate office facilities, travel and accommodation entitlement support, and personnel-related services. The Department's Ministerial and Parliamentary Services Group (M&PS) is primarily responsible for delivering the range of services that ensure Outcome 3 is fulfilled. The Business Services Group had responsibility for COMCAR in 2000–01; however, this responsibility moved to M&PS, effective 1 July 2001.

PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT

In its 2000–01 PBS indicators, Finance outlined its goals for improving customer satisfaction and services to Senators and Members of Parliament.

The Department has performed very strongly against these indicators in 2000–01, having met or surpassed all of them except one. In the case of that single indicator—customer inquiries successfully responded to within one working day—Finance achieved a result of 90 per cent against a target of 95 per cent. In relation to some demand driven indicators, Finance did not provide the estimated number of services required, because demand was lower than originally estimated. Finance achieved an excellent result in processing superannuation payments for former Senators and Members.

COMCAR achieved a satisfaction rate of 99.60 per cent, based on the number of incidents reported.

More detailed performance information, including analysis and resources tables for Outcome 3, is at the end of this chapter.

ACCOMMODATION AND ENTITLEMENTS SERVICES

Improving the Entitlements Framework

Finance is committed to continuous improvement in its customer service. This was delivered in 2000–01 with better collation and analysis of our customer inquiries and by ensuring that the Department was more responsive in providing information to Senators, Members and their staff.

The Account Management Unit (AMU) within Finance is the key point of contact for Senators and Members who require advice relating to their Parliamentary entitlements and, when relevant, information on their use against entitlements. The AMU provides both telephone advice and face-to-face advice, through an office located at Parliament House that is staffed during sitting weeks. The AMU is focused on providing consistently good service and worked in conjunction with the M&PS Service Centre, which is responsible for the processing of entitlements, to deliver a number of service improvements. These improvements resulted from following a number of internal procedures and protocols, including a service level agreement between the AMU and the Service Centre which provides for detailed performance reporting, and the continuous development and revision of guidelines and protocols. These steps were supported by improved customer relationship management systems that enable the AMU to analyse information on customer inquiries and to be more responsive in providing relevant data and advice to the Special Minister of State and to other Senators, Members and their staff. Each capital city has a state M&PS office that provides support to Senators and Members and staff of electorate offices.

Finance provides advice to our Ministers on possible improvements to the entitlements framework, as established by legislation and Remuneration Tribunal Determinations. In carrying out this role, Finance has advanced a number of measures to strengthen entitlements certification and make the accountability system more robust.

In preparation for key national events, such as the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Centenary of Federation Parliamentary sittings in Melbourne in 2001, Finance responded to our clients' needs. We developed and implemented special entitlements arrangements for these events, including special administrative arrangements within the entitlements framework as established by Remuneration Tribunal Determinations and other Determinations under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOPS Act).

Continuous Improvements in Accountability and Reporting

Finance continued to improve reporting and accountability procedures for Senators' and Members' entitlements in 2000–01.

The Department improved reporting procedures relating to telephone services charge cards (Telecards) and the system for reconciling Telecard payments with calls made. As part of

their monthly management reports, Senators and Members now receive regular reports on their Telecard usage. Tighter Telecard issue and receipt procedures were introduced on 2 November 2000, as well as active monitoring of Telecard accounts.

Finance has continued to work on improving procedures for entitlements of Senators, Members and their staff. These improvements include consistent certification, requiring original signatures on all staffing-related forms, rather than facsimile copies, and the provision of odometer readings at service stations when private-plated vehicles are refuelled. M&PS also distributes end of financial year management reports, listing expenditure against certain entitlements to Senators and Members for certification.

The monthly reports prepared by M&PS for Senators and Members detail expenditure against key entitlements. During 2000–01, these reports were updated to include information on a broader range of entitlements such as:

- listing Telecard costs as a separate line item;
- information on expenditure against staff budgets;
- details on individual transactions on private-plated vehicle fuel transaction reports;
- information on COMCAR usage;
- listing overseas study costs.

POLITICAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME'S 20th ANNIVERSARY

Finance provides a secretariat function to the Australian Political Exchange Council, which provides opportunities for young Australians involved in politics to study the political systems of other countries. It also offers a unique insight into the Australian political system to young people from participating exchange countries.

The Political Exchange Programme was established in 1981. The first exchange took place between Australia and the USA and since then 19 reciprocal visits have occurred. The programme has grown to include exchanges with China, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the USA, the United Kingdom and Vietnam. The

Council celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2000–01, with special events in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, which will continue in other States early in 2001–02.

Finance also upgraded the quality of information in these reports, met all distribution deadlines, and finalised plans to review these reports over the next year with the aim of improving them further.

Finance prepares a six-monthly report of Parliamentarians' travel costs, which lists expenditure against travel-related entitlements and is tabled in Parliament by the Special Minister of State. The Department has improved the accuracy and timeliness of these reports in the past 12 months, and will continue to build on this in 2001-02.

In November 2000, the ANAO commenced an audit of Parliamentarians' entitlements. In response to the ANAO's requests, Finance supplied a very large amount of information on use of entitlements. A dedicated response team was involved full-time from the commencement of the audit. At times, a significant number of staff were also diverted from normal duties to attend to the requests of the ANAO. Throughout this process, Finance maintained a focus on providing consistently good service to its clients.

The Department is committed to ongoing development in reporting and accountability, and will work with all stakeholders (including the Government, Senators, Members and the Remuneration Tribunal) to implement these improvements effectively.

Members of Parliament Staff

In late 1999, a professional development programme for MOPS Act staff was launched. This programme provides training in relevant areas to assist the staff of Senators and Members to work more effectively within electorates. It is another way that Finance draws on its resources to provide training and development opportunities.

During 2000-01, 37 courses were presented around Australia, attended by over 300 participants. The programme for 2000-01 reflected the training priorities identified by Senators, Members and their staff in a survey conducted during the previous financial year. It included courses on constituent management, communication skills and writing skills.

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the programme. The results of this feedback rated components of the programme as good to excellent in most categories.

During 2000-01, Finance also reviewed the existing Electorate Officer Classifications. The Special Minister of State confirmed the Government's commitment to take into account the review's findings when developing the next Certified Agreement.

The Special Minister of State also initiated discussions with staff employed under the MOPS Act on their next Certified Agreement. This involved 22 discussion sessions, held in all State capitals and Canberra, and a number of teleconferences. Employees were encouraged to participate in developing the next Certified Agreement, and to respond to the *Report on the Review of Electorate Officer Classifications*.

Information Technology Support

The Parliamentary System Suite, implemented in October 1999, underpinned the processing of Senators' and Members' entitlements during 2000-01 with increased entitlements checking and reporting capabilities aligned with the business processes.

The 2001-02 Budget provided for funding to upgrade IT equipment in electorate offices from July 2001. The equipment is being upgraded to provide Senators, Members and their staff with more flexibility, mobility and enhanced communication when undertaking their electorate office work. This reflects the public's growing expectation that its elected representatives will interact with the community in a timely, effective and responsive way, and will use appropriate technologies to do so.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT SERVICES

COMCAR provides travel and transport services to a wide range of clients, including present and former Federal Parliamentarians, the Federal judiciary, holders of high office and official guests of the Commonwealth Government. Throughout 2000-01, COMCAR handled over 55,000 general reservations and also provided

Parliamentary shuttle services. COMCAR serviced 55 'Guest of Government' visits, other visits and conferences.

In September 2000, COMCAR provided transport for visiting government dignitaries and guests during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Following thorough planning and a comprehensive training programme covering all Olympic routes and venues, 70 drivers recorded 3,000 transfers in 40 vehicles during the three-week period before and during the 2000 Olympic Games.

In May 2001, COMCAR provided transport to the range of Federal representatives attending the week-long Centenary of Federation celebrations in Melbourne. COMCAR worked with the transport offices of the Departments of the House of Representatives and the Senate to provide shuttle services from the airport to

the city and to the main functions. This was a complex undertaking, with over 1,000 transfers completed during the week.

Travel management services for Parliamentarians, their families, staff and other persons with entitlements have been provided by Finance since 1997, through a contract with Jetset. Travel arrangements currently comprise over 20,000 flight bookings per year. The current contract expires in September 2002, and a market testing exercise commenced in May 2001 to identify possible new arrangements. The new arrangements will endeavour to enhance accountability and transparency in all travel arrangements. Apart from booking travel for clients, the new travel management provider will also supply detailed reports on actual travel undertaken, which is a unique requirement for travel contracts. Finance expects to complete the market testing process by mid-2002.

COMCAR AND THE SYDNEY 2000 OLYMPIC GAMES

The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games was an outstanding opportunity for COMCAR drivers to show their professional dedication and expertise in once-in-a-lifetime circumstances.

Approximately 70 drivers, a mix of permanent and casual, from both Sydney and Canberra

transported dignitaries and overseas guests throughout the Games, navigating road closures (due to marathons) and other special conditions unique to an Olympic city. The Canberra drivers were given full training before they left for Sydney, so they could hit the ground running and

maintain the challenging pace throughout the Olympic Games. Their dedication to the task proved once again that Finance has a real commitment to excellence in all areas of its operations.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR OUTCOME 3

Effectiveness—Overall Achievement of the Outcome

Target	Result
Indicators of achievement of outcome:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved services to clients. 	Achieved—Performance against service level agreements was positive during 2000–01. Services to clients were improved through more accurate reporting processes. In 2000–01 special occasions required additional services. Clients responded favourably.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved access to information and guidance on entitlements. 	Achieved—The continued development of the account manager system facilitated better access to information and guidance for Senators and Members.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved entitlements management services. 	Achieved—Improvements in the certification procedures including additional information on key entitlements provided for improved management. Incorporated in this is further information in monthly reports to Senators and Members.
Indicator of contribution of outputs to outcome:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provision of high quality and timely advice and support services to Senators, Members and their staff. 	Achieved—Inquiries were responded to within specified timeframes. Monthly reports were delivered within set timeframes. The training for MOPS Act staff was an example of the high quality service provided to clients based on their feedback.

Output 3.1.1 Accommodation and Entitlement Services

QUALITY

Target	Result
Successfully managed contracts producing service delivery of accommodation, information technology, postage and security services that is in accordance with service level agreements.	Achieved—Performance against service level agreements was positive during 2000–01. A highlight was the development and implementation of enhanced reporting arrangements.
90 per cent of personnel/pay variations received prior to cut-off processed in that pay.	Achieved—94 per cent of pay/personnel variations were processed in the same period as they were received.
95 per cent of customer enquires successfully responded to within one working day.	Not met—A 90 per cent result was achieved. Some customer enquires were quite complex and required consideration and discussion between areas in Finance, taking longer than one working day to resolve.

Output 3.1.1 Accommodation and Entitlement Services (continued)

QUALITY

Target

Professional development program for MOPS Act staff which is targeted at key skills needs and is well received.

Monthly reporting to Senators and Members on entitlement usage that is accurate and timely.

Six-monthly reports to Parliament on Parliamentarians' paid travel expenditure that is accurate and timely.

90 per cent of superannuation payments/variations received prior to cut-off will be processed in that pay.

Superannuation statements and annual reports issued by 31 December each year.

Result

Achieved—Provided 37 courses attended by over 300 participants. Average ratings for the programme in 2000–01 in the good to excellent category were between 90 and 98 per cent.

Achieved—Improved processes have seen more accurate reports distributed to Senators and Members within predetermined timeframes.

Achieved—Both reports were tabled within six months of the period reported against. The reports were developed using improved processes, leading to greater accuracy.

Surpassed—100 per cent processed.

Achieved—Statement issued by 31 December.

QUANTITY

Target

40,000 entitlement transactions for Senators, Members and their staff.

25,000 service calls received via Parliament and Staff Desk Units.

Approximately 900 Parliamentary services transactions including:

- 550 Ministerial letters.
- 300 Ministerial briefs.
- 50 Questions on Notice.
- 10 Political Exchanges arranged.

Annual superannuation and ad-hoc advice to 224 members.

Pay and update superannuation pensions of 330 beneficiaries.

Result

291,708 transactions—This is demand driven. The target was under-estimated.

17,662 service calls—Finance responded to 90 per cent of customer inquires within one working day. This measure is demand driven and the target was an over estimation.

358 letters—This measure is demand driven.

340 briefs—In line with target.

47 Questions on Notice—In line with target.

12 exchanges—Timing of exchanges is negotiated between participating exchange countries and is subject to change. As a result, the 2000–01 financial year saw an additional two exchanges.

Surpassed—2,311 statements/advice provided against a target of 1,693.

Achieved—All PCSS beneficiaries' pensions paid on time.

Output 3.1.2 Travel and Transport Services

QUALITY

Target

Travel agency services contract delivered in accordance with the service level agreement.

Result

Achieved—During the 2000–01 financial year Jetset processed approximately 26,000 reservations. Less than one per cent of reservations resulted in customers expressing dissatisfaction with Jetset.

90 per cent of travel allowance claims processed within five working days.

Achieved—92 per cent of travel allowance claims were processed and paid within five working days.

Satisfaction with COMCAR services in 98 per cent of all reservations.

Achieved—Satisfaction rated at 99.6 per cent.

QUANTITY

Target

26,000 travel allowance nights paid.

Result

24,223 paid—These measures are demand driven.

30,000 flight reservations to be processed.

25,329 flights processed—This measure is demand driven.

50,000 COMCAR vehicle reservations provided (excluding the Parliament House shuttle service).

Surpassed—56,779 vehicle reservations provided.

RESOURCES FOR OUTCOME 3—IMPROVED AND MORE EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

	Budget 2000–01 \$'000	Actual 2000–01 \$'000	Budget 2001–02¹ \$'000
Administered Expenses (including third party outputs)	226,359	240,796	281,599
Total Administered Expenses	226,359	240,796	281,599
Price of Departmental Outputs			
Output Group 3.1			
Ministerial and Parliamentary Services²			
Output 3.1.1 Accommodation and entitlement services	23,912	27,879	23,987
Output 3.1.2 Travel and transport services	24,448	16,321	20,441
Subtotal Output Group 3.1	48,360	44,200	44,427
Revenue from Government for Departmental Outputs	37,190	39,114	40,853
Revenue from Other Sources	11,170	5,087	3,574
Total Price of Outputs³	48,360	44,201	44,427
Total for Outcome³			
(Total Price of Outputs and Administered Expenses)	274,719	284,997	326,026
Average Staffing Level	288.0	308.0	283.0

¹ Due to the change to Finance's output structure in 2001–02 these figures have been recast in terms of the output structure for 2000–01.

² The reallocations between the components of Output Group 3.1 reflect a redistribution of resources to those areas identified as priorities.

³ The decrease in the Total Price of Outputs for Outcome 3 reflects a decrease in Revenue from Other Sources for Comcar (\$3.7 million) being offset by the redistribution of allocated overheads across outputs, with the main impact on Outcomes 1 and 3. This redistribution of allocated appropriation reflects a more accurate allocation method which was introduced during the year.

