



TWELVE

TOWARDS THE NEXT CENTURY:

2007–2010



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The 2007 federal election brought a change of government and a new minister.

Lindsay Tanner became Minister for Finance and Deregulation under the Administrative Arrangements Order of 3 December 2007, which transferred some units from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to what had been the Department of Finance and Administration. Senator John Faulkner was appointed to the position of Special Minister of State, which included responsibility for COMCAR. This situation continued until 6 June 2009 when Prime Minister Rudd reshuffled his Cabinet, with Senator Faulkner becoming Minister for Defence and Senator Joseph Ludwig, previously Minister for Human Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate, being promoted to Special Minister of State.

The Secretary of the Department of Finance and Deregulation, Dr Ian Watt, followed Senator Faulkner to the Department of Defence and, on 31 August 2009, was succeeded by David Tune. Mr Tune had previously been Deputy Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The national manager of COMCAR now reported to Kim Clarke, Divisional Manager of Ministerial and Parliamentary Services and through Kim to Jan Mason, General Manager of the Corporate and Parliamentary Services business group, which had been formed on 6 August 2007.

A significant undertaking for COMCAR following the federal election was the negotiation of a new Drivers' Collective Agreement. An extensive process of negotiation culminated in a crucial meeting on 11 December 2008 between management and unions, at which the TWU and the CPSU agreed on a remuneration package that was approved by the Department's Executive Board on 6 February 2009. With ministerial approval, the agreement was put to the drivers, who overwhelmingly endorsed it and it was signed on 5 May 2009. Having concluded the new agreement, COMCAR National Manager Ken Sweeney, decided it was an appropriate time to retire from the public service. A national recruitment campaign resulted in the appointment of Maree Faulkner, who took up the position of National Manager on 18 January 2010. Ms Faulkner brought to the job a breadth of experience from senior executive roles across all levels of government, the commercial and not-for-profit sectors.



HRH Crown Prince Frederick and Crown Princess Mary, arrival at Canberra airport, 2005.

Ms Faulkner took over leadership of a total staff of 330 across the six states and the ACT. The nature of the COMCAR workforce had changed significantly with over 90% of drivers now being employed on a casual or contract basis. This presented its own challenges and Ms Faulkner was conscious of the importance of continuing to improve communication and to foster cohesion and a shared sense of purpose across such a dispersed team.

The National Management Team now consisted of:

Maree Faulkner	National Manager
Wally Stopp	National Operations and HR Manager
Deesiree Kauflin	National Business Manager
Lesley Bills	Client Liaison Manager
Geoff Edwards	IT and Facilities Manager
Stan Marsh	Driving Operations Manager
Laurie Carbone	VIP Visits Manager
Eddie Capon	Project Manager
Paul Charlton	A / Supervisor Reservations & Allocations
Vermila Karalasingam	A / Supervisor Reservations & Allocations
Daryl Chan	State Supervisor, Qld
Trish Hawkins	A / State Supervisor, ACT
Ross Bennett	State Supervisor, WA
Claire Robinson	State Supervisor, SA
Paul Huxley	State Supervisor, Vic
Dean Fitzsimons	A / State Supervisor, NSW



Following a departmental restructure in May, 2010 COMCAR, together with the other branches in Ministerial and Parliamentary Services Division, became part of a newly formed business group, Asset Management and Parliamentary Services which was lead by Deputy Secretary, Jan Mason.



The Pope's motorcade returning from Randwick racecourse, 20.7.2008.

Visits

COMCAR continued to be involved in many of the key events making Australian history. Visits by distinguished guests of government increased in both frequency and duration under the Rudd government and servicing these visits continued to be a high profile activity for COMCAR.

Pope Benedict XVI visited Sydney for World Youth Day from 13 to 20 July 2008; the reconnaissance visit having taken place in November the previous year. As a head of state, the Pope was accorded guest-of-government status. The papal motorcade of thirty-eight vehicles included six COMCAR vehicles, three coaches and security vehicles provided by the New South Wales Police. Mario Bartolic had the honour of driving Pope Benedict while in Sydney, except for those occasions when he travelled in a Pope-mobile which was driven by New South Wales Police officers.

VIP visits 2008

	Total	ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	NT	SA	WA	TAS
PM&C visits	27	23	20	9	4	1	0	4	0
Parliamentary Relations Office visits	13	14	12	3	1	1	2	2	1
Other visits	17	15	12	4	0	0	1	1	0
Total	57	52	44	16	5	2	3	7	1

Beaconsfield residents arrive in Canberra for a government reception, 2006.



Parliament House Shuttle.



COMCAR vehicles behind the altar stage at Randwick racecourse for the closing mass of World Youth Day celebrations, 20.7.2008.



COMCAR drivers also fulfilled an important role when Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC was sworn in as the nation's 25th Governor-General on 5 September 2008. Ms Bryce became the first woman to hold the position. COMCAR provided a motorcade of seven vehicles to transport the Governor-General's family from Government House to Parliament House and return. Another four vehicles were used for Justices of the High Court who attended the swearing-in ceremony and a bus was provided to transport guests to Government House for the official luncheon.

The Governor-General continued to be a much valued client of COMCAR's services as she fulfilled her extremely busy schedule of vice-regal activities across the country.

A major event of 2009 was preparation for the 40th Pacific Islands Forum held in Cairns, Queensland, from 4 to 7 August. The scope of the forum, which was attended by the leaders of 16 Pacific Island nations, was comparable to that of one of the APEC ministerial meetings of 2007. The preparation was complex because of the relative remoteness of Cairns and the lack of COMCAR facilities there. Thirty cars had to be relocated from Canberra to Cairns where they were complemented by 13 local hire cars and coaches; 40 drivers and six supervisors had to be flown to Cairns for the occasion. The exercise was further complicated by the need to provide transport services for members of parliament in Canberra during the week beginning 9 August. In this instance the shortfall was met by contracting hire cars.

In June 2010 the Hon Kevin Rudd, MP was replaced as Prime Minister by the Hon Julia Gillard, MP. Within a few weeks of taking office Ms Gillard called a Federal election for 21 August 2010. Like all election campaigns this would be a busy period with COMCAR continuing to play its role behind the scenes ensuring that secure and reliable transport was available to both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition as they crisscrossed the country.

New technologies

Embracing new technologies was recognised as an essential element of improved service delivery capacity within COMCAR. One critical aspect involved redevelopment of the reservations and allocations (RISCC) system. RISCC has been in use since 1993 and the hardware and software are outdated and increasingly fragile.

The system underwent a thorough review between July and October 2007 and available alternative technologies were identified. Eddie Capon, who had been seconded to COMCAR during APEC 2007, remained with the organisation as RISCC Redevelopment Project Manager. Approval was finally given in early 2010 for the replacement project to proceed and COMCAR called for expressions of interest for a system which would enhance its efficiency and effectiveness into the future.

COMCAR vehicles and drivers (March 2010)

Region	Vehicles	Permanent Drivers	Casual Drivers
ACT	73 cars 1 Tarago 1 van	9	147
NSW	26 cars 1 Tarago 1 van	4	41
VIC	21 cars 1 Tarago	7	27
QLD	10 cars	1	14
SA	8 cars	1	11
WA	6 cars	1	8
TAS	1 car	1	0
	150	24	248

COMCAR also turned its attention to its environmental impact in accordance with its obligations under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. In September 2007 COMCAR took delivery of a Toyota Prius to assess the fuel efficiency of the hybrid vehicle and its potential for use in the COMCAR fleet. Between 12 May and 6 June 2008 two Toyota Prius vehicles were trialled on the parliamentary shuttle and a further four were added to the fleet in March 2009. In February 2010 COMCAR was one of the first organisations to take up the Toyota's hybrid Camry vehicles. As they rolled off the production line at the Toyota factory in Victoria, twelve of these new hybrid Camrys joined the COMCAR fleet in Canberra.

Other changes were also occurring within the fleet. In May 2007 Ford Australia's President had announced that local production of the Fairlane and LTD sedans would cease, though COMCAR was to continue receiving Fairlanes until the end of that year. COMCAR's connection with Ford extended back to 1920 when the first Ford vehicles were acquired for the ministerial fleet in Canberra. Ford Fairlanes had been imported into Australia from 1959 until 1967, when the model was built locally and they had become a significant part of the COMCAR fleet. Fortunately COMCAR was able to introduce the new Ford G6E vehicles and maintain the long association with the Ford company.



COMCAR: The future

The Commonwealth Government's car service has undergone immense change since the acquisition of the Renault for Prime Minister Andrew Fisher in 1910.

COMCAR began as a service for the Prime Minister and fellow ministers, with entitlements to its use being determined by the Prime Minister and the government of the day. Those entitled to use the service grew significantly over time and in accordance with demands on government and the public service. But technology and the expectations of governments and society changed rapidly in the latter part of the 20th century, prompting shifts in government policy and the refocusing of the agency as a parliamentary and VIP service.

Irrespective of these changes, COMCAR has remained an important arm of government, particularly in an era when the personal security of political leaders has become a major issue. The provision of a secure, reliable, efficient and high quality service remains the focus of all employed by COMCAR whether they be a reservations officer taking an urgent booking at 2am, an allocator co-ordinating movements of cars in Sydney peak hour traffic, a manager ensuring the best use of resources or a driver transporting a minister to a crucial meeting. Whilst much of COMCAR's work is behind the scenes, the guest-of-government service has increased in importance and profile reflecting the growing significance of Australia in the region and the world. This service, in particular continues to publicly showcase the professionalism of COMCAR and its traditions.

By its very nature, COMCAR's story has been interwoven with the history of the Commonwealth and the key events of the Australian community over the last 100 years.

The men and women of COMCAR now stand ready to play their part in the next chapter of Australia's history.