

Department of the Legislative Assembly Annual Report 2020–21



Department of the
Legislative Assembly
Annual Report 2020–21





Legislative Assembly *of Victoria*

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25 October 2021

Hon Colin Brooks MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
East Melbourne Vic 3002

Dear Speaker

I have pleasure in forwarding to you the Annual Report for the Department of the Legislative Assembly for the year 2020–21.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bridget Noonan'.

Bridget Noonan
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly



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Clerk's overview

In the last annual report, I wrote “it is clear that the challenges of COVID-19 will be with us for some time to come.” I would very much have liked to be proved wrong. Much of the Department's efforts this year focussed on how we could provide our services in an environment constrained by COVID-19. This annual report explains how that was achieved, and the opportunities we found along the way, such as online tours services to schools, remote hearings for committees, a range of Chamber innovations, and more effective use of digital services. Flexible working arrangements—first adopted by necessity—have become a regular part of life for most business units, and are working well for us.

The Parliament's strategic objectives have continued to provide the right framework for us to deliver services to members and the community. Focussed on supporting members fulfil their roles, informing the community, engaging with First Peoples, and protecting the independence and integrity of Parliament, the strategic plan gives us the scaffolding to deliver services day to day, and respond to new challenges. With our colleagues in the other departments, we have been working on a performance and activities reporting dashboard. This will shape much of our work in the next cycle, and I look forward to reporting to members and the community with more information about how the Assembly goes about its work.

None of our work would be possible without the support from and collaboration with our colleagues in the Departments of the Legislative Council and Parliamentary Services. I am always able to call my colleagues Andrew Young and Peter Lochert to discuss all manner of issues, and I value their collaboration and support. I acknowledge the leadership of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Claressa Surtees, who has been active in organising semi-regular virtual meetings of Australian and New Zealand clerks. That forum has been a lifeline over the last year, as we've navigated similar challenges.

This annual report covers the Department's operations for the last year. It explains the creative ways parliamentary officers worked to deliver services in a rapidly changing environment, and engaged with members to understand what they needed. Committees adapted and moved to largely online hearings and meetings. In some cases, the effects of the pandemic were material to the inquiries already underway, such as the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's inquiry into disadvantaged jobseekers. The tours team moved the regular schools tour program to an online service, and we were pleased

to see that rural and regional schools took up this service. As someone who grew up in a rural community, I feel especially pleased that an innovation born of the pandemic will allow the tours team to better connect with country schools and students into the future.

One of my predecessor clerks would often remark that every sitting week brings something new, and that clerks have front row seats to many historical events. This was the case when the Assembly held a special sitting at the Royal Exhibition Building in March, to mark the tabling of the Royal Commission into the mental health system. Hearing the stories of those with experience of mental health care, and enabling many commission witnesses and practitioners to gather for the presentation of the report was genuinely moving. That it was all arranged in a little over a week is a testament to the professionalism of my team and our Department of Parliamentary Services colleagues, and I make particular mention of Deputy Clerk, Robert McDonald, for his project management. I note that the special sitting was delivered without any additional funding provided.

History was also made in the Assembly on 3 September, when the Speaker called the Member for Morwell to contribute to debate on a bill, and the member joined proceedings via remote participation from the Latrobe Valley. My team worked closely with the Hansard staff behind the scenes to set up the remote participation system, and we were all pleased that it enabled members who were not able to attend in person to take part in debates, and represent their constituents. Of particular interest was that Mr Northe circulated amendments to a bill during this speech, and the process flowed exactly as though he had been in the Chamber. There was some cheering in our offices when this happened seamlessly, as it has several times since. This demonstrated that the Assembly can adapt to a changing environment so the House can function in the way the community deserves. Members can continue to represent their communities, and the House can legislate and contest ideas.

None of the achievements described in this report would be possible without the energy, commitment and creativity of the staff of the Legislative Assembly. I thank them all.

Bridget Noonan
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Departmental objectives and functions

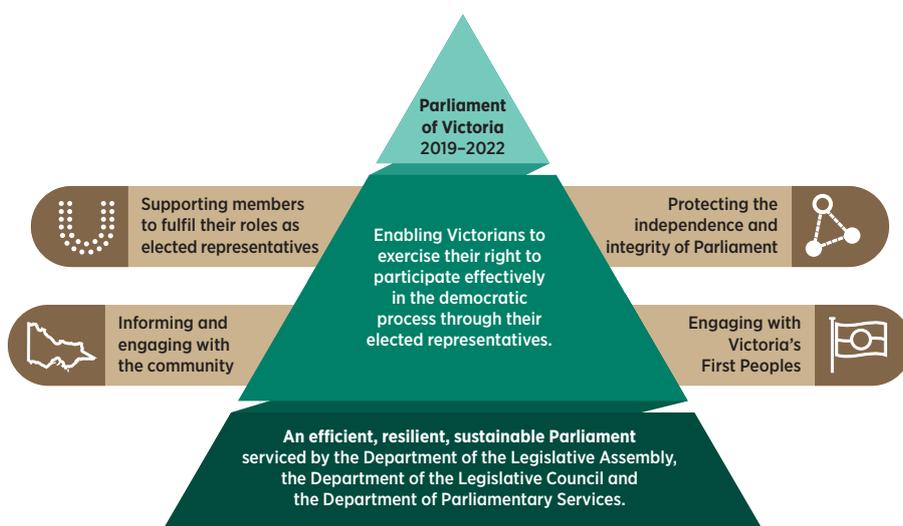
Department of the Legislative Assembly

The Department of the Legislative Assembly supports members to fulfil their roles as elected representatives and enables Victorians to participate effectively in the parliamentary process. In support of this purpose we deliver apolitical, professional and innovative services to the Legislative Assembly and inform and engage with all Victorians. Headed by the Clerk, officers of the Department support the Speaker and the work of the Chamber, the operations of committees, and in the provision of information and community engagement services.

Strategic directions and priorities of the parliamentary departments

The Parliament of Victoria, through its elected representatives, is accountable to the Victorian community for the provision and conduct of representative government in the interests of Victorians. The objective of all the departments of the Parliament is to deliver apolitical, professional and innovative services to support our elected representatives and the Parliament as an institution.

In fulfilling its constitutional purpose, the strategic direction of Parliament for 2019–2022 prioritises four roles and focuses the parliamentary departments on improving Parliament’s resilience and efficiency. The primary functions of parliamentary departments are to assist members to represent the people of Victoria and to ensure the independence and integrity of Parliament as an institution.



The strategic priorities of Parliament for 2019-2022.

Report on operations

2020–21 at a glance



49

bills passed by
the Assembly

47

bills initiated in
the Assembly

49

bills passed by
both Houses



43

sitting days

362hrs 44mins
total sitting time

8hrs 26mins
average sitting day

10hrs 25mins
longest sitting day

182
member allowance
claims processed



860

statements
by members

14

remote
contributions

215

questions
without notice

2,713

questions
in writing

31

divisions

23,927

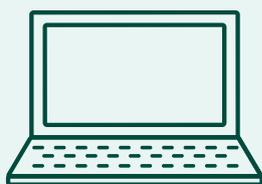
signatures
on petitions

45

petitions
presented

1,482

documents
tabled



11.5%

increase in social
media followers

13

online engagement
events

10

video news
bulletins in Auslan



26

committee
reports tabled

596

submissions
to committees

84

committee
meetings held

289

public hearings
held



8,428

students on
online incursions

309

online incursions
delivered

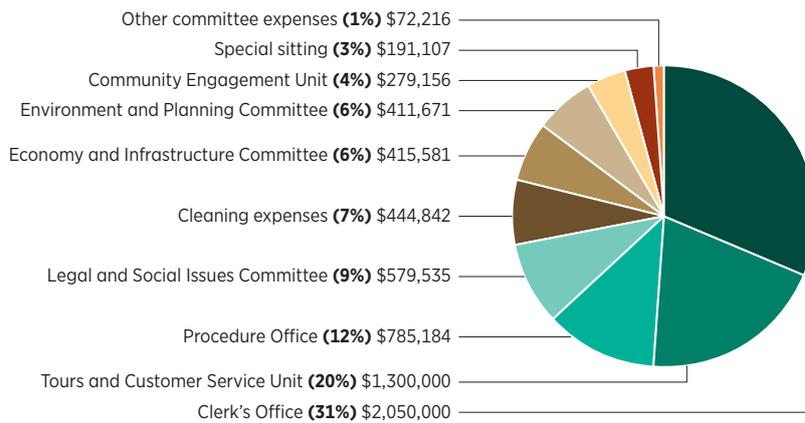
1,408

students visited
at schools

51

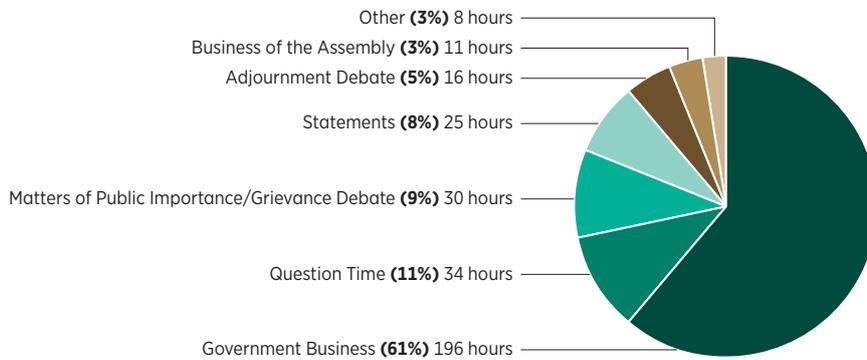
metropolitan
schools visited

Departmental expenditure



A breakdown of departmental expenditure in 2020–21.

Breakdown of business in the Assembly¹



A breakdown of time spent in the Chamber on different types of business in 2020–21.

¹ Not including mealbreaks.

Chamber operations

Adapting Chamber operations to a COVID-19 environment

Following the implementation of Stage 4 restrictions in Victoria on 2 August 2020, the Chief Health Officer advised the Speaker to consider delaying the Assembly's planned sittings from 4 to 6 August 2020. Based on this advice, the Legislative Assembly's scheduled sitting weeks in August did not proceed.

Significant changes were needed to enable the House to sit safely in September. The Chief Health Officer recommended that the Assembly and Council sit on different days to reduce member and staff interactions. To further minimise the risk of transmission, the following changes were made in the Chamber:

- perspex screens at the main table, in front of the Speaker, and the Hansard reporters' desks;
- compulsory wearing of face masks for all members and staff;
- separate exit and entrance to the Chamber; and
- staff divided into two teams—working on-site alternate weeks.

The House also passed a motion that made changes to sitting arrangements, including:

- reduced members in the Chamber;
- scheduled cleaning breaks;
- reduced sitting hours; and
- incorporation of contributions into Hansard.

A new division process for bills on the government business program was implemented. To comply with physical distancing requirements, members voted in groups. Members not present for a division could register their opinion in writing with the Clerk. These opinions were published after the results of the division in Hansard and the *Votes and Proceedings*.

Many of these new procedures remained in place for the remainder of 2020, with a few changes as case numbers dropped and restrictions eased. By October, health advice allowed both Houses to resume sitting on the same day, but start and finish times and lunch breaks were staggered.

The Assembly was able to meet on all its scheduled sitting days during the first half of 2021. The Leader of the House moved a motion at the start of each sitting week adjusting sitting arrangements depending on the health advice and restrictions at the time.

The House also dealt with several bills requiring an absolute or special majority, which is more than half or three fifths of the total elected members respectively. On the week these bills were considered, the sitting arrangements motion included the upper and lower galleries as part of the Chamber when the House voted on them. With members socially distanced around the entirety of the Chamber, divisions were able to take place with the required numbers of members present, both fulfilling the requirements of the Constitution and adhering to public health directions.

“ It has been a very challenging year for parliamentary staff to ensure that we have been able to continue operating the Parliament and our committees and acquitting the important work that the Parliament does.

Speaker, Hansard,
10 December 2020

Chamber seating arrangements

The health directions issued by the Chief Health Officer included density limits for shared spaces. The limits changed between one person per four square metres and one person per two square metres throughout the year. Under these restrictions, it was not possible for all 88 Assembly members and the required staff to be in the Chamber at the same time.

The Speaker removed the usual requirement for members to sit in allocated seats. The motion moved by the Leader of the House at the start of each sitting week specified a limit on the number of members allowed in the Chamber at one time. During the second half of 2020, when room densities were set at one person per four square metres, this limit was 24 members plus the Speaker. This number was then divided between the parties on a roughly proportional basis, but allowing for all three independents to be present. This meant the Chamber comprised of 13 Government members, seven Opposition members, one Greens member and three independents. To assist with these arrangements, signs were placed on each chair in the Chamber designating where members from each party could sit and which seats should be left vacant.

Staff numbers inside the Chamber were also kept to a minimum. The public galleries were closed, and the media were able to use both the existing press gallery and the upstairs public gallery to comply with physical distancing.

When the sittings resumed in 2021, restrictions had eased to one person per two square metres. The House agreed to allow a maximum of 56 members in the Chamber at any time—34 Government, 17 Opposition, two Greens and three Independents. By May 2021, restrictions had eased enough to allow all 88 members to sit in the Chamber at the same time. However, by June, greater restrictions returned, and room densities were again restricted to one person per four square metres. This time the House agreed to allow 29 members in the Chamber, with the lower public galleries included as part of the Chamber for the first time to accommodate an additional five members. The Hansard Broadcast team placed temporary microphones in the galleries and adjusted their cameras to ensure members' contributions could still be broadcast. The 29 members comprised of 16 Government, 10 Opposition, one Greens member and two Independents (one Independent member having indicated he would be absent).



Perspex screens, facemarks and reduced members in the Chamber were introduced to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Remote participation

For the first time in the Assembly's history, in 2020 the House agreed to allow members to participate in proceedings remotely. The authorising motion allowed remote participation on most items of business, including debates on bills and motions, question time, constituency questions and the adjournment debate. However, members participating remotely were not able to be counted for the purposes of a quorum and were not able to vote.

The Speaker issued guidelines to members explaining the technical and practical arrangements for remote participation. They outlined the rules of debate which would apply when participating remotely and practical arrangements for seeking the call and connecting to the online system.

Remote participation was made available to members via Zoom, with the Hansard Broadcasting team connecting Zoom calls through to the Chamber and out to the live broadcast. Members participating remotely could view the Chamber in real time and were able to communicate with the Speaker to receive the call. When asking questions or raising adjournment debate matters, members participating remotely could also hear from ministers responding to their contributions.

Members participated remotely on 14 occasions, contributing on bills, asking questions without notice and constituency questions, and raising adjournment debate matters. A member also circulated amendments to a bill while participating remotely.

“Members and staff in the chamber, we are now going to be witness to a little bit of history for this place. The member for Morwell is now going to contribute to debate on a bill via technology.

Speaker, Hansard,
3 September 2020



Ms Suzanna Sheed MP participating in proceedings remotely via Zoom.

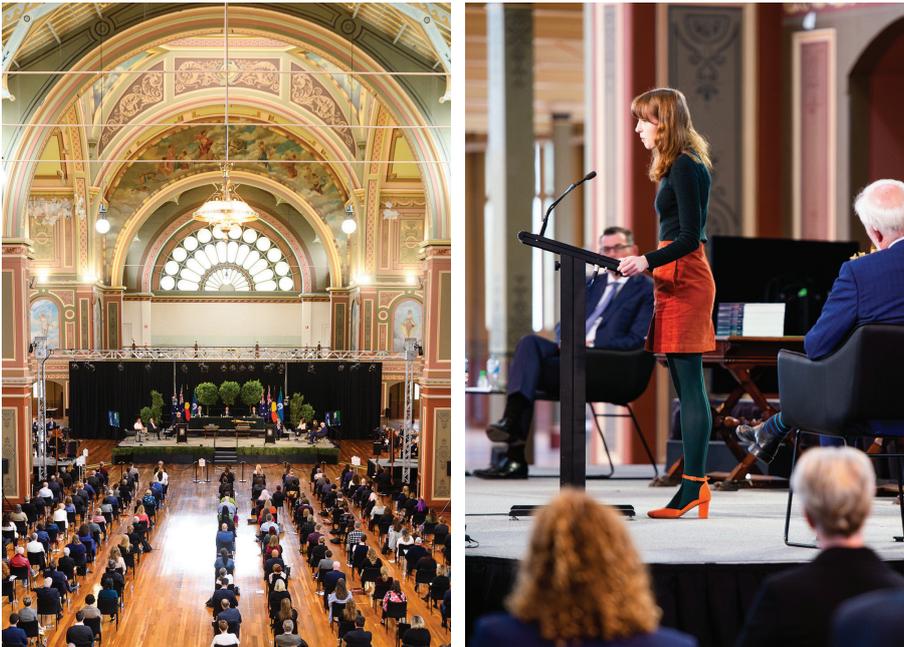
Special sitting at the Royal Exhibition Building

A special sitting of the Legislative Assembly was held on 2 March 2021 to table the final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. With COVID-19 density restrictions reducing the number of people able to visit Parliament House, the decision was made to hold the special sitting at the Royal Exhibition Building, the first time the Victorian Parliament had sat in the venue since 1927.

The staging of the special sitting was a significant exercise for Assembly and DPS staff, as it was delivered within a very short time frame. The motion agreeing to the sitting was passed by the House on 19 February 2021, giving parliamentary staff just six working days to stage the event.

Several logistical challenges presented themselves in moving the Parliament to the Royal Exhibition Building with such limited preparation time. A production company was contracted to assist with staging, lighting and seating, and to advise Assembly staff on the best way to hold the sitting in a COVID-safe manner for all Assembly members, 200 invited guests including Council members and the media.

On the advice of Victoria Police, the entirety of the Carlton Gardens was gazetted to be part of the parliamentary precinct for 48 hours, so that appropriate levels of security could be put in place. The Governor also signed a proclamation to allow the Parliament to meet at the Royal Exhibition Building for the morning.



The special sitting of the Legislative Assembly to table the final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System on 2 March 2021. Photos by Janusz Molinski.

The sitting began with the Clerk tabling the Royal Commission report. Following this, the Chair of the Royal Commission Penny Armytage AM, Professor Patrick McGorry AO and two members of the Victorian community with lived experience of mental health addressed members and invited guests. The Premier, Leader of the Opposition and two other members then spoke. At the conclusion of the special sitting, the House suspended for three hours and then continued with a usual sitting day in the Legislative Assembly Chamber at Parliament House.

The special sitting could not have been staged successfully without the assistance of the DPS, in particular staff from Security, Hansard/Broadcast, IT, Community Engagement and Buildings and Grounds. The Legislative Assembly was also grateful for the assistance of the staff from the Engagement and Protocol team at the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Royal Exhibition Building team, who provided event support. The Department of the Legislative Assembly's costs for the special sitting were \$191,107.

State budget delayed

The State budget, comprised of appropriation bills and budget papers, is typically introduced by the Treasurer in May each year. In 2020, the State budget was delayed due to the unpredictability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, interim appropriation bills passed Parliament and received royal assent in late April. The complete 2020–21 State budget was then introduced on 24 November 2020, and six months later the 2021–22 State budget was introduced on 20 May 2021.

The State budget introduced in November incorporated the interim appropriations with funding for the remainder of the financial year. Only a limited number of members were allowed in the Chamber on budget day, due to COVID-19 density limits. We therefore had to adjust our usual processes and we distributed copies of the budget papers to the members who were not in the Chamber from outside on the rooftop of the Members' Annexe. The Appropriation (2020–21) Bill 2020 and Appropriation (Parliament 2020–21) Bill 2020 spent three sitting days in the Legislative Assembly and a further four sitting days in the Legislative Council. The Governor gave royal assent to these bills on 15 December 2020.

This delay in the State budget also impacted the scrutiny of the budgets by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC). The Committee held two rounds of estimates hearings in quick succession at the end of 2020 and again in mid-2021.

Changes to standing and sessional orders

On 23 June the Standing Orders Committee tabled a report on e-petitions, responding to statements made in the Legislative Council and supplementary questions. The following day the Assembly agreed to a motion to make changes to its standing and sessional orders based on the recommendations in the report.

Two changes to the sessional orders were made. The first was the establishment of an e-petitions process. The new sessional order almost mirrors the process used in the Legislative Council, with the main difference that an e-petition must be sponsored by an Assembly member before it is published on Parliament's website. This is to ensure that a potentially objectionable petition, that no member would sponsor, is not published on the website. Other key features are:

- A member must not sign an e-petition they have sponsored.
- Once an e-petition is published it cannot be altered, but the sponsoring member may request it be withdrawn.
- Multiple e-petitions about the same issue and requesting the same action are not allowed simultaneously. However, once an e-petition has been tabled, a new e-petition can be started.

The second change was new Sessional Order 12A which allows a member ordered to withdraw from the House under Standing Order 124 to nominate another member to ask their supplementary question in question time. If the member is not quiet

or respectful after being asked to withdraw, the Chair will ask them to withdraw immediately without nominating another member. This sessional order is temporary until the end of 2021 when the Standing Orders Committee will review it.

The House also amended Standing Order 107 to clarify the process for members to correct the record if they feel they have been misrepresented by statements made in the Council. Previously, members could either make a personal statement by leave or a personal explanation. The Committee found it was unhelpful to have two different procedures—one which requires leave, and one which requires the consent of the Chair. They recommended the Standing Order be amended so members can only make a personal explanation, which requires the Speaker to approve any statement before it is made in the House.

No confidence motion

On 13 October 2020, the Assembly debated and ultimately defeated a motion of no confidence in the Government. This was only the second time since 1989 that the Assembly had debated a motion of no confidence. It is a rarely used, but potentially powerful tool. If successful, it is the first step to forcing the resignation of the Government or holding an early election.

No confidence motions are governed by special procedures set out in the Constitution and the Standing Orders. A no confidence motion is the only non-government motion that is guaranteed to be debated, as standing orders currently don't provide time to debate matters initiated by non-government members. However, Standing Order 34 gives no confidence motions precedence over all other business.

Unusually for such an important motion, the Assembly did not debate it on the next sitting day. The Leader of the Opposition gave notice of the motion on Thursday 17 September and the Assembly sat the following day with the motion listed on the notice paper for a later date. Under section 8A(2) of the *Constitution Act 1975*, three days must pass between the giving of notice and the debate on the motion. This meant the motion could only be moved on the next sitting day after 20 September, which turned out to be 13 October.

When the House met on 13 October, the sitting began with question time and formal business before proceeding to debate the motion. The debate lasted for approximately seven hours, with the House extending the sitting beyond the usual adjournment time to resolve the question. Through the course of the day, 34 members spoke on the motion: 15 Government, 16 Opposition, one Greens member and two independents. The motion was defeated with 23 ayes and 44 noes. Fourteen members who were not present for the division also registered their opinion with the noes under the special COVID-19 sitting arrangements.

Bills introduced and passed both Houses within the same week

Two bills were introduced and passed the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council within the same sitting week.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension and Other Matters) Bill 2020 was introduced to extend the state of emergency declaration for the COVID-19 pandemic from six months to 12 months and make minor amendments to the role of the Chief Health Officer and reporting requirements. It was introduced in September, when the sittings of the Houses were staggered to minimise the amount

of people within the parliamentary precinct. The Council sat first on Tuesday and Wednesday, and the Assembly sat Thursday and Friday. The bill was introduced in the Council on the Tuesday and passed without amendment on Wednesday. The Assembly received the bill on Thursday, debated it and then passed it on Friday under the government business program. The bill received royal assent the following Tuesday.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020 was introduced to provide fees payable by people arriving from overseas and quarantining in Victoria. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services introduced the bill in the Assembly on Tuesday 8 December 2020 and moved the second reading immediately under Standing Order 61(3)(b). The Assembly passed the bill at 5.00 pm that day under the government business program. The bill was then received by the Council, and the second reading was moved immediately so that debate could follow. The Council spent some time in Committee of the Whole but ultimately passed it with no amendments later the same day. Due to the urgent nature of international flights resuming in Victoria, the bill received royal assent the following day, meaning the bill progressed from being introduced to royal assent in just over 24 hours.

Senate Vacancy

On 3 September 2020 the Speaker read a message from the Governor notifying the Assembly that Senator Richard Di Natale had resigned and there was a vacant Victorian place in the Senate. Filling a Senate vacancy requires a joint sitting of both Houses. The usual process for initiating a joint sitting to fill a Senate vacancy is for the Assembly to send a message to the Council proposing a time and place to meet. In this case the Council sent a message to the Assembly proposing the joint sitting and the Assembly agreed to the Council's proposal. This was because the Council were sitting on Tuesday and Wednesday that week and the Assembly was sitting on Thursday and Friday.

On Friday 4 September 2020 the Assembly and Council held the joint sitting in the Assembly Chamber and chose Lidia Thorpe to hold the vacant seat. Often proposed new senators sit in the public gallery for the joint sitting, however due to COVID-19 restrictions, this was not possible. This was also the first time a joint sitting to fill a Senate vacancy has been held on a day when the Council was not sitting. The only Council member in attendance was the President.

Electronic tabling of documents

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we stopped requiring departments and agencies to provide a physical copy of documents for tabling. This change was made as most public servants were working from home and not able to easily deliver reports in person, and to promote COVID-Safe practices by reducing the number of people coming to Parliament House.

These adjustments have since informed changes to our tabling processes from the start of 2021. We now accept tabling letters by email with electronic copies of documents. For most documents, we print a hard copy for tabling in-house. We only require hard copies to be provided if a document is over 250 pages or it is a parliamentary paper. These changes have also helped to reduce waste and the need for storage space. We held online information sessions for government departments explaining the changes. Over 200 government department and agency staff took part in the two 30-minute sessions.

As more documents are provided in digital formats, we have increased the types of documents that are published to our tabled documents database. This has meant that more information is readily available to members, their staff and the public. We email members a full list of documents tabled each sitting day linked to online publications. We also provide a print on demand service for members.

Speaker's rulings

Occasionally the Speaker will make a ruling to clarify the Assembly's rules or where a new situation has arisen for the first time. They are often made in response to points of order raised by members seeking clarification on a matter. We support this function by researching the practices of other jurisdictions and providing considered advice to assist the Speaker in make a ruling. Rulings form an important source of procedure by providing a consistent interpretation of standing orders and other rules. The Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Acting Speakers use the rulings to help guide future decisions.

Two of the more significant rulings made by the Speaker were:

- The Chair will consider whether the intent of a constituency question is to seek information, rather than focusing solely on the wording or phrasing of the question.
- Confirming that the decision whether to stop the clock is entirely at the discretion of the Chair, who will take into account many factors, including whether granting the member speaking additional time will take time away from a member speaking later in the debate.

The Speaker also ruled that a supplementary question can only be asked by the same member who asked the original substantive question. This issue was then considered by the Standing Orders Committee, and a new sessional order has been introduced, which is discussed earlier in this report.

Condolence motions/statements

On 3 September 2020, the Speaker offered condolences on behalf of the House to victims of the Beirut port explosion, after a large amount of ammonium nitrate exploded and killed at least 215 people. On the same day, the Speaker reflected on the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II.

The House also paid tribute to His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh after his death. Members expressed their sympathies to his family and acknowledged his long career and many years of service. The House requested that the Governor communicate this resolution with the Queen.

The Speaker also announced the death of two former members—David Lea, former member for Sandringham and Frank Sheehan, former member for Ballarat South.

“ I have taken the view that if members seek information about something in their electorate in good faith, I will let those questions stand.

Speaker, Hansard,
13 October 2020

Committee operations

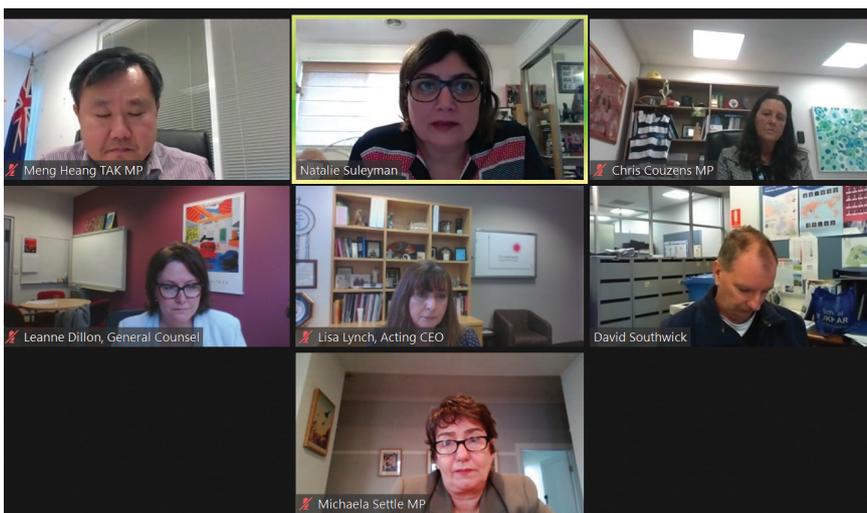
Adapting committee operations to a COVID-19 environment

Parliamentary committees built on their experience organising meetings and hearings remotely throughout the year and successfully convened most activities online through a variety of online collaboration and video conferencing applications. As a result, we were able to provide services to committees with minimal staff required on the parliamentary precinct. During this time committees continued to innovate with witness participation and improvements to all abilities access, such as through the extended use of Australian sign language (Auslan) in broadcast proceedings.

While standing committees of the Legislative Assembly are able to have members count for quorum and vote using remote participation, members of the joint investigatory committees have only been able to do this through amendments to the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*. Amendments to the Act in April 2020 allowed remote participation until October 2020, and further amendments in September 2020 and March 2021 extended these arrangements to 26 April 2021 and 26 April 2022, respectively.

When in-person hearings were required, excellent support and collaboration from Hansard, Broadcast, IT and other units helped us to deliver innovative solutions for hearings. Due to COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions, for example, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee convened estimates hearings in Queen's Hall in November and December 2020. Hearings in the Legislative Council Committee Room were also held with significant reconfiguration to allow physical distancing to occur.

Committees staff delivered exceptional services during the 2020–21 year, providing a relatively seamless transition for committees from traditional face-to-face meetings and hearings, to online and COVID-compliant activities, while maintaining (and in some cases, improving) productivity and outcomes. Many of the changes introduced during the year will no doubt be retained as standard committees practice into the future.



The Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee conducts a public hearing via Zoom for its Inquiry into historical forced adoptions in Victoria.

Legislative Assembly Standing Committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers

The terms of reference asked the Committee to consider the social and economic benefits of placing jobseekers facing disadvantage into sustainable employment. The consultations for this inquiry all took place in the previous reporting period, with the Committee receiving over 100 submissions and conducting eight days of public hearings.

The Committee tabled its final report on 19 August 2020. The Committee found jobseekers facing disadvantage lack access to opportunities and resources to improve their employment prospects and enable them to find and retain work. The Committee's final report made 70 recommendations, including the continuation of the Jobs Victoria Employment Network, expansion of training opportunities at Learn Locals and Aboriginal-controlled organisations, and widespread adoption of social procurement across local government. It also recommended the co-design and co-development of employment programs with employers and jobseekers and the development of a youth employment strategy and regional skills demand profiles. The Committee's report acknowledges the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and how this exacerbates employment barriers for jobseekers facing disadvantage. The report emphasised the urgency of implementing these recommendations to avoid the scarring effect of long-term unemployment for these jobseekers.

Inquiry into access to TAFE for learners with disability

In this inquiry the Committee is examining the accessibility of TAFE for learners with disability and how their experience of TAFE can be improved.

The Committee called for submissions in August 2020, including via a video in Auslan and an easy English guide, and received a total of 39 submissions. The Committee conducted four days of public hearings from December 2020 to May 2021, speaking with learners with disability and organisations that represent them, TAFE and other education providers, and the Victorian Government. All public hearings for this inquiry were conducted via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee's final report will be tabled early in the next reporting period.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Inquiry into tackling climate change in Victorian communities

The Committee completed the Inquiry into tackling climate change in Victorian communities, tabling its final report on 25 November 2020.

The final report made 72 recommendations to the Government across a range of areas, including community energy, agriculture, urban forestry, local government, water, transport, waste management, energy efficiency, disaster resilience, leadership, strategy and advocacy.

The Government tabled its response to the report on 24 June 2021.

Inquiry into environmental infrastructure for growing populations

The Committee commenced the Inquiry into environmental infrastructure for growing populations in August 2020, with a call for submissions and extensive advertising of the terms of reference. The Committee received 264 submissions from a wide range of stakeholders. The Committee also heard from a total of 60 stakeholder organisations during 10 days of public hearings (from March to May) in Melbourne.

The Committee was due to table its final report by 30 June but has received an extension and will now table in the next reporting period.

“ One of the key points that has come out of the submissions and research is that 300,000 to 400,000 Melburnians don't live within walking distance of adequate open space.

Ms Sarah Connolly MP,
Chair, Environment
and Planning Standing
Committee.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Inquiry into early childhood engagement of CALD communities

On 28 May 2019, the Committee received from the House an inquiry into early childhood engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, with a tabling date of 30 June 2020. However, due to the circumstances arising in March 2020 around COVID-19, the reporting date was extended, and the report was tabled on 17 September 2020.

The Committee received 39 submissions and eight supplementary submissions. It held nine days of public hearings and attended site visits in greater metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

The report made 49 recommendations aimed at improving access to, and connections with, early childhood services in Victoria.

Inquiry into anti-vilification protections

On 12 September 2019, the Committee received an inquiry into anti-vilification protections, with an original tabling date of 1 September 2020. Due to circumstances arising around COVID-19, the report was tabled on 3 March 2021.

The main purpose of the inquiry was to examine the effectiveness of the operation and enforcement of the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*, including whether to extend the protections beyond existing classes, and consider the role of the State in addressing online vilification. The Committee received 62 submissions and 11 supplementary submissions, and held seven days of public hearings in Melbourne, both in person and remotely via video link. The final report comprised of 36 recommendations aimed at preventing vilification, strengthening law enforcement and addressing the rising problem of online vilification.

Inquiry into responses to historical forced adoptions in Victoria

On 28 May 2019, the Legislative Assembly referred to the Committee an inquiry into responses to historical forced adoptions in Victoria, with a tabling date of 31 December 2020. This date was later extended to mid-August 2021.

The Committee called for submissions on 6 November 2019 and agreed to continue accepting submissions throughout the inquiry process. Overall, 114 submissions were received, with some people supported to prepare their submission with the help of an oral historian or counselling. Upon the lifting of social distancing restrictions, the Committee held 11 days of public hearings in metropolitan and regional areas from December 2020 to July 2021. Counselling support was available at every public hearing and offered to witnesses following their appearance if they needed it. The report is scheduled to be tabled in August 2021.



Top left: Promotional image for the Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee's Inquiry into access to TAFE for learners with disability.

Top right: Promotional image for the Environment and Planning Standing Committee's Inquiry into environmental infrastructure for growing populations.

Bottom centre: Members of the Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee with a printed copy of their report on the Inquiry into anti-vilification protections.

Joint Investigatory Committees

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) has had a highly productive year, tabling four reports in Parliament. It also undertook work on another three important inquiries on gender responsive budgeting, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the 2021–22 budget estimates.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and a request from the Premier, the Committee commenced an inquiry into the Victorian Government's Response to the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020. PAEC tabled an interim report in August 2020 and a second report in February 2021. The Committee gathered evidence from some extraordinary witnesses representing many different sectors—from the hospitality and tourism industry, education and health to First Nations people, students and ministers. Changes have already been made in response to the Committee's inquiry, including special schools now staying open for children with disability during lockdowns; and a commitment to greater transparency on the reporting of rent relief grants paid, the international student support fund and impact of the pandemic on court operations. The Government has accepted all but three of the 47 recommendations made by the Committee in its second report. For example, it is commissioning independent and expert modelling of the broader health and mental health impact of the pandemic and associated non-pharmaceutical interventions.

The Committee fulfilled a critical role in scrutinising the Government's COVID-19 related expenditure at the height of the pandemic. The estimates hearings were still held, but in November rather than May in line with the delayed tabling of the State budget.

The Committee is in the final stages of its inquiry into gender responsive budgeting (GRB) with evidence to be gathered from jurisdictions with well-established GRB practices such as Spain and Austria. The inquiry commenced in September 2019 but was interrupted by the pandemic. Gender responsive budgeting promotes gender equality through the way budgets are constructed, funds are collected and spent, and outcomes achieved. The Victorian Government has already responded to the Committee's inquiry in part with the creation of a new GRB unit within Department of Treasury and Finance in 2021–22. The unit, according to the 2021–22 Gender Equality Budget Statement, will be responsible for ensuring outcomes for women are measured as part of the budget decision-making process.

The Committee has oversight responsibilities in relation to two independent Officers of the Parliament—the Victorian Auditor-General and Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO). The Committee undertook its first review of the PBO since its establishment in 2017. The report to Parliament is expected to be tabled in August 2021. The Committee also undertook its regular annual activities—commissioning the financial audit of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO), participating in the VAGO draft annual plan and budget process and reviewed the PBO's operational plan for the 2021–22 year. The Committee also provided feedback to the Auditor-General on some performance audit specifications.

The Committee looks forward to receiving the Government's response to its inquiry on the management of Victoria's internationally recognised Ramsar wetlands. The Committee's 16 recommendations focussed on the management, monitoring, funding and governance of Victoria's 12 precious Ramsar sites. The Government's response was due by mid-December 2020.

The Committee had two membership changes over the last 12 months. Nina Taylor MLC joined the Committee on 14 October 2020 after Ingrid Stitt MLC accepted the Ministries of Workplace Safety and Early Childhood. James Newbury MP joined the Committee on 4 May with the resignation of Bridget Vallence MP.

Finally, PAEC secretariat staff have been active in the capacity building space. Three PAEC staff participated in a workshop organised by the United Nations Development Programme Pacific Office in October 2020. Presentations and discussions on citizens budgets, gender budgeting and budgeting in a crisis gave the PAEC team plenty of food for thought ahead of the 2020–21 Victorian State Budget being handed down.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee (SARC) plays an important role reviewing all bills introduced into Parliament and reporting to both Houses. SARC does not comment on the policy aspects of legislation, but focuses on the use of certain legislative practices and allows the Parliament to consider whether the use of these practices is necessary, appropriate or desirable in all the circumstances.

In deciding whether to comment on a bill, SARC is guided by its terms of reference set out in the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*. These scrutiny principles allow SARC to look for such things as trespasses to rights and freedoms and inappropriate delegation of legislative powers. The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* also

“ As the pandemic hit, governments asked legislatures [Parliaments] to set aside or modify established budget practices and adopt solutions to expedite emergency responses. At the same time COVID-19 presented serious operational challenges for legislatures. They responded with creative solutions for swift action while maintaining effective oversight and accountability, demonstrating their resilience.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),
25 November 2020.

requires the Committee to consider whether the bill is incompatible with human rights. SARC also has a role to examine all regulations and legislative instruments against similar terms of reference set out in the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994*.

During the reporting period, SARC tabled 15 Alert Digests that examined and reported on 52 Bills and six Acts as well as four regulations and two legislative instruments. SARC, through the Regulation Review Subcommittee, reviewed 181 regulations (including one public interest determination and two national laws) and 59 legislative instruments. SARC's review of subordinate legislation was published in the *Annual Review 2019, Regulations and Legislative Instruments* tabled in October 2020.

Domestic Committees

Privileges Committee

The Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council Privileges Committees jointly met with the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser (PIA) on 7 August 2020 and were briefed on the PIA's activities and on his report to the Parliament that was subsequently tabled on 3 September 2020.

Standing Orders Committee

On 23 June 2021 the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders Committee tabled a report on e-petitions, responding to statements made in the Legislative Council and supplementary questions. The Committee's recommendations are discussed earlier in this report, in the section on changes to standing and sessional orders.

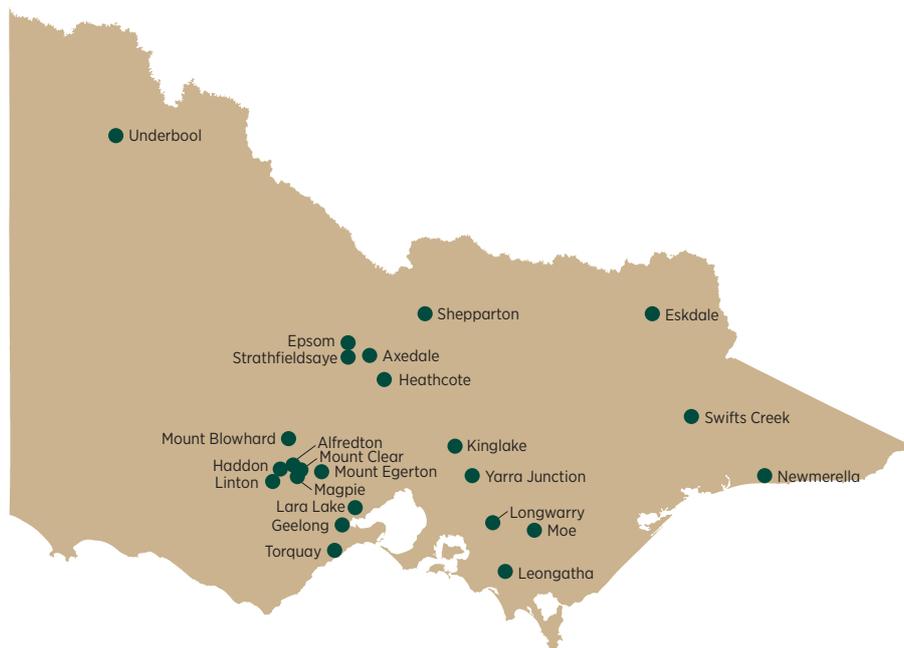
Community engagement

Tours and outreach program

The Tours and Outreach Officers at the Parliament of Victoria normally spend their weeks showcasing the building to tourists and informing school students about parliamentary processes. When COVID-19 restrictions closed the front doors of Parliament to visitors, the team wanted to find a way to reach out and engage with students around Victoria and our online incursion program began.

Online incursions were initially targeted towards grades 5 and 6 students. We contacted schools all around Victoria and found teachers were keen for different learning experiences for their students. For each session, a Tours and Outreach Officer presents from one of the chambers or the Library using video conferencing software. They deliver a presentation about how a law is made, including activities and questions along the way. The online program is now a permanent part of our tours program. We have added programs for all secondary school levels, from year 7 up to VCE, linked to the curriculum.

An added benefit of offering the program online is the ability to reach students all over Victoria, including remote regions. Schools from all across the State have booked incursions, including from Mount Egerton, Kerang, Orbost, Eskdale, Rosebud, Torquay, Longwarry, Yarra Junction and Heathcote.



“ Thank you. You were very prompt with all your responses and emails and the presenter was great with the kids online (during remote learning). Thank you again.

“ Fantastic incursion for our Year 6 Class. It was interesting and engaging for the students. Diagrams and photos were great too.

Feedback from teachers about the online incursion program.

Regional schools that participated in online incursions in 2020–21.

From Term 1 we commenced visiting schools again as part of the metropolitan visits program. In Term 2 2021 we were able to welcome school groups back to the Parliament in person. We were also able to conduct one regional visit. Overall, in 2020–21, the team:

- delivered 309 online incursions to 8,428 students;
- presented to 647 students who came to Parliament House for a school tour;
- delivered tours to 55 people from community organisations, adult learning, government departments and tertiary institutions;

- visited 51 metropolitan schools engaging with 1,408 students; and
- conducted a regional visit to Sale where six role-play presentations were delivered to 129 students.



A Tours and Outreach Officer presents from the Legislative Assembly Chamber during an online incursion.

Engaging with the community

Engagement with the community was a priority during the year. Staff throughout the Department contributed to Parliament-wide efforts to connect with Victoria's diverse communities through experiences, learning initiatives, news and information services, and community partnerships.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on events at Parliament House. In response we pivoted to online experiences. Our community engagement team coordinated a series of online events to connect people with Parliament, engage them with our social media channels, and interact with them on issues of importance to the community and the future development of our State.

Thirteen online events were held and streamed via Facebook and our website. They included:

- an online forum on a committee inquiry into social media and elections;
- panel discussions and a forum for National Science Week;
- webinars with leading scientists as part of a Parliamentary Library series;
- an online panel and premiere videos for Open House Melbourne; and
- an online series for the Australian Heritage Festival.

More than a thousand people viewed the live streams and were able to interact by submitting online questions for panel members to answer. Many thousands of people subsequently viewed the video recordings, with much positive feedback from the community. Many of the events were conducted in partnership with others, including the organisers of Open House Melbourne, the Royal Society of Victoria, and Victorian Parliamentarians for Science, Technology Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

At the start of 2021, when COVID-19 restrictions eased, we held two events on the steps of Parliament House to encourage people to return to Parliament. They were:

- an interactive chalk drawing activity on the steps, conducted in partnership with the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art as part of the Uptown community art event; and
- a photographic installation about Parliament as part of the PHOTO 2021 international photography exhibition.

Both events sought to introduce Parliament to people who had never visited the building before, as a way of connecting with new audiences.



Interactive chalk drawing on the steps of Parliament House, conducted in partnership with the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art as part of the Uptown community art event.

In the learning space, a major new resource was completed, *Aboriginal Change Makers*, which provides histories and learning activities to connect students with the stories of Aboriginal leaders who have brought about significant social change. The project is an outcome of a close working relationship with the staff at Worawa Aboriginal College, under the leadership of Dr Lois Peeler AM. A ceremony to launch the resource at Worawa College was planned for May but could not take place, and we now hope to launch it early in the next reporting period.

The Parliament Prize 2020 attracted a record field of entries in July, with 748 students taking part across the state. Children's rights and protections was one of the most popular topics, along with education, Indigenous issues, mental health, homelessness, racism, pollution and the impact of COVID-19. Students from Viewbank Primary, MacKillop Catholic Regional College and Scotch College took out the top honours, and the winners were celebrated in a special online announcement in October that was delivered through a collaboration between the community engagement and tours and customer service teams.

We also completed a review of our education resources, working with our education advisory panel to assess how well our existing resources are meeting the requirements of the curriculum and identifying which resources need updating and what future resource needs are to be addressed. Some of the early priorities to come out of this process include working with the tours team to develop materials that complement existing visitor and outreach programs, along with resources that support members' engagement with schools.

A lecture program for Victoria University law and justice students that in previous years had been delivered at Parliament House was switched to an online format. Members of Parliament were included in the presentations to students, enabling the students to get a better understanding of the role of parliamentarians in our democratic system of Government. Nine sessions were conducted involving more than 500 students, with an assessment task set for students to complete after the session.

Through our news and information service, we made a concerted effort to inform the community about the work of parliamentary committees and the opportunities for community members to contribute their views to public inquiries conducted by those committees. Initiatives included social media packs to enable the community to share information about inquiries and a range of video material shared on social media channels highlighting key aspects of committee inquiries.

There was a six per cent increase in subscribers to our news alert service, growing to 2,500 subscribers. In addition, we had many hundreds of subscribers to news alerts covering specific committee inquiry topics.

Our social media following continued to grow during the year, as shown in the table below.

Channel	Following		Increase	
	30 June 2021	30 June 2020	number	per cent
Facebook	76,480	70,027	6,453	9
Instagram	5,639	4,766	873	18
LinkedIn	9,493	7,903	1,590	20
Twitter	7,933	6,964	969	13
YouTube	1,906	1,315	591	44

Parliament of Victoria's social media following as at 30 June 2021.

The significance of social media to our engagement can be seen from statistics relating to our Facebook page. During the first quarter of 2021, our Facebook posts reached 1.1 million people and attracted 174,100 engagements.

We continued to work on improving the accessibility of parliamentary information and events. Auslan interpreters were used for our online webinars and panel discussions. In partnership with a group of young Victorians, 10 video news bulletins were produced in Auslan and shared on our social media channels, attracting hundreds of views and positive feedback from members of the Deaf community. We also employed a young member of the Deaf community as a youth associate to work on other initiatives to connect us with Victorians who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Youth engagement continued to be a focus to ensure young Victorians can connect with Parliament in an effective way. An online leadership forum for young women leaders was held in March and attracted 56 participants from metropolitan and regional areas. In their evaluations, 44 per cent of participants in the Women Engaged in Leadership forum (WE Lead) rated the relevance of the sessions as very high and 44 per cent rated them as high. In addition, more than 20 young people participated in a youth workshop in June 2021 to help map out a future model for youth engagement by the Parliament, with further work to be undertaken on this initiative in the year ahead.

As visits to Parliament House were not possible due to COVID-19, we coordinated online programs for community leaders, including regional community leaders from the Great South Coast, Geelong, Gippsland and Goulburn Murray, as well as for community

leaders from around Melton. The leadership groups gave positive feedback about these online programs, indicating that they provided people with insights into Parliament that they would not have been able to get otherwise.

An ongoing community project with the Eastern Community Legal Centre saw consultations undertaken with a community advisory panel on ways to enhance engagement with CALD communities. A report produced following those consultations has provided various project ideas that are being implemented during 2021–22.

Services to the public

The COVID-19 pandemic required us to adjust the way we deliver our services to the public.

The Procedure Office respond to public inquires on a wide range of matters relating to the Parliament and assist to connect callers with appropriate Government departments and agencies. Like many Victorians, Procedure Office staff were required to work from home for much of the year due to COVID-19 restrictions, so they implemented a system to answer phone calls from home instead of the office. Parliament's IT team helped redirect calls from the Procedure Office phone numbers to their computers. Taking calls from the public whilst at home took some adjustment, especially when responding to calls from Victorians adversely affected by the pandemic. The Procedure Office undertook challenging callers and resilience training to support them with this.

We also added to the information available to the public through the Parliament's website. This included reports tabled in the Legislative Assembly, real-time information about what is happening in the Chamber and fact sheets about how the Assembly works.

The Tours and Customer Service Unit also adapted the way it delivers its services. Calls relating to tour bookings were redirected so they could be answered by staff working from home. The team also contacted all 88 Assembly members' electorate offices to provide updates on changes to the tours and outreach program.

Twinning program

The Victorian Parliament is twinned with the Parliaments of Fiji, Nauru and Tuvalu, through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's (CPA) regional twinning program. We are grateful for the support provided for our twinning program by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We also acknowledge the logistical support provided by the Australian Parliament.

As the COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions provide challenges for delivering traditional capacity building programs, the focus shifted to providing assistance online and continuing engagement with our twinned Parliaments in new ways. Coordinated for the three parliamentary departments by the Office of the Clerk of Parliaments in the Legislative Council, as CPA branch secretary, activities included:

- Assisting to develop a Hansard operational manual for Fiji. Parliament's Hansard team worked with Fiji subeditors on the manual, incorporating workflows and style guides.
- Committee staff advising Fiji colleagues in relation to media guidelines and procedures and rules for broadcasting committee hearings.

- Assisting colleagues in Nauru with governance frameworks, as they transition to new parliamentary service legislation.
- Participating in online masterclasses for committees and outreach staff in Tonga, Samoa and Fiji with colleagues from other Australian states to exchange ideas and knowledge about parliamentary committee operations and administration, and barriers to community engagement.

We actively promoted our twinning program to the Victorian community by regularly posting a range information, photographs and videos about our twinning program to our social media.

Functions, events and exhibitions held at Parliament House

We aim to make Parliament House as accessible as possible to members of the public. However, the use of the building for community events such as exhibitions, public awareness campaigns, receptions and awards ceremonies was prevented by COVID-19 and its associated lockdowns and limits on the size of gatherings. We look forward to welcoming the Victorian community back to Parliament House once health restrictions allow.

Official visits and attachments

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to host any official delegations or attachments this year.

Work experience program

The work experience program for Victorian secondary school students was another unfortunate casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2020–21 financial year, we were unable to offer work experience to any students.

However, the temporary suspension has provided time to review the work experience program including the selection process and the opportunities available to prospective students. The review is taking place in consultation with our colleagues in the Legislative Council and the Learning and Development and Community Engagement units.

From 2022, students will have the opportunity to submit an Expression of Interest, asking them to nominate their preference of completing work experience during a sitting week (Parliamentary Sitting Program) or non-sitting week (Parliamentary Services Program). Students can choose to work with the House departments during a sitting week or, during a non-sitting week, in areas such as business management, facilities maintenance, community engagement, broadcasting, or information technology. We hope this process will be more inclusive and provide opportunities for a range of students representing rural, regional, and suburban areas and those from government, independent, and Catholic schools. We plan to launch the new program in late 2021.

Departmental initiatives

Parliament's strategic directions for the 59th Parliament

The Department works closely with the Department of the Legislative Council and DPS in achieving the Parliament's strategic directions. The directions are established early in each Parliament and reflect the objectives of the Presiding Officers and the Departments, and seek to be responsive to the needs of members and the Victorian community. For the life of the 59th Parliament, the strategic directions are:

- Supporting members to fulfil their roles as elected representatives.
- Protecting the independence and integrity of Parliament.
- Informing and engaging with the community.
- Engaging with Victoria's First Peoples.

The Department sought to partner with members where practical in the design and delivery of projects in support of the strategic directions, which brought a different focus to our service delivery approach. Work towards the strategic directions is outlined below.

Supporting members to fulfil their roles as elected representatives

Services to members

Sitting day information

Altered working arrangements to respond to the COVID-19 environment demonstrated that there was scope to deliver some of our services to members in different ways.

On sitting days, we now share various documents to members by email, including:

- the Clerk's daily running sheet, with a link to that day's notice paper online;
- a list of documents tabled, with links to the reports in the Tabled Documents Database;
- bills and second reading speeches, with links to the legislation website; and
- a list of Assembly committee reports that can be debated each Wednesday.

As well as the hygiene benefits of not handling multiple pieces of paper in the Chamber, the digital distribution has other benefits. Members not in the Chamber at the time, including members absent with ill health or for other reasons, still receive critical Chamber information in a timely manner. Significantly, these documents now reach members' staff, better assisting them in their work supporting members.

Parliamentary procedure can be complex and hard to follow. Providing all members and staff with information in a convenient format and without delay may help de-mystify some aspects of Chamber operations. Circulating the running sheet by email means that members and staff receive it an hour or more before the House sits, which may allow members to better plan for the day ahead.

While providing this information to members electronically has benefits, we are keen to explore options other than email in the next planning cycle.

Other business processes

Standing orders require the clerk to write to ministers to alert them to the tabling of any petitions relevant to their portfolio. At the end of the planning cycle, the Clerk's office began a pilot to automate this correspondence. If the pilot is successful, the same approach could be rolled out to other standard correspondence, such as those related to subordinate legislation and unanswered questions.

A project team of Assembly staff audited services provided to members by the Department's business units to assess whether any leant themselves to digitisation or further streamlining. The threshold against which digitisation was assessed was that it had to be as, or more, convenient for the member to use the service in a digital format as the traditional method. Digitising back-of-house functions that ultimately deliver a more complex service to members were discounted. We will consult with members about options for further digitisation of services in the next planning cycle.

Member induction and training resources

We have continued to explore ways we can provide better training and support for members' roles in the Chamber and on committees. We established a cross-department project team to:

- consolidate, improve and extend in-house training the Department provides to members about chamber and committee processes;
- ensure training options are customisable to suit the needs of individual members—both in format and content;
- develop a suite of training materials that can be easily, quickly and consistently delivered by a range of department staff; and
- ensure procedural information provided to members is consistent but not unnecessarily duplicated.

The team started by developing a training module and resources for new and existing shadow ministers. The session can be delivered to one or more members and their staff, in person or online. The training can be tailored to each member's needs, either covering topics in detail or as a refresher with the opportunity to ask questions. We also developed a shadow ministers' guide and PowerPoint slides to accompany the training and these will be used as a template for future modules. We successfully piloted the program and it is now ready for wider distribution.

Now that the first module has been developed and tested, we plan to develop other modules to assist members in their varied roles in the Chamber, such as ministers, whips, acting speakers and independents.

Evaluation of member services

We sometimes say that the work of the Department is being done well when nobody notices us doing it. One of the consequences of this approach is that the Department's traditional performance measures are not reliable indicators of performance. As part of our accountability and responsiveness to members and the community, this is something we are keen to remedy. In previous reporting periods, senior departmental staff ran a series of rolling feedback interviews with members, seeking targeted

feedback on various Assembly services. This has been a useful tool for planning purposes and Departmental staff were keen to continue it in an expanded form. Over the reporting period, we made it a priority to:

- establish measures for member services that are suitable for inclusion in the annual report to strengthen the Department's service evaluation;
- inform members of the results of the member survey and the actions to be taken based on the findings; and
- improve and promote our services and address the lack of service awareness expressed by some members.

Fortunately, the Legislative Council and DPS also saw these issues as a priority. Instead of each department following its own path, the three departments agreed to implement an activities and performance reporting dashboard to collect data and the activities and performance measures the departments currently apply. This project is discussed in the next section of this report. We hope that one of the outcomes of the dashboard will be to refine the measures we use, increase member familiarity with and use of services, and provide better reporting back to members and the public about our use of resources.

We sometimes say that the work of the Department is being done well when nobody notices us doing it.

Protecting the independence and integrity of Parliament

Performance and activities reporting

Throughout 2020–21, a cross-parliament team worked on a proof-of-concept design for a performance and activities dashboard. The implementation of a dashboard is an important step in making Parliament more data-driven in the way we work. The dashboard will improve our ability to monitor the activities and performance of the parliamentary departments, implement improvements, allocate resources appropriately and demonstrate the scope and complexity of parliamentary work in support of its appropriation. It has been designed using a balanced scorecard methodology to ensure proper coverage of its diverse functions. This has been overlaid with Parliament Strategic Priorities 2019–22 to produce relevant performance assessment and reporting. The pilot has been endorsed by the Parliamentary Executive Group and we will progress to designing and building a full dashboard to be rolled out across the organisation.

Administration of members' allowances

Under the *Parliamentary Salaries, Allowances and Superannuation Act 1968*, the Clerk is the relevant officer for members' work-related parliamentary allowances. This role includes determining whether claims meet the requirements of the guidelines issued by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and relevant regulations and publishing quarterly reports.

During 2020–21, the Tribunal made a determination adjusting the salaries and allowances of members of Parliament, which takes effect from 1 July 2021. The Tribunal also undertook a review and issued new guidelines effective from 1 May 2021. The Clerks of both Houses made a joint submission to the review, drawing the Tribunal's attention to some areas where it could consider providing further clarity.

Most of the changes to the guidelines related to the Electorate Office and Communications Budget, which is administered by DPS. The changes related to allowances included:

- a statement of principles and overarching obligations are now referenced at the beginning of the guidelines;
- clarification that a member may only claim a travel allowance by making a claim for the reimbursement;
- further detail has been added about the four types of business that comprise public duties;
- parliamentary budgets can be made available for international travel in relation to committee business; and
- transport directly to or from a Victorian airport can now be claimed under both the commercial transport allowance and international travel allowance.

We updated the claim forms used by members to reflect these new provisions and we have continued to publish details of claims in quarterly reports on the Parliament of Victoria website. Further information about the number of determinations made, and amounts paid in respect of each allowance, is published in the DPS's annual report in accordance with the legislative requirements.

Parliamentary Integrity Adviser

The Parliamentary Integrity Adviser (PIA) tabled his first report to the Parliament on 3 September 2020. A training session was offered for all members of Parliament in November 2020, with 32 members and 13 staff attending. The PIA provided advice to 11 members of the Legislative Assembly during the reporting period.

The PIA also met with the Clerks of each House and the Secretary of Parliamentary Services (the relevant officers), and the Compliance Officer in relation to the operation of the standards framework.

Disability Action and Inclusion Plan

We have launched a Disability Action and Inclusion Plan (DAIP), which sets out Parliament's strategy to proactively support and engage with people with disability to participate in public life and enjoy social and economic inclusion. The plan was developed in partnership with an external reference panel, comprising community disability advocates.

The DAIP was officially launched by the Presiding Officers on 3 December 2020, the International Day of People with Disability. We established a dedicated SharePoint site to share information internally about the DAIP and document the achievements of the DAIP working group and the external reference panel. Projects have included:

- closed captioning of all videos used by Tours and Customer Service Unit in their outreach programs;
- online disability awareness training for the entire Parliament provided by Scope with the assistance of the Learning and Development team;
- tailored disability awareness training for business units across the Parliament provided by the Australian Network on Disability with the assistance of Parliament's Learning and Development team;
- regular contributions in our internal staff newsletter, On Notice, to promote the DAIP and disability awareness;

The Disability Action and Inclusion Plan has been a great example of collaboration across the Parliament to achieve a shared goal.

- website updates to provide better information about the accessible entrances to Parliament House;
- video clips to provide detailed instructions on how to use the accessible entrances to Parliament House, filmed from the perspective of a person with disability; and
- procurement of an external provider to conduct an accessibility audit of Parliament House.

All business units across the Parliament have contributed to these initiatives including the Buildings and Grounds, Community Engagement, Hansard, IT, Library, People Operations and Security units. They all share an enthusiasm to help the Parliament be more accessible to employees and visitors with disability. The DAIP has been a great example of collaboration across the Parliament to achieve a shared goal.

Engaging with Victoria's First Peoples

Reconciliation Action Plan

The three parliamentary departments made steady progress toward introducing the first stage of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), the Reflect RAP. A workplace survey, called the RAP barometer, was sent to parliamentary officers in August 2020 to provide baseline data to inform future activities and projects under the parliamentary departments' RAP. The RAP barometer showed that there was a high degree of support among parliamentary officers for the principles and objectives of Reconciliation Australia. The results of the survey were communicated to parliamentary officers in October 2020. Following the survey, we submitted a formal proposal for a Reflect RAP to Reconciliation Australia for approval. We hope Reconciliation Australia will endorse the Reflect RAP by September 2021.

Informing and engaging with the community

Audio guides for non-English speakers

We have developed multi-lingual audio guides for non-English speaking visitors to use when they visit Parliament House. We designed the guides to be used on our in-person guided tours, but they can also be used as a standalone experience through our website.

A team of Tours and Outreach Officers created a script for the audio guides based on the tours they deliver every day. They removed any references to changeable elements such as political parties and their leaders, so the guides don't date quickly. We then engaged SBS In Language to translate the script into our pilot language, Mandarin. Explaining parliamentary terminology in English can often be challenging, so translation into a language of a country with a different system of government was not straightforward. Once the script was translated, we used a Mandarin speaker from the SBS pool to produce audio files for each of the rooms on a usual public tour.

We then explored ways to deliver the audio guides to visitors. We wanted to choose a system that could support multiple different languages and that would be free, contactless and that users could access using their own phones or other devices. We selected izi.travel, who already host audio guides for other Victorian sites such as the Koori Heritage Trust and the Immigration Museum. Their system allows visitors to listen to the guides through our website or by downloading an app on Android or Apple devices. We plan to add more languages over time, and hope this new option will

provide more meaningful experience for people of CALD backgrounds when they visit Parliament House.

Submissions writing workshop

A cross-committees team developed an online workshop on writing submissions. The workshop aimed to increase the skills and capacity of people working in the community sector to write effective and impactful submissions. The committees team worked closely with the Victorian Council of Social Service on the content and delivery approach.

The 90-minute workshop ran on Zoom and provided an introduction to parliamentary committees and the inquiry process, as well as practical advice on how to write submissions and recommendations. The workshop also included a five-minute talk from a committee member about the value of submissions and what members look for in submissions.

The session ran three times in the first half of 2021, with a total of 72 participants. Two of the three sessions were Auslan interpreted and captioned. Going forward, Committees plan to run the workshop regularly.

The workshop received very positive feedback from participants.

Parliament of Victoria website redevelopment

As reported in last year's annual report, work is underway to redevelop Parliament's website to make it easier to navigate, simpler to understand and more relevant and engaging. The Information Technology Unit within DPS is leading the project, with input from members, the public and parliamentary staff.

Over the past 12 months, the project team has completed the design phase and commenced work on building the site. The focus of the new site is ensuring content is accessible to the general public. Assembly staff are assisting with reviewing and rewriting pages to ensure they are user-focused and mobile-friendly. We will also update the videos and photography used throughout the site.

“ Very helpful to attend a workshop. I'm sure my next submission will be so much better as a result and I would like to apologise for any past shoddy submissions. When we know better we do better!

“ I really like hearing the tips of what makes a good and bad submission from the perspective of who reads them—very helpful.

Feedback from participants in the Submissions writing workshop.

An efficient, resilient, sustainable parliament

Technology

Parliamentary Information Management System (PIMS)

PIMS is the Parliamentary Information Management System. It is a custom-designed information management software developed specifically for parliaments. PIMS is already in use in several other Australian parliaments, and the Victorian Parliament is progressively implementing various modules for our business processes.

Questions and Responses database

Parliament's new questions database is now live on our website. The database contains all questions that require a written response and the responses. This is a shared project with the Legislative Council.

Over the last year we:

- progressively tested the new database as the developer finished each section;
- tested the new webpage to make sure the questions and responses would be published correctly;
- copied all 2021 questions into the new database;
- trained the staff who enter questions and responses and developed manuals and a SharePoint page to assist them;
- communicated with members, their staff, Government department staff and parliamentary staff about the changes; and
- worked on further improvements to the database.

The benefits of the new database include:

- easy and intuitive for staff to use;
- flexibility to accommodate all the different things that can happen to questions, including reinstatements, second answers and redirections to other ministers;
- ability to easily import questions asked in the Chamber from Hansard into the database;
- emails to members advising them of new responses to their questions now link directly to that response; and
- ability to export questions into Word from the website.

Committees module

Working with IT, a committee staff working group conducted extensive testing and gave feedback on the PIMS committees module. This involved basic testing of functionality for committee activities, and also the development of new functionality for specific needs of the Victorian standing and joint investigatory committees. Once the committee-focused testing was complete, we assisted with testing for integration

of PIMS across other departments. The module went live in April 2021. Committee staff are now progressively implementing the system within individual committees as new inquiries commence.

Digitisation activities

We are continuing to digitise our resources and make them available online. We have digitised all notice papers from 1860 to 1979 and they are now available on our website. We are currently digitising the question papers from 1979 to 2018 and standing orders from 1858 to 1996.

We now accept electronic versions of documents required to be lodged with the Clerk of the Parliaments under s 32 of the *Interpretation of Legislation Act 1994*. We initially started accepting these documents electronically at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when stay-at-home orders made it challenging for government department staff to provide them in hard copy. We have now made this an ongoing arrangement. Members can now access lodged documents on Parliament's intranet site to use when scrutinising subordinate legislation.

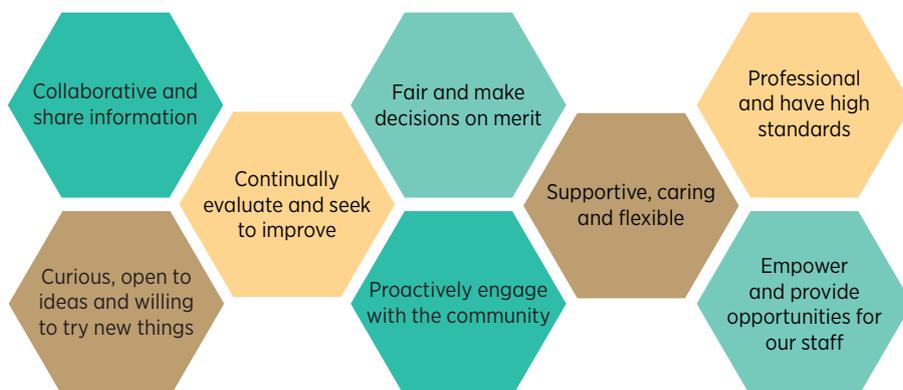


Some of the many resources which have been digitised.

Capability and culture

Strengthening our culture

Building and strengthening our culture remains a high priority for the Department. We continue to work toward a set of shared goals with the aim of creating the Department we want to be.



The values the Department is committed to modelling when working together and interacting with others.

A project team representing all areas of the Assembly was formed to regularly check in on the Department's culture and to identify initiatives for staff to build their networks and develop connections between teams.

In the hybrid working environment, the group met virtually throughout the business planning year and many of the discussions focused on ways to maintain and build culture without being able to be physically together.

Parliament pathways

The major initiative for the 2020–21 year was the development and implementation of a pilot program called Parliament Pathways. The project team identified a lack of networking opportunities available for staff at Grades 2 and 3 both with their peers outside their immediate teams and with the wider parliamentary staff cohort. The Parliament Pathways concept was developed to offer staff at those grades a series of facilitated sessions where they could meet staff from across the Parliament and hear about their personal career journeys.

Seven staff participated in the pilot program. Over three sessions, the group heard the career stories of 12 staff from across the Parliament, under the following topics:

- Session One: Business Units within the Parliament
- Session Two: Career journeys, inside and outside Parliament
- Session Three: Secondments.

Each presenter was asked to consider the following questions in their presentation:

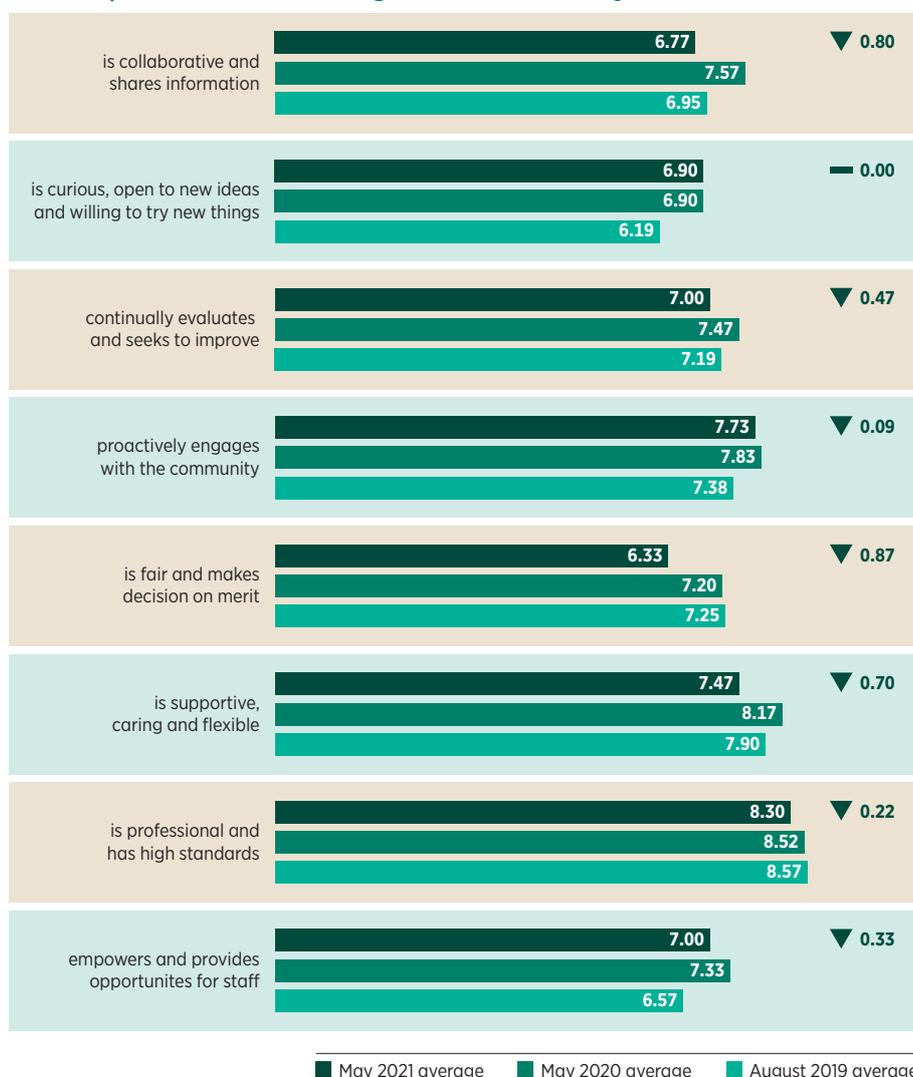
- summarise your career journey;
- tell us about the biggest challenge you have faced in your career;
- tell us about a time you 'failed' at work and how you dealt with it; and
- tell us about something that, looking back, you wish you had handled differently.

The sessions were facilitated by an external provider and allowed for frank discussion and time for personal reflection by the participants. In a survey following the program, 100 per cent of the participants agreed they would recommend the program to their colleagues. It is anticipated that the program will be offered again in 2021–22.

Staff survey

In May 2021, Assembly staff were asked to complete a survey to seek feedback on the Department’s culture. Thirty out of 59 Assembly staff completed the survey, the same number that completed the survey in May 2020. While results were overall high, many of the measures showed a slight downward trend compared to 2020. Free text commentary provided insight into the results. Some of the results were due to the impact of the pandemic and the uncertainty it caused. The results also identified the need to provide additional training and support to all Assembly managers to assist them adapt to managing remote and flexible teams.

The Department of the Legislative Assembly



Comparison of staff survey results rating the Department on key values in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The group has developed terms of reference for a new Culture Advisory Group to continue this work in the next financial year. We will call for expressions of interest from interested staff. The new group will continue to monitor progress and explore further opportunities for change, both within the Assembly and as part of wider parliamentary initiatives.

Remote and flexible working

The working patterns of the Department changed radically with the arrival of the pandemic. Like many workplaces our staff found through necessity that they could do their jobs by working from home, or rostering in split teams. While doing so, we were providing services to members, public servants and community members who found themselves in similar situations. At times, this led to new or improved services, such as the online school tour incursions, and the electronic distribution of Chamber documents, referred to earlier in the report. As the pandemic continued, and we realised we could deliver our objectives in a range of different working modes, we began to plan for what working for the Department would mean in the future.

The working patterns of the Department changed radically with the arrival of the pandemic.

At the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the Clerk's office instigated fortnightly whole-of-department staff meetings using Microsoft Teams. The meetings last for half an hour, and presenters usually take no more than five minutes to share information with the Department. In the beginning the meetings were to provide staff with connection to the broader team in an otherwise isolated work environment, and to make sure everyone was hearing the same important information at once. Topics have included:

- regular updates about the COVID-Safe plan from the Serjeant-at-Arms;
- committee inquiry overviews from committee staff;
- an explanation of online tours from the tours team;
- a discussion about how rulings from the Chair work in practice; and
- a range of topics about working in the Department.

Colleagues from the Council and DPS have attended on invitation to share information about their teams and priorities. The survey mentioned in the previous section indicated it was the very strong view of staff that these meeting should continue, regardless of the pandemic. Staff have said that the meetings make them feel more connected to the Department, informed about the work of their colleagues, and confident in approaching staff in other teams with questions, or about project work.

Our staff were also keen to continue flexible working in some capacity. Noting that the work of the Department varies greatly, from onsite tours, hearings and sittings, travel for committee inquiries and school visits, answering public queries by phone, to drafting committee reports, graphic design, database maintenance, and visitor management, a project team of staff quickly concluded that there could not be a 'one size fits all' model for flexible work in the Assembly. Accordingly, the team came up with a principles-based approach for the Department which, at the time of writing, is proving successful. The principles essentially leave the responsibility for identifying how to make flexible working arrangements successful to individual teams. The six principles are:

- The Legislative Assembly supports flexible working arrangements and recognises the extent of flexibility will vary between roles.
- Flexible working arrangements must meet operational needs and support service delivery.
- An individual's flexible working arrangements must suit all team members and workloads will be distributed fairly between them.
- Flexible working arrangements must meet occupational health and safety requirements.
- Flexible working arrangements should support team cohesion and collaboration.
- Flexible working arrangements should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are working for all team members.

Leadership and professional development programs

Leadership programs

Over the last 12 months, we have continued our focus on supporting existing and emerging leaders and managers within our Department. This has become even more important, as employees across the globe are looking to leaders for support, clarity and guidance through the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We held a series of leadership masterclasses for our business unit managers. These aimed to support a culture of collaboration across the Assembly's management group, by bringing together managers working across a range of business functions, including community engagement, procedural roles, committee roles and project roles. Although their day-to-day work is different, all unit managers have many similar challenges, such as working with diverse stakeholders, managing remote or hybrid teams, and building a positive culture. The sessions provide an opportunity to share and reflect on their experiences and learn from each other. They also provided an opportunity for Assembly managers to build and maintain positive peer support networks.

Three Assembly staff are undertaking an emerging leaders program, with three participants from the Legislative Council and four from DPS. This program provides an opportunity to explore leadership effectiveness and interact and work with staff in other areas of the organisation. It comprises workshops, coaching sessions and collaboration on a workplace project. Participants also undertake DiSC personality profiling to assist them to understand themselves and learn strategies to improve interaction with others.

Professional development

We are committed to the professional development of our staff. Each staff member has different needs and professional development opportunities need to be matched to an individual's requirements. We encourage staff to have conversations with their managers and document their professional development needs in performance plans. Some are looking for opportunities that will assist in their current roles, and others for new skills to help them progress their careers into other areas of interest.

To assist with this, the Committee Services Office, Procedure Office and Tours and Customer Service Unit engaged the Learning and Development unit and the Assembly's People Partners to speak with their teams. Topics included how to access and use the Learning Portal, encouraging staff to have open conversations about their professional development with their manager and making the best decisions for career progression and development.

Team building

As COVID-19 restrictions across Victoria began to ease and people began to return to the workplace, an opportunity presented itself for a department-wide team building activity. Many months of lockdown and working from home meant that there had been little opportunity to engage with people in person. It was agreed that a team building activity would provide a chance for everyone to reintroduce or introduce themselves to each other in person and reintegrate into the workplace through a relaxed and fun team activity.

An external provider was engaged to facilitate an activity called The Great Pursuit. It was held on two mornings, with half of the Department participating each day. Assembly staff were split up into teams of five to six people and given the challenge

[E]mployees across the globe are looking to leaders for support, clarity and guidance through the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

of finding certain landmarks and completing a variety of activities across the Melbourne CBD. Teams were formed across the various units within the Assembly, providing an opportunity to get to know those colleagues we may not normally work with. The activity was followed by a barbecue lunch in the Treasury Gardens. Feedback from staff has been positive.

Sitting week review

Building on feedback from staff across the Department, who expressed a desire to learn more about parliamentary procedure related to the chamber during sitting weeks, we introduced a regular program of briefings that follow each sitting week. Each briefing is delivered on Microsoft Teams by one of the Assembly clerks, and is open to all staff of the Legislative Assembly with an interest in chamber activities.

Project teams

We are keen to promote collaboration across the Department's different business units. This has been challenging in a remote working environment, as incidental interaction has been reduced, requiring a more deliberate and coordinated approach.

Through our business plan, we established several project teams to work on initiatives that involved the whole Department. These included groups focussed on our culture, records management, professional development, flexible work arrangements and wellbeing, and digital services. Each group developed a project plan setting out their objectives and planned activities. They then assigned roles to group members, so the workload was shared and everyone had an opportunity to contribute.

The project teams were very successful. As well as achieving significant progress on their projects, they also provided an opportunity for staff across the Department to connect with each other while working from home. We plan to build on this approach, by establishing cross-department coordinating groups as part of our next business plan.

Records management

We are committed to improving the Department's records management system and digital record storage. We established a records management project team with aims to:

- improve the management of the Department's records;
- provide clarity around the locations where documents and records should be stored;
- reduce the reliance on personal inboxes and units siloing information; and
- establish a records management culture.

To achieve these goals, the team implemented a new business classification system in our shared drive and reviewed folder structures and permissions. We identified and removed any duplicated or redundant records and promoted an open information model. The team also centralised the Assembly's photographic collection in our SharePoint site, with image metadata added for easier searchability, and reviewed historical administrative records for digitisation or disposal.

We also developed guidelines for our staff on best practice methods for digital information storage to ensure a consistent records management approach across the Department. The guidelines cover topics such as where to keep documents, document formats, record naming conventions, maintenance and destruction. We hope all these activities will assist in promoting a records management culture across the Department.

Serjeant-at-Arms Office review

During the year, we undertook a review of the Serjeant-at-Arms' Office (SAA Office). The staffing structure of the Office had not changed for more than 15 years. Over that time, the role and responsibilities of the Office had changed significantly. Responsibility for security transferred to DPS between 2006 and 2010, the former Attendant group has become the Tours and Customer Service Unit, and the members' allowances regime has recently undergone significant change with the enactment of the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*. The SAA Office now has a greater role in community engagement activities, project management and member services.

The review assessed whether the current staffing structure and roles still met the contemporary needs of the Department. It also explored opportunities to clarify and potentially expand the services provided by the SAA Office, examine the capability of staff needed to undertake roles, and looked at how the Office best contributes to the overall strategic objectives of the Department.

We engaged an external consultant to undertake the review. The consultant interviewed a range of Assembly staff and other stakeholders, reviewed the services provided by the SAA Office and examined existing position descriptions. She then produced a report outlining options and recommendations to restructure the Office to meet current and future work requirements. The report recommended:

- the core functions for the Office be confirmed;
- the SAA Office take on a project and business planning function for the Department; and
- key positions and structure of the SAA Office be reorganised in recognition of its functions and activities.

We adopted these recommendations and changed the position descriptions of the two staff in the SAA Office to redefine their roles and responsibilities. The review also recommended several future activities to improve business processes and service delivery, which will be progressed over the coming year.

Parliamentary Officers Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA)

A new Parliamentary Officers Enterprise Agreement took effect from 11 May 2021. A bargaining team of management, staff and Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) representatives negotiated the agreement over a four-month period. The parliamentary departments are nexus agencies, meaning many of the terms and conditions are the same as those in the Victorian Public Service (VPS) Enterprise Agreement, including the period of operation, classification structure and salary levels.

Key features of the new agreement are:

- average annual 2 per cent pay rises each year for the four years of the agreement;
- improved parental leave provisions, gender equity provisions and language allowance;
- an annual 1.25 per cent productivity payment; and
- adoption of the VPS provisions relating to performance development and progression and probation.

The new agreement also introduced standard hours of work across all categories of parliamentary officers. This change provides all staff equal access to benefits like flexi time, time off in lieu and overtime in both sitting and non-sitting weeks.

Safety, risk and governance

COVID-19 Subcommittee

The COVID-19 Subcommittee (CSC) was established in response to the challenges presented to the Parliament by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent health directions. Membership of the CSC comprises of all five members of Parliament's Senior Management Group, the Serjeant-at-Arms, Usher of the Black Rod, Manager Security, Manager People Operations, Buildings and Grounds Services Manager and the Senior Asset Management Coordinator with Buildings and Grounds Services, together with a Health and Safety Representative on a rotational basis.

The CSC has met most Friday mornings to discuss the current COVID-19 restrictions in Victoria. The CSC is responsible for coordinating any changes needed to enable the Parliament to continue to safely deliver its services and comply with relevant workplace directions. This has included implementation of contact tracing check-in systems, changes to room density limits and signage, and the issue of work permits. The group has also prepared communications to send to members and parliamentary staff to keep them informed of changes to health directions and arrangements for the parliamentary precinct and electorate offices.

Parliament House building works

The planning and design phases for renovations in three Assembly offices and amenities spaces were completed during the 2020–21 year. The Papers Section of the Procedure Office, not renovated in 20 years, will be modernised to reflect the changing nature of the work completed by the Procedure Office team. The Parents Room has been redesigned to offer a private space for parents and carers visiting and working in Parliament House. A former bathroom space will provide Assembly staff working on levels 1, 2 and 3 with dedicated kitchenette facilities for the first time.

Construction has continued on the east wing renovation throughout 2020–21, as has the stoneworks project, with the final stages of those works now underway at the southern end of Parliament House. Minor refurbishments of several Assembly ministerial offices were also completed during 2020–21 to provide working spaces that meet modern health and safety standards for ministers and their staff.

Visitor management

We have made changes to our visitor management processes to strengthen security and improve the visitor experience. All members and passholders are now required to pre-register any non-passholder visiting them at Parliament House. Assembly and Council staff contact passholders when their guests arrive, so they can collect them from the Vestibule or rear entrance and escort them while in the building. We have also introduced new identification requirements for visitors to Parliament House. Everyone visiting Parliament House for a public tour or sit in the public galleries on a sitting day must provide a valid form of photo ID.

Emergency management

Emergency management continues to be a priority for the Legislative Assembly and the Parliament. The Assistant Clerk Procedure and Serjeant-at-Arms performs the role of Chief Warden for Parliament House in conjunction with the Usher of the Black Rod.

Floor wardens and area wardens are selected from parliamentary staff, including many Assembly staff, who know the building well. All our wardens receive regular training and an external provider supervises our emergency evacuation drills and provides feedback on the effectiveness of our current procedures.

Appendices

Appendix A

Reports on output measures

Department of the Legislative Assembly

Output/Deliverable	Target	Actual
Quantity		
Procedural references updated biannually	2	2
Quarterly allowance reports published in accordance with <i>Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019</i>	4	4
Regional visits to schools to conduct parliamentary role plays	5	1 ^a
Quality		
Bills and amendments processed accurately through all relevant stages in compliance with constitutional requirements and standing orders	100%	100%
Member satisfaction that advice is responsive, prompt, clear and objective	80%	99% ^b
Teacher satisfaction with tours of Parliament for school groups	95%	100%
Timeliness		
Documents tabled within time guidelines	90%	100%
House documents available one day after sitting day	100%	100%
Online information relating to bills updated within one day	95%	100%
Cost		
Total output cost (\$ million)	44.8	38.4

- a Due to COVID-19 restrictions, only one regional visit was possible this financial year. We have offered online incursions to regional schools instead.
- b We take great pride in the timeliness and accuracy of advice given to members, and we are pleased with this result. There can be circumstances where members may not be satisfied with the advice we give, despite its accuracy and timeliness. This is particularly the case where members wish to use parliamentary procedure as part of political tactics, and we need to advise that their proposal or strategy is not allowable or procedurally right. Taking into account the subjective nature of the target, we consider 80% to be a high benchmark.

Joint investigatory committees

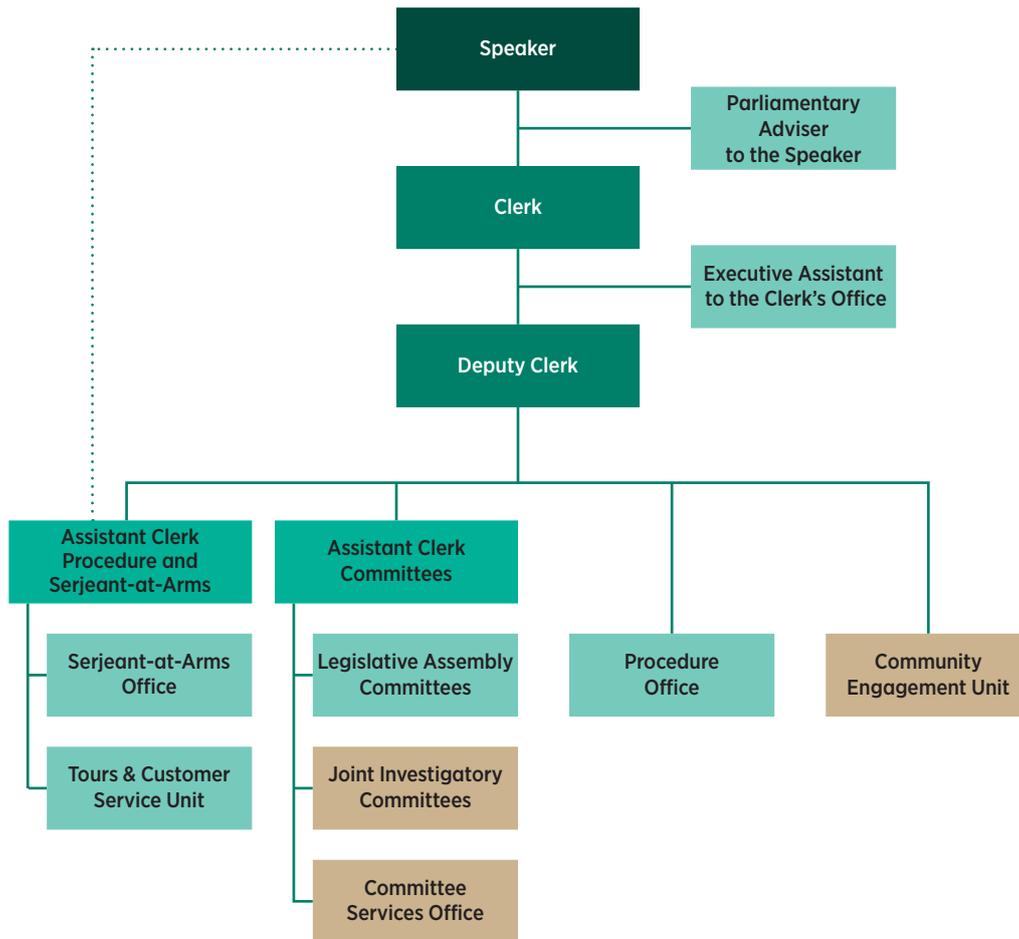
Output/Deliverable	Target	Actual
Quantity		
Reports tabled per annum	20	24
Quality		
Committee members satisfied that advice about procedure, research and administration is responsive, clear, objective and prompt	80%	97% ^a
Inquiries conducted and reports produced in compliance with procedural and legislative requirements	95%	100% ^b
Timeliness		
Reports tabled in compliance with procedural and legislative deadlines	95%	100% ^c
Cost		
Total output cost (\$ million)	5.5	5.5

- a This measure was based on a confidential survey in May 2021 of joint investigatory committee members. Due to the sometimes political nature of committee work, members may not always be satisfied with advice even when it is accurate. For 2020–21 members' satisfaction with the quality and responsiveness of committees advice has exceeded our expectations.
- b This figure is a credit to the procedural knowledge of our committees' staff.
- c This figure is a credit to the business processes in the committee office.

Appendix B

Organisation structure and corporate governance

Department of the Legislative Assembly organisational chart



The Speaker

The Speaker is the principal office holder in the Legislative Assembly. The main elements of the role are chairing meetings of the Legislative Assembly, representing the Assembly at State and other official occasions, overseeing the operations of the Department and, jointly with the President, of the Department of Parliamentary Services.

The current Speaker, the Hon Colin Brooks MP, was elected on 7 March 2017, having represented the Electorate of Bundoora since 2006. He was re-elected on 19 December 2018.

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Bridget Noonan joined the Department in 1999 to work in the Procedure Office, and subsequently worked in a number of roles within the Office. She was appointed Assistant-Clerk Committees in 2006, Assistant Clerk Procedure and Sergeant-at-Arms in 2011 and became Deputy Clerk in 2013. In September 2017, Bridget was appointed as Acting Clerk and became Clerk in January 2019. Bridget has a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from Melbourne University.

Chamber Officers

Robert McDonald, Deputy Clerk

Robert re-joined the Department in August 2013 as Assistant Clerk Procedure & Serjeant-at-Arms, having previously worked in the Procedure Office from 2004 to 2007. Robert was Manager, Chamber Support in the Legislative Council from 2007 to 2011 and Secretary to the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Economy and Infrastructure from 2011 to 2013. In November 2017, Robert was appointed Deputy Clerk. Robert has a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) and Bachelor of Science from Melbourne University.

Vaughn Koops, Assistant Clerk Committees

Vaughn joined the joint investigatory committees as a research officer in 2003, and from 2005, worked as executive officer to five joint committees prior to his appointment as Assistant Clerk Committees in 2014. He was Assistant Clerk Procedure and Serjeant-at-Arms from July 2016 to June 2020 and returned to the role of Assistant Clerk Committees in July 2020. Vaughn has a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts (1st class Hons) from Auckland University and a Doctor of Philosophy from Melbourne University.

Paul Groenewegen, Assistant Clerk Procedure and Serjeant-at-Arms

Paul joined the Department in 2009 in the newly created position of Manager, Tours and Customer Service Unit. In January 2018, Paul was appointed Assistant Clerk Committees and he rotated to his current role in July 2020. Paul has a Bachelor of Arts from La Trobe University and a Graduate Certificate in Management from Swinburne University of Technology.

Appendix C

Branch roles

Clerk's Office

The Clerk's Office is responsible for the general management of the Legislative Assembly. This includes the provision of expert policy, procedural and corporate management advice to the Speaker. In addition, the Office is responsible for advising members on matters relating to the operation of the Legislative Assembly and its committees. The Clerk's Office also records the decisions and proceedings of the Legislative Assembly and ensures the passage of legislation is in accordance with legislative and procedural requirements.

The Clerk is the relevant officer for members' work-related parliamentary allowances under the *Parliamentary Salaries, Allowances and Superannuation Act 1968*. This role includes determining whether claims meet the requirements of relevant Tribunal guidelines and regulations and publishing quarterly reports.

Committee Office

The Legislative Assembly established three new standing committees at the start of the 59th Parliament:

- Economy and Infrastructure Committee;
- Environment and Planning Committee; and
- Legal and Social Issues Committee.

There are also four joint investigatory committees, comprising members of both Houses. Two of these are administered by the Department of the Legislative Assembly:

- Public Accounts and Estimates Committee; and
- Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee.

The Assembly also has two domestic select committees appointed by resolution for the duration of the Parliament that work on domestic matters or procedures of the House:

- Privileges Committee; and
- Standing Orders Committee.

Committee secretariat staff provides administrative, procedural and research support to these committees. This includes coordinating public hearings and submissions, and writing briefing papers and reports. The Committee Services Office provides centralised administrative and corporate support to all committees. The Assistant Clerk Committees oversees this work, briefs the Speaker on committee operations, ensures compliance with relevant Acts, standing orders, Presiding Officers' directives and accepted practices and procedures, and monitors committee expenditure.

Serjeant-at-Arms' Office

The Office of the Serjeant-at-Arms is, by custom, a long-established high-profile position recognised in Westminster-style Parliaments. The position has existed in Victoria since the establishment of the first Legislative Assembly in 1856. As Principal Executive Officer to the Speaker, Assistant Clerk Procedure and Serjeant-at-Arms is responsible for ceremonial events and the security of the Chamber. They also undertake procedural research and project management, assist at the Table on sitting days and oversee the production of certain House documents.

The Office provides a range of services to members, including managing accommodation within Parliament House and the Annex, administering allowances and former member support. It also manages media accreditation, supports functions and events held in Parliament House, and coordinates the Department's business planning and performance reporting.

Tours and Customer Service Unit

Reporting to the Assistant Clerk Procedure and Serjeant-at-Arms, the Unit conducts community engagement programs such as public tours and presentations to school groups. With a major focus on programs for school children, including at VCE level, staff give presentations and deliver role plays at Parliament House, visit schools in metropolitan and regional Victoria, and provide a range of online programs. Staff also deliver specialist tours at Parliament House, including an architecture tour, an art tour, and an express photographic tour. In addition, the Unit provides mail and other support services including support to the Chamber on sitting days.

Procedure Office

The Procedure Office provides administrative and research support to the Chamber and senior officers within the Department. The Office is responsible for answering inquiries from the Department's customers, including members, the media, government departments and the public. In addition, staff are responsible for the publication and distribution of House documents. This role includes ordering and proofreading the various prints of bills, preparing Acts of Parliament for royal assent, processing reports submitted for tabling and archiving parliamentary documents.

Staff undertake research and produce general reference material for the use of parliamentary staff and the Speaker on the various authorities, practices and procedures of the Legislative Assembly. One of the Department's major procedural authorities, LAPRAC, is also produced by Procedure Office staff, in consultation with the clerks. More specific research is undertaken to provide procedural solutions where precedents are lacking.

Community Engagement and Education Unit

The Community Engagement and Education Unit coordinates the delivery of community engagement activities across the Parliament in accordance with the community engagement strategy, provides communications services across the Parliament, delivers education resources in the community. The Unit is supported by staff from across the parliamentary departments.

Appendix D

Comparative workforce data

The following table discloses the head count and full-time staff equivalent (FTE) of all active employees of the Department, employed in the last full pay period in June of the current reporting period, and in the last full pay period in June of the previous reporting period.

Head count and full-time staff equivalent—all active employees (2021 and 2020)^a

	All active employees (head count)		Full-time staff equivalent (FTE)	
	June 2021	June 2020	June 2021	June 2020
Gender				
Male	23	21	22.6	20.6
Female	39	37	34.8	32.6
Self-described	0	0	0	0
Age group				
Under 25	2	2	1.6	1.2
25-34	21	21	20.0	19.6
35-44	15	12	13.6	11.2
45-54	16	16	14.6	14.6
55-64	7	6	6.6	5.6
Over 64	1	1	1.0	1.0
Classification				
VPS 1	0	0	0	0
VPS 2	5	4	4.6	3.6
VPS 3	26	25	22.4	21.2
VPS 4	6	5	6.0	5.0
VPS 5	16	15	15.4	14.4
VPS 6	7	7	7.0	7.0
Executives	2	2	2.0	2.0
Total	62	58	57.4	53.2

^a The table excludes staff on leave without pay and staff seconded to other departments

Head count and full-time staff equivalent—breakdown for ongoing employees and fixed term and casual employees (2021 and 2020)^a

	Ongoing employees ^b						Fixed term and casual employees			
	Full-time (head count)		Part-time (head count)		Full-time staff equivalent (FTE)		Number (head count)		Full-time staff equivalent (FTE)	
	June 2021	June 2020	June 2021	June 2020	June 2021	June 2020	June 2021	June 2020	June 2021	June 2020
Gender										
Male	18	17	1	1	18.6	17.6	4	3	4.0	3.0
Female	26	25	8	7	30.6	29	5	5	4.2	3.6
Self-described	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Age group										
Under 25	0	0	1	1	0.6	0.6	1	1	1.0	0.6
25-34	14	14	2	3	15.2	15.6	5	4	4.8	4.0
35-44	10	9	3	1	11.6	9.6	2	2	2.0	1.6
45-54	13	13	2	2	14.2	14.2	1	1	0.4	0.4
55-64	6	5	1	1	6.6	5.6	0	0	0	0
Over 64	1	1	0	0	1.0	1.0	0	0	0	0
Classification										
VPS 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VPS 2	3	3	1	1	3.6	3.6	1	0	1.0	0
VPS 3	16	15	7	6	20.2	18.6	3	4	2.2	2.6
VPS 4	3	4	0	0	3.0	4.0	3	1	3.0	1.0
VPS 5	13	11	1	1	13.4	11.4	2	3	2.0	3.0
VPS 6	7	7	0	0	7.0	7.0	0	0	0	0
Executives	2	2	0	0	2.0	2.0	0	0	0	0
Total	44	42	9	8	40.2	46.6	9	8	8.2	6.6

^a The table excludes staff on leave without pay and staff seconded to other departments.

^b Ongoing employees means people engaged on an open-ended contract of employment who were active in the last full pay period of June.

Appendix E

Staff listing as at 30 June 2021^a

Clerk's Office

Bridget Noonan, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Robert McDonald, Deputy Clerk
Vaughn Koops, Assistant Clerk Committees
Natalie Osborne, Executive Assistant
Kate Murray, Project Officer (Parliamentary Procedure)
Liesel Dumenden, Digital Content Officer
Patrick Mercer, Graduate Recruit

Serjeant-at-Arms' Office

Paul Groenewegen, Assistant Clerk Procedure and Serjeant-at-Arms
Sarah Cox, Planning and Projects Manager
Brenda Kittelty, Serjeant-at-Arms Office Coordinator
Helen Dorian, Personal Assistant to the Serjeant-at-Arms Office

Tours and Customer Service Unit

Pablo Diaz, Manager	Jane Flanagan, Tours and Outreach Officer
Bronwyn Gray, Tours and Outreach Coordinator	Craig Foster, Tours and Outreach Officer
Mark Smith, Tours and Outreach Coordinator	Amy MacKintosh, Tours and Outreach Officer
Sarah Laurence, Visitor Services Coordinator	David Robertson, Tours and Outreach Officer
Baron Campbell-Tennant, Tours and Outreach Officer	Michael Gigliotti, Mail and Printing Officer
Rosie Cobb, Tours Booking Officer	Michael Gruschel, Tours Booking Officer
Michael Cutrupi, Tours Booking Officer	Jeremy Walsh, Speaker's Personal Assistant

Speaker's Office

Jason McDonald, Executive Assistant (Adviser to the Speaker)

Procedure Office

Stefanie Tardif, Manager	Danielle Broadhurst, Customer Service Officer
Liam Moran, Senior Parliamentary Officer	Megan Rocke, Customer Service Officer
Steph Blackshaw, Parliamentary Officer	Melissa Morewood, Administrative Officer
Brittany Turner, Parliamentary Officer	

Community Engagement and Education Unit

Glenn Jeffrey, Assistant Manager
Gaya Subramaniam, Community Partnerships Coordinator

^a Includes staff on leave and being backfilled, such as parental leave, but does not include staff seconded to other departments.

Committee Office

Committee Services Office

Larissa Volpe, Manager
Penelope Amy, Desktop Publisher
Michelle Summerhill, Committee Services Officer

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Kerryn Riseley, Committee Manager
Marianna Stylianou, Research Officer
Anna Scott, Committee Administrative Officer
Janelle Spielvogel, Committee Administrative Officer

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Nathan Bunt, Committee Manager
Rory Dufficy, Research Officer
Helen Ross-Soden, Administrative Officer

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Yuki Simmonds, Committee Manager
Raylene D'Cruz, Research Officer
Rachel Macreadie, Research Officer
Richard Slade, Research Officer
Katherine Murtagh, Research Assistant

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Caroline Williams, Executive Officer
Janithri Wickramaratne, Lead Analyst, Budget Estimates and Outcomes
Iain Gately, Lead Analyst, Public Accounts and Audit
Igor Dosen, Analyst, Budget Estimates and Outcomes
Alanna Symons, Analyst, Budget Estimates and Outcomes
Krystle Gatt Rapa, Research Assistant
Lucas Grainger-Brown, Research Assistant
Charlotte Lever, Research Assistant
Jacqueline Coleman, Committee Administrative Officer

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Helen Mason, Executive Officer
Lauren Cook, Senior Research Officer
Sonya Caruana, Committee Administrative Officer
Simon Dinsbergs, Business Support Officer

Appendix F

Legislative Assembly expenditure statement

Expenditure	2020-21		2019-20
	Budget	Actual	Actual
	\$	\$	\$
Departmental expenditure			
Cleaning expenses	470,000	444,842	468,623
Clerk's Office ^a	2,756,272	2,053,485	
Community Engagement Unit	328,000	279,156	4,542,587 ^b
Procedure Office	909,900	785,184	
Tours and Customer Service Unit	1,484,278	1,303,362	
Special Sitting	-	191,107	-
Auditor-General's Office audits	19,500	19,500	12,500
Total—Department	5,967,950	5,076,637	5,023,710
Standing committees expenditure			
Economy and Infrastructure	474,000	415,581	376,114
Environment and Planning	504,150	411,671	382,985
Legal and Social Issues	594,300	579,535	403,706
General expenses	150,100	72,216	76,396
Total—Standing committees	1,722,550	1,479,003	1,239,200
Total—Operating expenses	7,690,500^c	6,555,640	6,262,911
Assembly Members—special appropriations			
Members' salaries, allowances and on costs	30,712,190	28,188,087	27,148,141
Members' superannuation	-	2,503,187	2,439,273
Total—Members' salaries and related special appropriations	30,712,190	30,691,274	29,587,415
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	38,402,690	37,246,914	35,850,325

Note: This information is provided for the benefit of members. A complete set of financial statements of the Parliament of Victoria, including for joint investigatory committees, is provided in the Department of Parliamentary Services Annual Report for 2020-21.

- a This figure includes expenditure relating to the Clerk's Office, Serjeant-at-Arms' Office and Speaker's Office
- b In previous annual reports, Departmental expenditure was grouped differently. For a further breakdown of these expenses see the 2019-20 Annual Report, Appendix F.
- c This figure includes the following sources of funds:
- \$7.121 million—*Appropriation (Parliament 2020-21) Act 2020*
 - \$0.0195 million—*Special Appropriation under the Audit Act 1994*
 - \$0.550 million—*Special Appropriation under s 94 of the Constitution Act 1975*

Appendix G

Joint investigatory committees expenditure statement

Joint investigatory committee	2020-21		2019-20
	Budget	Actual	Actual
	\$	\$	\$
Auditor-General's Office performance audit	-	17,600	271,475
Committee Services Office ^c	2,273,650	1,367,349	1,090,378
Electoral Matters ^p	484,300	414,982	331,281
Former committees ^d	-	210	451
Integrity and Oversight ^b	704,100	662,885	529,591
Public Accounts and Estimates ^a	1,400,500	1,242,239	990,289
Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations ^a	667,450	598,816	569,159
Total	5,530,000	4,304,081	3,782,624

- a The Legislative Assembly currently administers the Public Accounts and Estimates and Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committees.
- b The Legislative Council currently administers the Electoral Matters and Integrity and Oversight Committees.
- c Both House Departments jointly administer the Committee Services Office. Its budget includes rental payments for committee accommodation and various other administrative overheads for whole of committee operations.
- d The following committees were not reappointed for the 59th Parliament: Accountability and Oversight; Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills; Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development; Family and Community Development; Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission; and Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee.

Appendix H

Overseas travel undertaken by the Speaker

Speaker Brooks did not undertake any overseas travel in the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Appendix I

Assembly business statistics

	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
House related documents produced	154	137	150
Documents tabled by Command	4	7	2
Annual reports tabled	305	312	317
Documents tabled by leave	29	23	21
Other documents tabled	1,116	1,008	1,025
Messages presented	103	104	94
Reports presented by parliamentary committees	28	22	26
Questions asked			
In writing	2,713	1,004	4,186
Without notice	215	190	235
Constituency questions	430	380	470
Government Bills			
Initiated in the Assembly	47	54	76
Amended in the Assembly	3	7	5
Passed both Houses	49	53	64
Reasoned amendments moved	6	12	9
Divisions	31	40	66
Petitions presented	45	70	101
Petitions listed for debate	43	52	67
General business notices of motion	21	40	65
Grievance debates	5	3	5
Matters of public importance	10	8	7
Statements by members	860	777	781
Statements on parliamentary committee reports	85	62	41
Pages of bills proofread	2,401	3,685	6,463
Sitting days	43	40	39
Hours including meal breaks	362:44	340:06	324:55

Appendix J

Committee statistics

Committees under the administration of the Legislative Assembly

		Deliberative meetings ^a	Public hearings ^b	Inspections	Reports tabled
Legislative Assembly standing committees	Economy and Infrastructure	8	25	0	1
	Environment and Planning	17	31	0	1
	Legal and Social Issues	18	61	0	2
Joint investigatory committees	Public Accounts and Estimates	17	172	0	5
	Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations	24	0	0	16
Domestic committees	Privileges	0	0	0	0
	Standing Orders	3	0	0	1

a Includes subcommittee meetings.

b Number of public hearings held is the number of witness groups appearing before the committee. For instance, one day of committee hearings with five witness groups appearing would equate to five different public hearings for the purposes of the statistics.

Committee reports tabled 2020–21

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

- Inquiry into sustainable employment for disadvantaged jobseekers

Environment and Planning Committee

- Inquiry into tackling climate change in Victorian communities

Legal and Social Issues Committee

- Inquiry into anti-vilification protections
- Inquiry into early childhood engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Joint investigatory committees

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

- Inquiry into the 2017–18 and 2018–19 financial and performance outcomes
- Inquiry into the Victorian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic—Interim report
- Inquiry into the Victorian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic—Final report
- Report on the 2020–21 Budget Estimates
- Report on the 2019–20 financial and performance outcomes

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

- Alert Digests Nos 7–13 of 2020
- Alert Digest Nos 1–8 of 2021
- Annual Review, 2019, Regulations and Legislative Instruments

Domestic Committees

Standing Orders Committee

- Report on e-petitions, responding to statements made in the Legislative Council and supplementary questions

Appendix K

Disclosures made under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012*

The Speaker did not notify any disclosures to the IBAC under s 21(2) of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

The Parliament of Victoria's *Procedures for Making a Disclosure about a Member of Parliament* can be downloaded at: <https://parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/public-interest-disclosures>.

The Integrity and Oversight Committee did not notify any disclosures to the IBAC under s 21(2) of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

The Integrity and Oversight Committee's *Public Interest Disclosure Procedures* can be downloaded at: <https://parliament.vic.gov.au/ioc/contact-iao>.

Appendix L

Documents and evidence disclosed under Standing Order 231(3) and Joint Standing Order 16(4)

For the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, no disclosures were made.

Appendix M

Redactions authorised by the Standing Orders Committee under Sessional Order 16

For the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, no redactions were made.

