



PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE COMMISSIONER

The Hon. Neil Andrew MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Speaker

REVIEW OF ASPECTS OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PARLIAMENT

Attached is my final report on the Review of Aspects of the Administration of the Parliament which you and the President commissioned in April 2002.

My earlier report on the security aspect of the Review indicated that significant advantages would arise from a change to the administration of security within Parliament House through rationalisation and consolidation of governance, planning and management arrangements. The arrangements that I proposed sought to improve the quality, efficiency and appropriateness of security at Parliament House, but they did not seek to make savings.

My final report incorporates the earlier report on security so that it provides a comprehensive summary my findings and recommendations. I have removed from this version of the report on security references to the source of threat assessments made of the Parliament in case you and the Speaker wish to make the report public.

The general conclusion from the remainder of my Review is that significant efficiencies could be achieved from changes to the administration of the Parliament, particularly relating to the provision of corporate and management functions within the Service. A modest option based on retaining the existing departmental structure would produce modest savings; more substantial gains would result from my preferred approach involving amalgamation of three Departments. The proposed changes would enable a shift of resources from internal management towards the provision of improved services to Senators and Members.

I separately initiated research into the history of the debate on bicameralism and the independence of the Parliament from the Executive arm of Government to ensure that I understood the environment in which the Review was being conducted. I was also

keen for this research to assist my broader understanding of the Parliamentary administration in my ongoing role as Parliamentary Service Commissioner.

This research has resulted in a draft paper *Parliament – Master of its Own Household?* and I am providing you with a copy of the paper. It is my intention to finalise this paper over the next few weeks and to publish it in my role as Parliamentary Service Commissioner. This would be the first in a small series of occasional papers that I might publish.

I note from this research that, while there has been a long history of debate and consideration of the most appropriate arrangements for the administration of the Parliament, the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* has altered the prevailing context.


The *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, among other matters, enshrines in legislation a set of values applying to employees of the Parliamentary Service, including the provision of *professional advice and support for the Parliament independently of the Executive* and *non-partisan and impartial advice and services to each House of the Parliament* (s10). The Act also establishes the two Chamber Departments (s54(1)) and the offices of the two Clerks (s55), and gives the two Clerks considerable independence (eg. s19 and s20).

The Act does not establish the structure for other elements of the administration of the Parliament, but rather, it provides for the creation and abolition of such other Departments of the Parliament as are required (s54(2)) through resolutions passed by each House.

Accordingly the context in which this current Review has been undertaken differs in an important way from that of the many previous reviews of the administration of the Parliament. Concerns about the independence of the Parliament from the Executive, and about bicameralism, are now substantially addressed by the underlying legislative provisions for the Parliamentary Service. I believe the case for structural change is now particularly strong.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the responsiveness and assistance provided by Parliamentary Service staff throughout the Review.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Podger

30 September 2002