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Terms of Reference

Independent Review of Resourcing in Parliamentary Offices

Context

The Independent Review of Resourcing in Parliamentary Offices (the Resourcing Review) will review the factors affecting workloads in federal parliamentary offices, particularly in electorate offices, in accordance with Recommendation 3 of the *Review of the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (Review of the MOP(S) Act).

The Review of the MOP(S) Act was Recommendation 18 in the *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* undertaken by former Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins.

Objectives

The Resourcing Review will examine the factors affecting workloads in federal parliamentary offices, including support systems and processes as well as external factors such as workload linked to federal government responsibilities and electorate composition, to inform an evidence-based consideration of resourcing allocations and support services across parliamentary offices.

The Resourcing Review will develop recommendations on principles to be considered by the Prime Minister relating to broad resourcing allocations and support services for parliamentary offices.

Scope

The Resourcing Review will examine the factors affecting workloads in federal parliamentary offices, including:

- systems, resources and processes used, particularly in electorate offices, and opportunities to better support the work being undertaken;
- increased electorate populations and the impact of constituent demography on workloads;
- changes in community expectation of, and engagement with, offices; including methods of engagement such as social media and email;
- casework and constituent engagement linked to federal government responsibilities, including Centrelink, aged care, NDIS, immigration services, passports and grant processes, and the relationships between parliamentary offices and government departments providing these services;

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- support provided to parliamentarians and their offices to support their work in the Parliament, including but not limited to the services provided from the parliamentary departments and the provision of drafting resources;
- parliamentary functions, hours of work, including additional responsibilities, hours of expected availability, functions, duties and associated workload of the parliamentarian and staff and the role the parliamentarian plays in the business of parliament;
- support systems and processes currently available, such as template correspondence and forms, guidance for grants administration, and administrative processes impacting on office operations;
- current information and communications technology (ICT) resources, including laptops, email functionality, customer relationship management databases, content management systems, integration of systems across the parliamentary network, software and program offerings, and remote working functionality;
- training needs, including handling difficult interactions with members of the public, efficient use of ICT resources, participating in parliamentary business and Bill scrutiny training; and
- current staffing resources, including workforce profile, capability requirements, parliamentary resources and level of shared support, adequacy of staffing levels for electorate offices, supplementary or alternative labour options, attraction and retention issues and the use of volunteers, trainees/cadets or interns.

As relevant, the Resourcing Review may have regard to:

- metrics, ratios, model budgets or formulas that can be used to calculate electorate and personal staff resourcing needs and office composition;
- existing key systems, resources and processes within parliamentarian offices;
- any gaps, under-capacity or opportunities for improvement;
- impact of capability deficits;
- reasonable working hours within the operating context of parliamentary and electorate work;
- retention and continuity of skilled staff in the context of existing leave provisions and other relevant employment conditions; and
- costings of any proposed staff resourcing changes, particularly in relation to staffing allocation.

The provision and administration of parliamentary business resources under the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017*, including office facilities, travel and COMCAR are outside the scope of this review. Public resources provided to parliamentarians and their staff, other than travel, can still be considered in the context of the impact on workloads in parliamentarian offices.

Process

The reviewer will consult with stakeholders, including parliamentarians (metro, regional and remote locations), employees (and additional representatives as requested); the MOP(S) Act Employee Consultative Group and the Work Health and Safety Committee, the MOP(S) Act employee representatives of the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce consultative group, representatives from the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS), relevant central agencies, Commonwealth and parliamentary departments.

The review will draw on a range of sources, including the Review of the MOP(S) Act, legislation, policies and arrangements of other relevant jurisdictions, including international equivalents.

To ensure all those who have relevant experience can contribute to the Resourcing Review and taking into account the parliamentary sitting schedule, a range of methods will be used to collect contributions, including invitations for interview and consultative groups.

The PWSS CEO will provide copies of the final report to the Prime Minister and to the Special Minister of State as the Minister with responsibility for the MOP(S) Act employment framework.

The Resourcing Review will be conducted by the PWSS and will collect and manage personal information in line with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles. The PWSS is not subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and is not required to release information under freedom of information laws. Under the *Archives Act 1983*, records of the PWSS are not disclosed under 99 years.

Timing

The Resourcing Review will commence in January 2024. The reviewer will provide periodic progress updates to the PWSS CEO. A final written report of the review will be provided to the PWSS CEO by October 2024.