



The Parliament of Tasmania is restricted in the ways it can provide educational services due to limitations on its resources. Unlike some other Parliaments, the Parliament of Tasmania does not have a dedicated Parliamentary Education or Community Engagement Officer, and there is still little likelihood in the foreseeable future of an appointment to a dedicated position responsible for parliamentary education in Tasmania.

Nonetheless, the Parliament of Tasmania does still manage to provide a number of services and initiatives that serve to educate the broader community, its staff and Members of Parliament.

These services and initiatives include:

- Youth Parliament;
- Parliamentary Tours and Visits;
- The Corridors of Power Program;
- The Parliamentary Interns Program; and
- The Parliamentary Library and Parliamentary Research Service.

### **Youth Parliament**

Once again there was a highly successful Youth Parliament session held during the 2013 July School holidays.

Each year the organisation and training for participants is enhanced principally due to the dedication and hard work by the YMCA Youth Task Force. The standard of debate, research on the subjects, knowledge of procedure and the confident positive attitude both when debating and discussing issues was outstanding.

The activities of the Youth Parliament comprised a condensed form of Parliamentary procedures and practice relating to the introduction, debate and passage of bills.

Members from both the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council participated by taking on the role of Presiding Officer and assisting with procedure for at least one session.

16 Bills were introduced and debated by over 40 students from years 10, 11 and 12 from both public and private schools throughout the State. The Youth Parliamentarians were guided and assisted by the House of Assembly's Second-Clerk Assistant and Parliamentary Officer and a taskforce of past participants in Youth Parliament.

As would be expected, the choice of topics reflected the interests and concerns of the youth, and addressed a number of matters that are current topics of interest within the Tasmanian community. Such matters included debate on

- Alcohol Plain Packaging;
- Elective Surgery Grants;



- Compulsory Second Language;
- Gambling Advertising Prohibition;
- Saturated and Trans Fats Regulation;
- Religious Education; and
- Access to Abortion.

### **Parliamentary Tours and Visits**

Tours and visits to Parliament House are arranged and overseen by the Second-Clerk Assistant, with the assistance of the Parliamentary Officer. Tours are conducted by the Head Attendant and his staff.

On their tour of Parliament House, visitors are guided through all major areas of interest within precinct. Tours focus on the history of the Parliament House site and the role of the Parliament, and the attendants that conduct the tours provide a wealth of knowledge to tour participants.

While tours still cannot be provided on sitting days due to staffing restrictions; school groups and members of the public still frequently attend to observe proceedings in the House of Assembly or legislative Council in the public galleries.

Importantly, students comprise the majority of visitors to Parliament House. In the 2012/2013 financial year, 1277 students undertook a tour or observed the proceedings of the House of Assembly or the Legislative Council.

A further 312 people visited Parliament House for a tour or to observe proceedings. As is usually the case, Question Time in the House of Assembly proved very popular viewing with both students and members of the public alike.

### **Yes Minister: the Corridors of Power**

*Yes Minister: the Corridors of Power* is a short course offered in conjunction with Adult Education Tasmania, and provides another opportunity for members of the public to learn more about the parliamentary process. In this course, students, as a guest of the Speaker of the House, see Parliament in action, and get a better understanding of the political process. This provides a rare opportunity to get behind the scenes at Parliament House and again, as in past years, attracted considerable interest.

### **Parliamentary Internship Program**

The Parliamentary Internship program is run by the Clerk of the House of Assembly and the Director of the Parliamentary Research Service in partnership with the University of Tasmania.

This year 8 students are undertaking an internship by working on specific research projects with Members of Parliament from both Houses and from all political parties.

Each student produces a report of approximately 5,000 words on a topic of specific interest to their supervising Member of Parliament. The topics researched generally have direct

relevance to that Member's electorate, the Committees on which they sit or to the specific portfolio responsibilities the Member may have within their respective party. Each report becomes the property of the MP for their exclusive use for 6 months and is then deposited in the Parliamentary Library for all to access.

The topics being researched by this year's intake of Parliamentary Interns include:

- Individual Advocacy and Children in Out of Home Care;
- Sentencing in Tasmania: The Use and Utility of Suspended Sentences and Home Detention;
- Access to legal services in rural and remote Tasmania: making it work for both clients and legal services;
- Can't See the Forest for the Trees: Bio-mass residue based industries for Tasmania: Energy & Exports:
- How do we Engage Tasmanians? An Assessment of Community Engagement Models and their Feasibility in Tasmania;
- 'On Your Bike'. A case study of the health and tourism benefits of the North West Coastal Pathway;
- Young People and Youth Services. An overview of the recreational and health services available to young people in the Latrobe municipality; and
- Marketing Issues Associated with Tasmania's GMO Moratorium: Premiums, Returns and Coexistence.

### **The Parliamentary Library and Parliamentary Research Service**

The Parliamentary Library offers a wide range of library services, including several unique services available only from the Parliamentary Library. These include:

- Inter-library loans and document delivery service;
- Reference and information services;
- An Intermediary service which provides access to information sources that ensures the anonymity of the client;
- A Newspaper Clippings service, which includes a searchable database of articles from 2004 onwards;
- Television Monitoring, with news broadcasts captured electronically each day, which can be viewed on the Parliament intranet site. Electronic files and DVDs can be provided to members on request;
- Radio Monitoring, with ABC Hobart Radio programmes captured electronically. Audio files can be sent to Members on request.

- A Transcription Service, with transcripts of items monitored on TV and radio provided to Members on request;
- Parliamentary Backgrounders, which comprise a series of information sheets relating to the Tasmanian Parliament, Parliamentary procedures and history and which are available on the Parliament website and in print for Members and the public; and
- Library Databases, including:
  - Questa, which is a database indexing Questions on Notice, Questions Without Notice, Adjournments, Special Interest Matters and Matters of Public Importance in both Houses;
  - The Bills Database, which tracks the status of a Bill and provides electronic access to accompanying material for bills since 1989; and
  - The Parliamentary Papers Index, which is a database of Parliamentary Papers from 1899 to the current day.

The Parliamentary Research Service (PRS) serves Members and their staff, Parliamentary Committees and their staff and Officers of the Parliament. The PRS exists within the neutral environment of the Library, to provide its clients with written or oral briefings and other research activities on subjects of interest to them.

The PRS provides independent information and research, and all work done for clients by the PRS is strictly confidential.

It provides a range of services including:

- Personal briefings;
- Brief research notes
- Research papers;
- A range of social and economic statistical summaries on Tasmania;
- Demographic profiles for each electorate;
- Summaries of opinion polls; and
- Parliamentary Committee research support.

The Information and Research Services of the Parliamentary Library and Parliamentary Research Service are aimed at assisting Members and Parliamentary Staff to access current and useful information to assist them with their work.

### **Other Resources**

As well as the services and initiatives detailed above, there are a number of other resources available to members of the public, Parliamentary Staff and Members of Parliament. These include:

- The Parliament of Tasmania Internet site, which provides public access to a wide range of information on the Parliament, its functions, activities and history, its Committees, Parliamentary journals and other documents and importantly, facilitates timely public access to current Parliamentary business, including Bills and related explanatory material.
- Web casts of the proceedings of the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council when in session, which provides access to members of the public who are interested in viewing the proceedings of Parliament but are unable to attend in person.
- The Parliament Intranet site, which provides Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff with user-friendly access to a range of resources, including a comprehensive database of Parliamentary journals and documents, including Bills and related explanatory material.
- The Members Handbook, which provides information on procedural and chamber services, facilities and entitlements to Members and their staff.
- The Manual on the Procedures and Practices of Committees of the House of Assembly, which provides comprehensive detail on the operation, conduct and administrative arrangements for House of Assembly Parliamentary Committees, including Rulings made and Precedents set by the Speaker of the House of Assembly and Committee Chairpersons, and is a key reference resource for staff tasked with providing secretariat support to House of Assembly Committees.

The Parliament of Tasmania, despite the limitations on its resources, take its education role seriously, and will continue to provide a range of services and initiatives that strive to educate the broader public, its Members and staff about its functions, activities and history.