

## **Jurisdictional Report: Parliamentary Education Office**

### **Overview**

Jointly funded by the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives, the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) delivers parliamentary education services to teachers, students and other learners across Australia through:

- experiential learning programs that enable students and teachers to understand and engage with the work of the Parliament
- comprehensive websites covering fundamental concepts such as representation, law-making, the separation of powers and responsible government
- teaching resources aligned to the Australian Civics and Citizenship Curriculum.

Since the PEO was established in 1988, over 2.1 million students have expanded their knowledge of the role, function and value of the Australian Parliament through participating in a PEO program.

In addition to operational management from both departments, the PEO is guided by the PEO Advisory Committee.

Co-chaired by the Deputy Speaker and Deputy President, the Committee offers advice on the strategic direction of the PEO, and forms an additional conduit between the PEO and parliamentarians. The Committee reports to the Presiding Officers and meets twice a year.

### **Education Programs at Parliament House**

The PEO's immersive learning program at Parliament House is regarded as a highly effective method of parliamentary education. The program continued to run at capacity in 2017, with 90,711 students (from 1,564 schools) across Australia participating.

These figures represent a small increase on 2016 and see student participation rates at Parliament House remaining ahead of most national institutions in Canberra and parliaments in a number of significantly larger countries.

PEO education programs at Parliament House place an emphasis on using active, participatory techniques to enable students to 'learn by doing'. Facilitated by experienced educators, programs take place in a simulated parliamentary chamber, with students given the option of debating a bill, conducting a committee of inquiry or participating in a Question Time session.

### **Outreach, online and classroom resources**

The PEO offers several options for schools, students and teachers unable to travel to Canberra, including outreach, a comprehensive web presence and video conferencing.

In 2017, the PEO delivered three weeks of outreach to 3,585 students (in 64 schools) across six electorates in Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

The PEO's primary website, [www.peo.gov.au](http://www.peo.gov.au), has remained especially popular, with 1.22m visitor sessions (representing a total of 2.9m pageviews) expected for the calendar year.

Reflecting the increasing use of technology in the classroom, the PEO completed the installation of video conferencing facilities to allow engagement with schools across Australia, and particularly those in regional or remote locations.

Following the release of version 8.3 of the Australian Curriculum in December 2016, the PEO also introduced updated education resources – including lesson plans, assessment rubrics, activity sheets and videos – for teachers of Years 6–10.

## Services for members and senators

The PEO provides dedicated support to encourage and assist members and senators engage with schools and students.

Members and senators are offered a complimentary annual allocation of education and information materials for students, teachers and others in their community. 192 members and senators requested their allocation in 2017.

The introduction of customised materials for members and senators continues to be popular, with personalised versions of *Representing You* – a tailored brochure outlining the role of a parliamentarian and the issues in their electorate, state or territory – created for 49 members and senators.

During sitting periods, members and senators are encouraged to meet school groups from their state, territory or electorate visiting Parliament House. 120 members and seven senators met with school groups during PEO programs over the past 12 months.

## Printed products and additional materials

The PEO produced and distributed a range of publications, including:

- 11,049 copies of the *Australian Constitution Pocket Edition*
- 6,864 copies of *Get Parliament*, an easy-to-understand booklet that explores Australia's system of governance
- 3,386 copies of *Role-play the Parliament: a Teacher's Guide*, a step-by-step guide to conducting immersive parliamentary education in the classroom.

Additional products – including materials for younger learners – are available through the PEO website or by contacting the PEO.

## Staff changes

The PEO has welcomed several new staff, including:

- Mr Tim Grainger, who commenced as Director in September 2016 following the retirement of Simon Harvey; and
- Ms Angela Casey, who commenced as Education Manager in January 2017 following the retirement of John Studholme.

Ms Amanda Paroz (currently the Manager of Learning at the National Museum of Australia) will commence as the Parliamentary Education and Support Liaison Officer in early 2018 following the resignation of Jason Bongers to accompany his partner on a diplomatic posting to Africa.

## Outlook for 2018

With advance bookings for learning programs at Parliament House remaining high, the PEO will continue to explore strategies to effectively meet demand – and ensure program quality – in 2018.

Working with senators, members and their staff, the PEO seeks to reinforce a whole-of-Parliament education approach, and further enhance the experience for visiting students, teachers and others participating in learning programs.

In support of this, the PEO expects to increase options for students and schools unable to travel to Canberra, including a greater use of video conferencing and digital technology, to extend and enhance access, and help teachers deliver parliamentary education in their own classroom.

In addition, the PEO seeks to use its position as a leading provider of civics and citizenship education to strengthen relationships with the teaching profession, further improve alignment with the Australian Curriculum, and share knowledge with educators in parliaments across Australia and around the world.