



STRATEGIC PLAN

OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
2018-2021



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office's strategic plan for 2018-2021 affirms that the Office is responsible for: a) advising and supporting the Assembly as a democratic institution; and b) advising and supporting the MLAs who constitute its membership at any given time. These responsibilities are concisely expressed in section 6 of the [Legislative Assembly \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Act 2012](#), which establishes the function of the Office as being to:

...provide impartial advice and support to the Legislative Assembly, its committees and members of the Assembly...

The Office's plan builds on this starting point.

The plan acknowledges the Office's accountabilities to the Speaker, Assembly committees and the Assembly as a whole; sets out the high-level structure of the organisation; and lists the people and organisations that we work with.

In addition to focusing on our role in supporting and advising the Assembly and its members, the plan recognises that the way we attend to our own organisational capabilities—how we are governed, how we make decisions and how we allocate resources—will bear heavily on our success.

Through a series of staff workshops, and following discussions with the Speaker and the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure about the findings of the survey of members, the Office has devised a series of signposts to guide the steps that we take to address the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Against this background, the Office has settled on our:

- **Values**—the beliefs we hold about what is important in performing our functions and delivering our services;
- **Impact factors**—the operating environment (both internal and external) in which we find ourselves and the circumstances that potentially influence how we perform our functions;
- **Objectives**—the overarching areas of achievement that we will pursue over the life of the plan; and
- **Strategies**—the way we will focus our efforts to work towards the achievement of our objectives.

I look forward to working with Office staff to deliver on the aspirations of the plan and to build on our success as a high-performing parliamentary support agency that facilitates and enables a strong parliamentary system in the ACT and delivers high-quality services to the people and organisations we work with.



Tom Duncan
Clerk

March 2018

2. OUR FUNCTION

Headed by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, the Office supports the Assembly as the democratic body responsible for considering and passing laws, holding the Executive to account, and representing the people of the ACT.

The Office is established as an independent statutory agency under the [Legislative Assembly \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) 2012 Act](#) (the OLA Act). Section 6 of the Act provides that **the Office's function is to provide impartial advice and support to the Legislative Assembly, its committees and Members of the Assembly**, including by:

- Providing advice on parliamentary practice and procedure and the functions of the Assembly and committees;
- Reporting proceedings of the Assembly and meetings of committees;
- Maintaining an official record of proceedings of the Assembly;
- Providing library and information facilities and services for members;
- Providing staff to enable the Assembly and committees to operate efficiently;
- Providing business support functions, including administering the entitlements of members who are not part of the Executive;
- Maintaining the Assembly precincts (including, through the Precincts Act, providing security services); and
- Providing public education about the function of the Assembly and committees.

The Office has functions under other legislation, including the [Legislative Assembly \(Broadcasting\) Act 2001](#) and the [Legislative Assembly Precincts Act 2001](#).¹ The Clerk and staff of the Office also perform a wide range of core parliamentary roles arising from the Assembly's [Standing Orders and continuing resolutions](#) and parliamentary practice and procedure.

Our relationships

In addition to supporting the Assembly as an institution, the Office works with a range of different people and organisations, including:

- non-executive members and their staff;
- ministers;
- members of the ACT community;
- the ACT public sector;
- Officers of the Legislative Assembly (the Auditor-General and the members of the Electoral Commission);
- educational institutions;
- participants in committee inquiries;
- interparliamentary organisations, other parliaments and their members; and
- the media.

Accountability

All staff within the Office are accountable to the Clerk. The Office is not accountable for its performance to the Executive² but to the Assembly, as a whole, through the Speaker.

¹ The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly may seek administrative support or advice from the Office in exercising his or her functions under the [Auditor-General Act 1996](#), the [Electoral Act 1992](#), and the [Ombudsman Act 1989](#).

² Section 8, [Legislative Assembly \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Act 2012](#)

3. OUR STRUCTURE

The Office is organised into three streams:

1. the **Office of the Clerk** is headed by a director, reports directly to the Clerk and is responsible for a number of governance and leadership roles, education and public affairs. The Clerk also has an Executive Officer within the Office of the Clerk responsible for the provision of various parliamentary and executive support functions.
2. headed by the Office’s Deputy Clerk and Serjeant-at-Arms, the **Parliamentary Support Branch** comprises: chamber support; committee support; Hansard; and Assembly library functions; and
3. headed by the Office’s Executive Manager, the **Business Support Branch** comprises: finance; HR, payroll and entitlements; broadcasting, information and technology; and security and facilities functions.

The Office’s Executive Management Committee (EMC) is responsible for the overall governance of the Office: financial management, strategic direction and policy. It is composed of: the Clerk; the Deputy Clerk and Serjeant-at-Arms; the Executive Manager; the Director, Office of the Clerk; and the Chief Finance Officer.

FIGURE 1: *Top level structure*

Clerk, Legislative Assembly		
Parliamentary Support Branch	Office of the Clerk	Business Support Branch
Chamber Support	Executive Officer	Finance
Committee Support	Education and Engagement	Human Resources and Entitlements
Hansard	Public Affairs	Broadcasting, Information and Technology
Assembly Library	Interparliamentary Relations	Security and Building Services

4. OUR VALUES—WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

Our values, set out below, highlight the organisational culture that we wish to foster and maintain. These values:

- reflect the Office’s commitment to parliamentary service;
- guide the Office’s decisions; and
- underpin the way in which the Office performs its functions and delivers its services.

Professionalism

- We value our professional relationships with members, their staff, members of the ACT community, the public sector and the wider community of parliaments.
- We show respect—having due regard for people, their viewpoints and their aspirations—in all of our professional relationships.
- We are conscientious, knowledgeable and prudent in the way that we go about doing our work.

Independence

- We value our independence from the Executive.
- We value the checks and balances embodied by the ACT’s form of government, established in the [*Australian Capital Territory \(Self-Government\) Act 1988*](#), in which there are three separate and distinct branches of government (the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary).
- We value the principles and guidelines embodied by the Latimer House Principles as a clear statement of the best practice operation of, and relationship between, the three branches of government.

Honesty and Integrity

- We are honest and stand up for our values in all of our dealings.

Impartiality

- We provide advice and support to members and the Assembly without fear, favour or bias.

Transparency

- We are open about how we perform our roles and the decisions we make.

5. OUR OBJECTIVES

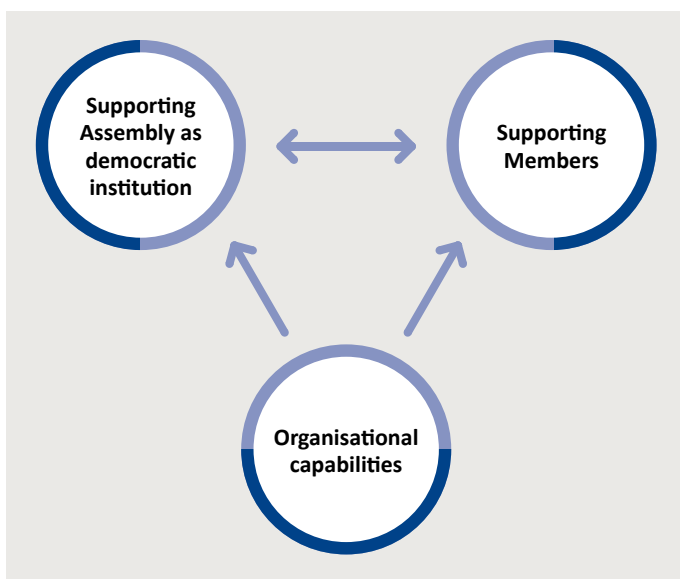
The Office’s objectives are consistent with our values and statutory functions and will guide the positive evolution of our organisational culture, our business planning processes and the way that we think about the remit of the Office. The Office’s objectives are to:

- **Support the Assembly as a democratic institution**—the Office will work to facilitate and strengthen the Assembly’s and its committees’ legislative, accountability and representative functions, including by enhancing understanding and awareness of the work of the Assembly and promoting opportunities to become involved.
- **Support and advise Members of the Legislative Assembly**—the Office will provide high-quality and timely advisory and administrative services enabling Members of the Legislative Assembly to participate effectively in the work of the Assembly and its committees and to undertake their constituency related roles.
- **Maintain and build internal organisational capabilities**—through effective decision-making, internal communication and information sharing, and staff engagement and resource management, the Office will achieve high levels of performance (delivering high-quality, timely and cost-efficient support and advice) and compliance (operating in conformity with legislation, policies and parliamentary law).

The first two objectives are outward looking and draw relevance from the underlying statutory function that the Office performs. They are interrelated and self-reinforcing. For example, a focus on supporting the Assembly as a democratic institution can affect how we design, implement and evaluate the support and advisory services that we provide to members. Conversely, in considering how we support the Assembly as a democratic institution, we acknowledge that a high-performing membership is essential and that the Office plays a central role in enabling members to perform effectively.

The third objective is inward looking and focuses on the good organisational housekeeping of the Office. Tending to the Office’s requirements as an organisation is not an end in itself but a means to ensure that the Office is able to respond effectively to the first two objectives. It draws on the accepted performance and compliance attributes that are demanded of public sector agencies.

FIGURE 2: *Interrelationships between objectives*



6. FACTORS THAT COULD IMPACT ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR OBJECTIVES

The Office has identified a number of factors that will potentially impact on the performance of the Office's statutory functions and the achievement of its three objectives over the life of the plan. These are set out below.

Factors that impact on our support of the Assembly as a democratic institution (objective 1)

As with all democratic institutions across the world, the Legislative Assembly must grapple with questions of how best to engage with, and to represent, the people it serves so as to maintain relevance and foster legitimacy. The idea of a 'democratic deficit' has long been discussed. With the fast pace of technological change, increasing doubt in the public mind about the veracity of information in political discourse, and scepticism about the value of democratic institutions, there are special challenges for the Office and the Assembly itself.

The Office is well-placed to facilitate and enable a strong parliamentary institution that performs its functions in the best traditions of Westminster-style governance. However, in serving the Assembly, the Office must be mindful of the challenges and acknowledge the limits of its capacity, as a support and advisory organisation, to remedy problems in the democratic system.

Factors that will potentially affect the Office's capacity to support the Assembly as a democratic institution include:

PROCEDURAL STEWARDSHIP

- The Office will need to provide advice and support for the Assembly as it seeks to renew its standing orders and procedural arrangements (the rules and process requirements governing the operation of the Assembly and its committees).
- The Office will need to ensure that the standing orders and procedural arrangements underpin the effective operation of parliamentary functions and are useful, relevant, and clear.

THE 'ATTENTION ECONOMY'

- the Office will need to explore opportunities for participation in an environment where the community's changing expectations about engagement with parliamentary processes is influenced by the intensification of online interaction and the proliferation of digital media, particularly social media, mobile devices, and interactive and audio-visual content.
- The Office will need to ensure that its outreach efforts are driven by careful consideration of the Assembly's democratic functions, rather than passing trends.

DYNAMIC PROTECTIVE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

- The Office will need to ensure that there is adequate protective security for the Assembly and its members so that key democratic functions do not become vulnerable.
- The Office needs to develop the necessary policies, procedures and operational capabilities to effectively manage security related threats in a proportionate and prudent manner, particularly in what is a fast-changing security threat environment (physical security, information security, personal security, cybersecurity).

ACCOMMODATION PRESSURE

- The Office needs to ensure that the Assembly building and its precincts are suitable for the effective functioning of the legislature.
- The Office will need to monitor the suitability of accommodation arrangements, particularly as the building's capacity to accommodate members, their staff and Office staff has come under additional pressure with the increase in membership.

DIGITAL PROCESSES

- The Office will need to recognise and meet the challenge of moving from a predominantly paper-based model for circulating material within the legislative chamber and parliamentary committees.
- The Office will be called upon to advise the Assembly and its committees on digital processing arrangements that are efficient and maintain the integrity of proceedings.

CONSTRUCTION OF GOVERNMENT OFFICE BLOCK

- The Office is mindful that the commencement in 2018 of major construction works at Constitution Place (adjacent to the Assembly) may initiate a period of disruption and disturbance.
- The Office will need to manage potential impacts associated with this activity to reduce their effects on the proceedings of the Assembly, its members and staff. It will also need to ensure that there are open lines of communication with Assembly building occupants.

Factors that impact on support and advice to members (objective 2)

The Office provides advice and support on Assembly and committee practice and procedure to members, their staff and parts of the ACT public sector. It is also involved in delivering a range of business services to members and their staff such as payroll, HR, and entitlements processing. Members expect that services will be efficient, easy-to-use, timely and underpinned by well-considered advice. There are a number of opportunities to maintain and build on the Office's service delivery capabilities through harnessing members' feedback, the better use of technology, and process re-engineering.

Factors that potentially affect the way that the Office supports and advises members include:

DEMAND FOR TRUSTWORTHY, AUTHORITATIVE ADVICE AND INFORMATION

- The Office must be the authoritative source of Assembly-related information.
- The Office must provide information and advice that is accurate, independent, timely and backed by rigorous analysis and due diligence.

TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS

- The Office will need to become familiar with and, where appropriate, adapt to the proliferation of digital social media platforms, the ascendancy of personal mobile digital technologies, and new frontiers in machine learning.
- The Office will need to consider the viability of cloud services, 'software as a service', mobile devices and increasingly fast mobile networking technologies, which are also driving changes across the public sector.

AUTOMATION OF BUSINESS PROCESSES

- The Office will need to make the shift from the manual and paper-based processing of various business support functions to more efficient and userfriendly digital platforms.

Factors that impact on the Office’s organisational capabilities (objective 3)

The ways in which the Office makes decisions, seeks and applies resources, manages risk and establishes performance and compliance arrangements will remain key to the management and leadership of the Office. The Office aims to have a dedicated and skilled workforce. Any successful public sector organisation—one that achieves a high level of performance against its objectives and complies with relevant legislative and policy requirements—relies on the skills, knowledge, experience and commitment of its staff. The Office will build on recent changes to the organisational structure, reporting arrangements and performance and development framework to get the most out of its staff and to ensure that staff enjoy a safe, rewarding and productive work environment.

Factors that potentially impact on the Office’s organisational capabilities include:

ACTIVITY/DEMAND FACTORS

- The Office will need to adapt to the variations in workloads and service demands arising from the Assembly’s expanded membership. Activity levels associated with proceedings are, to a large extent, determined by the Assembly and its committees.
- The Office will need to monitor workloads and the level of resourcing required to acquit its functions effectively.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

- The Office will need to optimise financial performance to minimise waste and apply resources where they are most needed.

INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

- The Office will need to ensure that staff have sufficient opportunities to contribute to decision-making and that management decisions are communicated effectively.
- The Office will need to ensure that staff are provided with the capacity to understand the roles and tasks performed by different parts of the organisation and to have the tools required to work collaboratively and flexibly in solving problems.
- The Office will need to ensure that information and records systems used by the Office are easy to use and enable staff to locate and search information efficiently.








COMPLIANCE FACTORS

- The Office needs to remain vigilant in responding to changing compliance requirements, including in relation to: audit; accounting standards; payroll; taxation; online accessibility; freedom of information; open access; records management; and broader legislative developments in the ACT public sector.
- The Office will need to ensure that attention is paid to compliance and assurance systems, training and staff development and the development of an organisational culture that is alive to, and effectively manages, risk.

7. STRATEGIES

The table shows the strategies that the Office will pursue in order to achieve its objectives.

TABLE 1: *The Office's strategies and objectives*

Strategies	Objectives		
	Support the Assembly as a democratic institution	Support and advise Members of the Legislative Assembly	Maintain and build internal organisational capabilities
 <p>1. Provide procedural stewardship Guided by the Assembly's core democratic functions—representative, accountability and legislative—the Office will provide authoritative advice, backed by rigorous analysis, on the Assembly's practices and procedures.</p>	✓	✓	
 <p>2. Provide good governance The Office will support good decision-making and high levels of organisational performance and compliance through: policy development; assurance mechanisms; the efficient use of resources; and the development of an organisational culture that is alive to, and effectively manages, risk.</p>	✓	✓	✓
 <p>3. Remove barriers, promote and communicate The Office will remove barriers to access so that those wishing to participate in proceedings or engage with the Assembly, its committees and its members can do so. The Office will promote and explain the proceedings of the Assembly and its roles and functions to the people and organisations that it works with, using different platforms and methods to reach different audiences.</p>	✓	✓	✓
 <p>4. Provide safe and functional precincts The Office will provide a secure, safe working environment—including accommodation and facilities—to enable the work of the Assembly, its members and its staff.</p>	✓	✓	
 <p>5. Foster staff learning and development The Office will build the professional capabilities of staff to deliver high levels of performance, facilitate career progression and strengthen the Office's base of skills and experience.</p>	✓	✓	✓
 <p>6. Harness technology The Office will make the best use of information and communications technologies that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated (i.e. work seamlessly with one another); • flexible and mobile; • reliable; • consistent with relevant procedural requirements; and • secure. 	✓	✓	✓
 <p>7. Share knowledge and information The Office will implement training, technology and systems to facilitate the efficient communication of knowledge and information that is required by members and Office staff to perform their roles effectively.</p>	✓	✓	✓