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The silent reformers: The role of Clerks in strengthening and transforming parliament



**Office of the
Legislative Assembly**

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Who was the first Clerk, what did he look like and what did he wear?

In researching this paper, I thought it might be interesting to find out who the first-ever Clerk of a Commonwealth parliament was, and what did he (there were no women in such roles at that time) look like?¹

Most commentators suggest that the office of the Clerk seems to have begun in the United Kingdom around the year 1290 when the keeping of parliamentary records appears to have been put on a more definite footing², but it is unclear who the first Clerk was. I consulted with the Clerk of the Tynwald, who advised that he was pretty confident that bodies recognisable as Tynwald Court, the House of Keys and the Legislative Council were in existence before 1363, but they don't have written records that early.³ Another reason for the uncertainty is because we do not know exactly when the Commons in the UK was first recognized as a "House" with rights of its own as well as duties to the Crown.⁴ The very first Clerk with some permanent status appears to have been in 1363 in the UK House of Commons.⁵ The official term for the role was "under-clerk of the parliament" and the appointee was Robert de Melton who was one of the Chancery Clerks.⁶ He was paid £5 per year for life.⁷

The first image of a Clerk that I could locate was of the 15th Clerk of the House of Commons, Henry Scobell. His image was placed on a gold medal handmade during Scobell's lifetime by the engraver Thomas Simon and is part of a series of portrait medals of many leading figures of the day. Wearing garments like his contemporaries, Scobell is shown with a large stiff collar, as opposed to decorative collars of those of Charles I. These large plain collars were often worn under armour, and together with the buff coat (see below) show that Scobell was a practical man.



Figure 1: Thomas Simon (1618–1665), Henry Scobell, gold medal (35mm), 1649, National Portrait Gallery, UK.

¹ I am indebted to Cherelyn Brearley in the Assembly Committee Office for researching this topic.

² "Office of Clerk of the Parliaments", *The Table*, 1932, p 15.

³ Jonathan King, Clerk of the Tynwald, email to the author, 26 August 2025.

⁴ Phillip Marsden, *The Officers of the House of Commons 1363–1965*, p 29.

⁵ However, there is some commentary that the position of Clerk of the Parliaments had existed in some form since around 1290, and the *Modus Tenendi Parliamentum* (in English, roughly "the Manner of Holding Parliament") was written in the fourteenth century probably by a Clerk of the Parliaments. See "The 200th Anniversary of the Clerk of the Parliaments Act 1824", *The Table*, Vol 93, 2024, p 8. See also the Clerical Organisation of the House of Commons 1661-1875 by O.C. Williams, 1954, p 3.

⁶ *Ibid*, p 16.

⁷ Ian Harris, *The role of a Clerk of the House of Representatives*, Address to Juris Doctor Students of University of Melbourne, June 2002, p 2.

Introduction

Filling the position of Clerk or Secretary to a Parliament is not just another staff appointment. A parliament must look for a truly remarkable person of unassailable character.¹

...we have a lot of other responsibilities and roles to take on as part of the Clerk mantle e.g. pastoral carer, confessor and handmaid... plus be experts in things like event management, diplomacy and international relations and even how to deal with plumbing issues, bathroom and kitchen leaks and generally mopping up the mess of life...²

Role of Clerks

When the first Clerks were appointed after parliaments were established, there was one main requirement that they had to fill. In the language of the time, the word “clerk” simply indicated a person who could read and write, and they assisted the parliament by reading petitions and bills, partly due to some Members not being able to read.³ This fact is recognised in many Commonwealth parliaments when, at certain stages of passage, a bill is “read” for the first, second or third time. It was suggested that not only did a Clerk need the capacity to read and write, but also that the key qualification was to also speak English, French and Latin.⁴

The requirements for Clerks are now much more demanding. In addition to ensuring that the chamber and any committees of the parliament run smoothly and being the principal adviser on parliamentary law and the procedures of their legislature, a Clerk is often the Chief Executive Officer administering a sizeable budget, staff and members entitlements system.⁵ The Clerk has been variously described as a guide, counsellor, true and faithful servant of the house, guardian of the procedural equity that is the touchstone of any real parliamentary assembly, and – both poetically and rather mischievously – a “wise old owl”.⁶ Former Clerk of the Australian Senate, Rosemary Laing, remarked that another aspect of a Clerk’s role is that the:

Defence of, and advocacy for, the integrity and rights of the parliamentary institution is a central and legitimate function of clerks when the occasion demands it, including in public forums. Such advice is invariably based on a detailed knowledge of the underlying parliamentary law, practice and precedent, one reason that it can take a long time to make a clerk.⁷

¹ S.N. Darkwa, “The essential characteristics of the Clerk of Parliament”, *The Parliamentarian*, 2010 Issue.

² Email from an Australian Clerk upon the retirement of David Blunt AM, Clerk of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, Australia, 12 February 2025.

³ Parliament of Canada, Factsheet, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/About/Clerk/Clerk-History-e.htm> accessed on 22 September 2025.

⁴ “The 200th anniversary of the Clerk of the Parliaments Act 1824”, *The Table*, Vol 92, 2024, p 10. Indeed, to some extent these three languages are still in use today by clerks of the UK parliament, with the minutes of proceedings being endorsed in Latin until 2003, and Norman French being used to announce the King’s assent to bills during the prorogation ceremony.

⁵ Ian Harris, *The Role of the Clerk of the House*, Paper presented to SOCATT 46th General Meeting, Arusha, Tanzania, October 2009, p 2.

⁶ Australian House of Representatives, Factsheet, *The Clerk*.

⁷ Rosemary Laing, *Here be dragons: The Advisory Role of Clerks, 44th Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference*, Canberra, July 2013, p 3.

In many job specifications for the role of the Clerk it is emphasised that to be eligible, one must have extensive knowledge of, and experience in, relevant parliamentary law, practice and procedure.⁸

This paper focusses not just on the required aspects of the role, but on the ways the office can strengthen and reform how parliaments operate. It does not focus at all on the personal qualities of the Clerk, although attached in the appendix are some important attributes that have been suggested over the years.

How does a Clerk strengthen and transform parliament?

(a) Securing independence of the parliamentary administration

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's *Recommended Benchmarks for the Democratic Legislatures* (the Benchmarks) advocate that the parliamentary administration of legislatures should be independent of the Executive. I consider that the Clerk has a critical role to play in facilitating, nurturing and defending that independence. The Benchmarks address this in several ways:

- The Legislature shall, either by legislation or resolution, establish a corporate body responsible for providing services and funding entitlements for parliamentary purposes and providing for independent governance of the Parliamentary Service;
- The Legislature shall have adequate non-partisan professional staff to support all elements of its operations;
- The Head of the Parliamentary Service shall have a form of protected status defined in legislation or in the jurisdiction's Constitution to prevent undue political pressure;
- The remuneration of the Head of the Parliamentary Service shall be set by an independent body or mechanism;
- The Legislature shall have an agreed Strategic Plan with related objectives developed and updated at regular intervals and a mechanism of monitoring and evaluation to measure achievement against the Strategic Plan or other goals;
- The Legislature shall have sole control of the Legislative Precinct;
- The Legislature shall have strategies and policies around the use of IT and the application of artificial intelligence with a focus on the protection of personal data; and
- The Legislature shall have targeted policies and measures in place to prioritise environmental and sustainable practices such as Paperless Parliaments.⁹

When I was appointed Clerk in 2003 it was by way of an instrument made by the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister pursuant to the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (this is the Act which provides the statutory framework for the regular ACT public service). Such an approach was generally regarded as militating against an independent, separate and distinct parliamentary service.

My colleagues and I advised successive Speakers that this situation needed to be rectified. The then Legislative Assembly Secretariat (the precursor to the Office of the Legislative Assembly (the Office)) prepared drafting instructions to develop a standalone statutory framework for the Office,

⁸ *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, Commonwealth Act of Australia.

⁹ Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, [Updated Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures, Summary Benchmarks](#), 2025 edition, Benchmarks 30.1, 31.1, 30.3, 30.4, and 30.7–30.10.

enshrining, among other things, the Office's functions and independence from executive government. The Legislative Assembly (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill was introduced and passed in 2012.¹⁰ Following its commencement, it is the Speaker who has the responsibility for appointing the Clerk of the Assembly. The Act requires that the Speaker must only appoint a Clerk:

- (a) with the agreement of the relevant Assembly committee; and
- (b) in consultation with the Chief Minister; and
- (c) in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition; and
- (d) in consultation with the leader (however described) of a registered party (other than the party to which the Chief Minister or Leader of the Opposition belongs) if at least 2 members of the Legislative Assembly are members of the party; and
- (e) in accordance with an open and accountable selection process.¹¹

It further provides that the Speaker must not appoint a person as Clerk unless satisfied that the person has extensive knowledge of, and experience in, relevant parliamentary law, practice and procedure.

Crucially for the continued independence of the Office, the Act also contains a section that states that, once appointed, "the Clerk and the office's staff are not subject to direction by the Executive or any Minister in the exercise of their functions."¹²

Other measures to ensure the independence of the administration of the parliament included:

- Measures to ensure the safe operation of the Members and staff of the parliament, including the passage of the *Legislative Assembly Precincts Act 2001* giving the Speaker responsibility and powers for the control and management of the Assembly precincts;
- The passage of the *Legislative Assembly (Broadcasting) Act 2001* to regulate the broadcasting of Assembly and Committee proceedings;
- The development of a memorandum of understanding between the Assembly Speaker and the Australian Federal Police setting out, among other things, requirements in relation to search warrants and parliamentary privilege; and
- The adoption of a separate logo for the parliament to distinguish the Office from the executive branch and the wider public service.

Of course, each parliament will have their own circumstances to deal with, but the sorts of measures listed above demonstrate the important role that the Clerk is able to play in strengthening the administration of parliament.

(b) Good governance of the parliamentary administration

In addition to an independent administration of parliament, it is important to ensure that the administrative support for any parliament is guided by principles of sound public sector management and governance. Parliamentary administrations, while typically separate from the wider public sector, nonetheless need to have appropriate arrangements for making decisions, evaluating risks and expending public funds. When I became Clerk in 2003, I sought to adopt a range of measures to

¹⁰ Some provisions of the bill were resisted by the Government of the day but were passed with the support of the Opposition and the Crossbench (for example, the requirement for a separate appropriation bill for the Office).

¹¹ *Legislative Assembly (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Act 2012*, s 9.

¹² *Legislative Assembly (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Act 2012*, s 8.

improve the Office's governance, drawing on a range of principles outlined in the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) *Public sector governance better practice guide*.

Since that time, and consistent with the ANAO guidance, the Office has implemented a range of important governance reforms, including:

- An Audit and Risk Committee, chaired by an external person with appropriate expertise;
- A comprehensive business continuity program with regular testing exercises;
- A comprehensive approach to risk management guided by relevant international standards;
- A series of strategic plans setting out the Office's values, overarching objectives and implementation plans;
- Arrangements for prudent financial management and a robust internal control environment, including the development of the *Clerk's Financial Instructions*;
- Several external reviews of the Office to ensure that the parliamentary support structure is fit for purpose;
- Establishment of an Executive Management Committee, comprising senior officials and working within the framework of a charter, to consider key decisions and to share information;
- Establishment of a staff consultative committee with representatives of staff, management and unions;
- Establishment of a Health and Safety Committee to perform relevant statutory responsibilities and to provide advice to Members and the Clerk about work health and safety matters;
- Establishment of a Protective Security Committee comprising representatives of Members and the Office to consider protective security matters (physical, information, governance, cyber etc.) and monitor internal controls and policies;
- Adoption of policies for child safety and respect in the workplace; and
- Adoption of a code of conduct for parliamentary staff.

While this list is not exhaustive, Clerks have a key role to play in ensuring that these types of policies are implemented to ensure that Members' and community expectations about what a modern workplace with efficient and effective organisational practices ought to look like are fulfilled.

(c) Securing financial independence

A parliament needs sufficient funds to perform its important work. To reflect this, the Benchmarks set out some important principles in relation to funding:

- Only the Legislature shall be empowered to determine and approve its own budget.
- The funding of the Legislature should be through a separate appropriations bill.¹³

While the ACT Legislative Assembly has had a separate appropriation bill since 2013, the Assembly does not determine the quantum of its own budget due to issues with the doctrine of the financial

¹³ Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, [Updated Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures, Summary Benchmarks](#), 2025 edition, Benchmarks 30.2 and 30.6.

initiative of the Crown.¹⁴ However, since 2014 the Speaker and the Chief Minister have operated under a set of *Assembly Budget Protocols*¹⁵ which, among other things, provide that:

- The Speaker and the Clerk are entitled to appear before Budget Cabinet to advance any budget proposals for the Assembly;
- When the Treasurer presents a Bill for appropriation that contains less than what was asked for by the Speaker, the Treasurer is required to present a statement of reasons as to why the recommended appropriation was not included;
- If the Executive intends to include the Assembly in any across-the-board savings proposals, it will not do so without first consulting the Speaker, who, in turn, consults with the relevant Assembly committee; and
- Any funds not expended by the Office of the Legislative Assembly during a financial year are retained by the Office of the Legislative Assembly and used as it sees fit to meet the requirements of the Parliament (within the constraints of the Financial Management Act).

While more work needs to be done on securing financial independence, the processes outlined above are a step in the right direction.

(d) Compiling accessible and authoritative procedural information

Writing a book on the practice of their parliament is – to quote an esteemed former Clerk of the Senate – one of the most important legacies a Clerk can leave to his or her successors.¹⁶ As all of us are aware, Erskine May published his seminal work, *A Treatise upon the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and usage of Parliament* in 1844, and it is now in its 25th edition. Many other parliaments across the Commonwealth have published similar books on parliamentary practice in their own respective parliaments.

Of course, undertaking such a task is very time-consuming, and that is why I asked the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly (Mark McRae OAM) to compile the first edition of the *Companion to the Standing Order of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory*, which was published in 2009. When it came time to update it, I assisted in editing along with the Senior Director of my office, David Skinner, and the second edition was published in 2022.

Not all legislatures will have the time to undertake such a significant body of work, but even if significant rulings or fact sheets are compiled in a central location, it can go a long way to strengthen the functioning of the legislature. Such efforts would also go some way to meeting the requirements under the Benchmarks that:

- The Legislature’s rules, proceedings and practices shall be readily available to Members of the House and to the wider public; and

¹⁴ Section 65 of the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* prevents non-ministers from presenting a bill or moving an amendment to appropriate funds (or increase appropriated funds).

¹⁵ [Budget-Protocols-Agreement-2020.pdf](#) (accessed on 2 October 2025).

¹⁶ Dr Rosemary Laing, former Clerk of the Australian Senate, farewell speech to David Blunt AM, 28 March 2025.

- The Legislature should produce an accompanying handbook which explains the importance of the Rules of Procedure in regulating how the Legislature conducts its affairs and which is made publicly available to citizens on the Legislature’s website.¹⁷

In addition, some legislatures have taken an extra step and published annotated sets of standing orders which explain in some detail each standing order and how it has changed over time.¹⁸

(e) Being an educator and developer of staff

Clerks were once a silo or sole repository of much procedural and corporate knowledge. They contributed to capacity-building by recording and writing procedural volumes, as described in the previous section. Professional development of staff was often limited to them observing proceedings over many years and being exposed to various aspects of the department only as promotional opportunities arose.

The contemporary Clerk must see institutional continuity differently. The Clerk must be an educator and developer of people, based on sharing knowledge and not only encouraging staff to learn “what to think” (which they can find in procedural volumes), but “how to think” procedurally and in corporate decision-making. The Department of the Senate in the Australian Parliament has a goal of “institutional continuity”. The department’s Corporate Plan states that the achievement of this goal lies in the recruitment of exceptionally capable staff, the provision of ongoing staff training and support, and the production of authoritative procedural guides and reference works.¹⁹

Pre-sitting day meetings, post sitting debriefs and special procedural forums are just some of the regular and strategic approaches to developing staff, with short- and long-term benefits both for the staff and for strengthening the institution.

In Australia and New Zealand an extension of this approach is embedded in the purpose and activities of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table (ANZACATT), which was modelled in part on the Canadian Clerks Association, but which has matured into one of the most active professional associations, based on sharing information and developing parliamentary officers. ANZACATT is now 25 years old, and as the inaugural Vice President and the second President of the Association I have remained a keen supporter of its university-linked parliamentary practice course, the annual professional development seminar, and procedural, case law and corporate resources available online. ANZACATT is not only a benefit to each Clerk and their staff, but represents an important aspect of Clerks as being part of a community of houses of Parliament where innovations and challenges can be shared for the betterment of all.

(f) Being an advocate for adopting best practice and innovation

Another way a Clerk can strengthen and transform their parliament is to advocate for adopting best practice and ensuring that the legislature is open to innovations that improve and strengthen parliamentary functions. As mentioned in a recent webinar by the Clerk of the Canadian House of Commons, Clerks are able to develop insights across the entire institution. This places them in a strong position to champion long-term thinking that goes beyond electoral cycles. Clerks come well-

¹⁷ Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, [Updated Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures, Summary Benchmarks](#), 2025 edition, Benchmarks 7.6 and 7.8.

¹⁸ See, for example: Susan Want, Jenelle Moore and David Blunt, *Annotated Standing Orders of the New South Wales Legislative Council*, Sydney, The Federation Press, 2018.

¹⁹ Department of the Senate, *Corporate Plan 2025–26*, p 61. (see [Accountability and reporting – Parliament of Australia](#)).

equipped to consider the utility that changes in technological or procedural practice might have in achieving the parliament's fundamental roles of legislating, holding government to account and representing electors.²⁰

Keen to ensure that our legislature was keeping pace with other legislatures, the ACT Legislative Assembly was the first legislature to measure itself against the CPA Benchmarks in 2008, and when the Benchmarks were updated in 2019, we conducted an additional assessment which was independently assessed by an academic with strong expertise in parliamentary affairs. Such assessments meant we were able to identify our strengths and areas for improvement.²¹ Thus, when the Assembly conducted a review of its standing orders (done every four years), or a review of adherence to the Latimer House Principles (done once every 8 years), I, as Clerk, was able to suggest possible reforms or adjustments to procedures. For instance, bills were not automatically referred to committees, and now they are, and the Executive controlled the parliamentary service and (as outlined previously) there is now a high level of independence.

(g) Keeping aware of other parliaments' innovations and reforms

It has been suggested that Clerks perceive innovation as an integral part of their work²² and one of their main roles is to make suggestions for improvement of the procedures of their legislature.²³

To do this effectively, Clerks need to be aware of reforms and innovations that occur in other legislatures, both within the Commonwealth and elsewhere.

During my period as Clerk, I have attended many parliamentary conferences, and I have often come away with some new practice that has been adopted elsewhere, with a view to seeing if it could work in the legislature I work in. When COVID-19 affected the world, the Clerks for Australian parliaments were able to manage the myriad of changes and modifications to practices required by liaising with, and learning from, other Clerks.

I think that it is important that parliamentary officers recalibrate (to a certain extent) after each election and note the composition of the new parliament (i.e. is it a majority parliament, minority parliament, a coalition of parties etc.) and carefully consider whether procedural changes are required.

Also, with a change of Speaker, find out what they intend to do during their term and be alive to any possible changes they may wish to make. At the election in October last year in the ACT, a new Speaker was elected (from the Opposition benches) and that has thrown up new opportunities and challenges, and resulted in some changes to the way we operate.

When we measured ourselves against the CPA Benchmarks, we found that we met 70 or so benchmarks out of the 81 listed. That exercise gave us a clear goal that – regardless of political shifts – enables us to stay aligned with modernising our legislature.

²⁰ Eric Janse, *The role of Clerks and Secretary Generals in driving the modernisation of parliaments*, Bussola Tech, webinar held on 16 April 2025.

²¹ When the CPA Study Group re-considered the original 87 benchmarks it added a further 47 new benchmarks, bringing the total number of benchmarks to 132. The Assembly scored 225 marks against a possible score of 246, which in percentage terms is 91.5% (compared with the 91.9% score obtained in 2008). [Assessment-of-the-Legislative-Assembly-s-performance-against-the-revised-Recommended-Benchmarks-for-Democratic-Legislatures.pdf](#)

²² Alexandra Meakin and Sabina Siebert, "Custodians of the Palace of Westminster", *Parliamentary Affairs* (2024), 77, p 248.

²³ Ian Harris, *The role of the Clerk of the House of Representatives*, address to the University of Melbourne, June 2002, p 5.

(h) Filing cabinet in the Clerk's Office with a bottom drawer

I think it is always handy for Clerks to have a stockpile of ideas to strengthen or transform your parliament. Attending an address that was held in honour of a former Senate Clerk (Harry Evans), I was struck by two passages:

Harry's concern for enabling Senators to go about their business in an as effective manner as possible saw him spend considerable time and effort devising innovative approaches to the Senate's daily workload. However, his ethical approach meant that he did not offer these without being asked. Nevertheless, once asked, one could almost always be assured that Harry would be ready.

Harry had clearly been considering the issue for some time for he was able to produce a file from his desk drawer and show me a series of possible motions aimed at establishing a "cut-off" by imposing a deadline on bills coming from the House of Representatives.²⁴

Since then, I have always squirrelled away interesting reforms in a bottom drawer. These are often utilised when making a submission to the quadrennial review of standing orders, or at a higher level, a submission to the review of the Latimer House Principles that occurs every 8 years. It is also useful when approached by Members for solutions to procedural problems in the legislature that may arise.

Conclusion

Clerks play a (mostly) silent but reforming role in ensuring that the institution of parliament is strengthened and positively transformed to meet the evolving needs of our communities and of democratic practice. It is important to remind ourselves of what the purpose of a legislature is, and I think the following words from a highly-regarded Australian Senate Clerk sums it up nicely:

One of the principal functions of a legislative assembly is to ensure that the holders of executive power are accountable, that is, that they are required to explain to the legislature and the public what they are doing with the power entrusted to them. This requirement is an essential safeguard against mistake and malfeasance in government.²⁵

In addition to the ability to read and write, a wide range of other important skills and attributes are required to perform this important role effectively. Clerks must understand technology, be alive to the governance and accountability requirements of the wider public sector, understand parliamentary law and practice, communicate effectively with members and the public about parliamentary roles and functions. We must be knowledgeable about protective security, building management (often in challenging buildings to which a large number of heritage requirements may apply), art collections, libraries, and catering.

In short, the days where just being able to read and write was enough are long gone. It's a good start, but being an effective Clerk is one of the most rewarding and interesting roles that I can think of in the public sector, and can result in a strengthened and transformed parliament.

²⁴ Dr Michael Maclin, *Serving the Senate: The Legacy of Harry Evans*, Senate Lecture Series, 8 September 2015, pp 4–5.

²⁵ Harry Evans, *The Senate, Accountability and Government Control*, Paper for Australian Research Council Project on Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions, Australian National University Parliamentary Studies Centre, 2007, p 1.

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Appendix

Qualities of a Clerk – Example 1

From Phillip Marsden, *The Officers of the Commons, 1363–1965*, Barrie and Rockliffe, 1966.

Though such conditions may seem hardship they have their value – no one would put up with them unless he loved his work. And since an absolute devotion to his duty of the indispensable qualities of a good servant of the House, this sort of consideration soon separates the sheep from the goats. Men who remain in the service, one can be sure, do so from the highest of motives – the desire to serve, and the will to serve usefully.

*Service in the House is a way of life. Unlike other professions, it cannot be taught – it is only by living and working in the very special atmosphere that exists uniquely within the walls of Westminster that one begins, after a few years' experience, to absorb that intangible "something" that makes the place what it is, and then to act and react the way it demands. **For make no mistake about it; even in this dynamic progressive twentieth century Palace of Westminster is full of magic still, a magic strong enough to grasp the imagination of everyone who works within its walls and to mould into his personality that indefinable characteristic that makes him out as a House of Commons man.***

If the House accepts them, these men are in a unique position and they must become unique to survive there. They must know not only their own particular duty but also why it is performed in a particular way, for in Parliament precedent is everything. Though divorced from party politics, they must yet be so saturated in political awareness that they are sensitive to every slightest political nuance both in the House and in the country outside, for otherwise it would be impossible for them to interpret functions of their ancient offices flexibly enough to meet the needs of the modern moment.

Qualities of a Clerk – Example 2

From SL Shakhder, "An Ideal Parliamentary Official", *The Table*, Vol XXIX, 1960, pp 18–25.

Shakhder's Sixteen areas for a parliamentary officer to grow both as an ideal parliamentary officer but also to be the best possible person you can be:

- Service to Country
- Attitude of Objectivity
- Spirit of Tolerance
- Supply of Factual Information
- Patience and Self-Control
- Attitude of Greatness
- Avoiding Publicity
- Upholding the Dignity of the Speaker
- Advising the Parliamentary Committees
- Knowledge of Men and Affairs
- All work is Alike
- Resolving Complicated Matters
- Quickness of Action
- Respect for members
- Part of the August Body
- An Ideal to be Cherished

Qualities of a Clerk – Example 3

From Peter Patmore, *Clerks of Houses of Houses of Parliament*, Proceedings of the Samuel Griffith Society, Volume 28, p 123.

*There is no shortage of material on the advisory and administrative roles of Clerks of houses of Parliament, but the casual parliamentary observer may be forgiven for overlooking them. As Prime Minister Robert Menzies noted, **they are neither flamboyant nor obvious. Indeed, anyone showing those attributes would be unsuitable for the job.** (emphasis added)*