



**Speaker's Response to the
Public Accounts Committee Report on
Annual and Financial Reports 2007 - 2008**

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Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly Secretariat prepare a specific strategy to address staff turnover.

1. The recommendation is agreed in part.
2. Since appearing before the committee in February 2009, at which time the evidence was provided that related to the Committee's recommendation, the Secretariat has undertaken some further analysis of its staff turnover.
3. Measuring turnover for the Secretariat is complicated by the existence of a proportionately large number of longer term (ie regular) casual staff. However, data analysis undertaken by the Secretariat shows that, over the five year period from 2004-05 to 2008-09, the rate of staff turnover, (based on losses of permanent and regular casual staff) was 11.7%, or an average of just over 5 staff per year.
4. It must be pointed out that an unusually high number of staff departures in the 2007-08 year (11 in the permanent and regular casual categories) distort the five year figure. In that year, over half of the departures were attributed to the Secretariat's age profile at the time (e.g. a large number of staff nearing retirement age), which is an issue that has confronted most employers in recent years.
5. The Secretariat expects that a figure in the order of 10% per annum is a more reliable estimate of likely future turnover and this level of turnover is not regarded by Secretariat management as unduly high. Indeed, it is lower than the rate that some published studies regard as optimal¹.
6. It is also relevant to note that, in 2006-07 and 2007-08, the Workforce Profile issued by the Commissioner for Public Administration shows the tenure (described as length of service in 2007-08) for Secretariat staff was above the Service wide average (8.5 yrs compared to a service wide average of 8 yrs in 2006-07; and 7.9 yrs, compared to a service wide average of 7.4 yrs in 2007-08).
7. The Secretariat's Strategic Plan for 2004-2009 already includes, as part of a specific corporate strategy, "Becoming an Employer of Choice.....". In support of this strategy, the Secretariat has implemented a number of measures and initiatives that support the attraction and retention of capable and valuable staff. Though it is not yet finalised, Secretariat managers have already agreed that this theme will be retained in the Secretariat's replacement strategic plan spanning the years 2010 to 2015.
8. In the context of concerns about staff turnover for the Assembly Secretariat, and in particular the "administrative burden" of turnover as opposed to its impact of any "loss of skills and expertise"...there may also be some merit in considering the turnover and length of employment for staff of non-Executive MLAs.

¹ A study published in September 2003 concluded that "the highest productivity is where about 22 per cent of total employees changed over the one year period" – Harris, Tang, Tseng (September 2003) "Employee Turnover: Less is Not Necessarily More?" <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:10735>

9. Not surprisingly, staff turnover was very high for this group in 2008-09 due to the election and the fact that it resulted in eight newly elected MLAs. The Secretariat placed considerable emphasis in its induction of new MLAs on the benefits of placing staff on longer term contracts once suitability for the role had been established and, while it is true that there have been a high number of staff contracts since the election, there are now signs that staffing is stabilising..
10. The Secretariat proposes to re-examine, in the first part of 2010, the numbers of Members' staff contracts and the average length of employment of staff. In the event that these statistics remain high, the Secretariat proposed to then consider what steps it may be able to take to assist Members in reducing turnover.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly Secretariat's Hansard provide one email address as the key point for email communication, preferably Hansard@parliament.act.gov.au.

1. The Secretariat agrees in part with this recommendation.
2. Hansard already had a generic mailbox but rather than having to check it frequently to look for electronic speeches Hansard staff decided to use a distribution list—#LA, Hansard—which would drop the speeches into a number of staff mailboxes to make sure they were accessed immediately. The name of this distribution list follows the whole-of-government naming convention
3. I have asked members to provide Hansard with electronic copies of speeches, questions and answers and members' staff have been cooperative at providing electronic speeches when requested; however, they are not always received early enough to be really useful. Hansard staff encourage members' staff to provide electronic copies of speeches at the earliest opportunity, preferably at the time of delivery.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly Secretariat in conjunction with InTACT prioritise the provision of increased email storage capacity for the mailboxes of members, members' staff, and members' public mailboxes.

1. The Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.
2. At the time the recommendation was made each staff member had 100mb (megabytes) of email storage and each member had 1gb (gigabyte) of email storage in each of their two mailboxes—public and private. In the past the Secretariat has encouraged staff to use their email storage efficiently but it has become clear that some members' offices were having difficulty working within the constraints imposed by InTACT.
3. On 18 June 2009 the Secretariat increased the storage capacity of members' public mailboxes from 1gb to 2gb. This allows members and staff to retain more emails in their public mailboxes before needing to archive.
4. The Secretariat has also confirmed with InTACT that it can increase email storage for up to two staff per office from 100mb to 500mb. Members were offered this additional storage capacity on 29 July 2009 and, so far, four

members have taken up the offer.

5. InTACT has advised that it is unlikely to charge for the additional capacity but, if it did, we anticipate that the additional cost of storage would be around \$2,700 per annum.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly Secretariat, in conjunction with InTACT, give consideration to the feasibility of replacing facsimile machines located in members' offices with access to a multifunction product (MFP) with print, copy, scan, fax and limited colour printing functionality.

1. The Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.
2. The large shared photocopiers are due for replacement in December 2009 and the faxes and printers in non-executive members' offices are due for replacement in September 2009 and March 2010 respectively. The Secretariat has consulted members' offices about future replacement options and has recommended replacing members' printers and faxes with multifunction devices capable of printing, copying, scanning and faxing, and replacing the three large shared photocopiers with two high speed, high volume colour multifunction devices.
3. After consulting members of the Administration and Procedure Committee I have approved the replacement strategy. The shared photocopiers will be replaced in December 2009 and individual multifunction devices will be installed in members' offices in March 2010 when the current leases expire.

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