

Message from the Speaker

It gives me great pleasure to present the Annual Report for the Queensland Parliamentary Service for 2019-20.

2019-20 was a year of great challenges for the Queensland Parliamentary Service.

Foremost was COVID-19, the greatest global challenge since the Second World War. The restrictions necessary to fight the spread of COVID-19 necessitated the closure of the Parliamentary Precinct to visitors and the cancellation of functions on the precinct from mid-March.

This resulted in a sharp drop in function revenue and visitor numbers to the precinct as access to the precinct was curtailed. Despite the disruption of COVID-19 restrictions, the Parliamentary Service continued to deliver on its core business of supporting Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Committees.

Electorate Offices, despite being closed to visitors, remained open to enquiries by phone or email and acted to deal with a high volume of communication with the public. The Parliament itself continued to operate on an augmented basis. While reduced numbers in the chamber for social distancing required the agreement of both Government and Opposition members, the work of Chamber Staff was critical to ensure the Legislative Assembly operated in a COVID-safe manner. The COVID-19 disruption also provided further opportunities for the Parliamentary Service to support the Queensland community in other innovative ways.

The Parliamentary Kitchen supported Scarlett May and Wesley Mission in preparing meals for their respective charitable causes. Prior to the COVID-19 emergency, the Parliamentary Service continued its proud record of community outreach.

In September, the Queensland Parliament conducted its first regional sitting in over a decade at the Townsville Entertainment Centre. The Queensland Parliament has always been the people's house, and that is true no matter where in this big state of ours it sits. Taking Parliament away from Parliament House has always been an enormous logistical effort. The deployment of the necessary resources from the Table Office, Hansard, Information Technology and Facilities is a significant exercise. A concurrent education program with school visits to the Regional Parliament, the delivery of a Youth Parliament and the Junior Indigenous Youth Parliament also brought the Regional Parliament visit to North Queensland students.

The Queensland Parliament's offering to the dining public was again on show in 2019-20 with numerous events including; Sometimes Strangers, High Teas and Chef's Table. These events were suspended from March 2020 due to COVID-19 but will re-commence in the 2020-21 financial year.

During 2019-20, the Parliament has again played an important role in promoting Queensland and our parliamentary democracy with internal and outreach activities – from hosting delegations from the German Bundestag, New Zealand Parliament, Gyeonggi Province Assembly and Saitama Prefecture Assembly to holding Youth Parliaments in Townsville and the Sunshine Coast.

In July 2019 the Queensland Parliament hosted the 50th Presiding Officers and Clerks' Conference. POCC brings together the presiding officers of all Parliaments in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania. The conference allows speakers, presiding officers and clerks from these parliaments to come together to share their knowledge and learnings.

Officially opened by His Excellency the Governor, POCC exhibited the best of the Queensland Parliament which underwent minor improvements for the occasion. POCC was graced with a keynote address from Sir Lindsay Hoyle, then Deputy Speaker of the UK House of Commons. Further, Leader of the House, Yvette D'Ath MP and the Manager of Opposition Business, Jarrod Bleijie MP, also gave guest lunchtime addresses.

In September 2019 I was proud to lead a Parliamentary Trade Delegation consisting of 7 Members of Parliament to Shanghai, China to mark the 30th anniversary of Queensland's Sister State relationship with the Shanghai Municipality. The delegation met with Australian company leaders and organisations which provided an understanding of both the opportunities and challenges for Australian companies in entering and completing business in China. The delegation also met with two of China's most prestigious and cutting edge technology companies: Alibaba (e-commerce) and SenseTime (artificial intelligence). The Delegation was provided with insights into the Shanghai and overall China market, how citizens live and the opportunities presented by the Chinese economy.

The Queensland Parliament also marked the 30th anniversary of the tabling of the Fitzgerald Report with a display on Level 3 of the Parliamentary Annexe. The display was a result of a collaboration of the Parliamentary Library and the Queensland State Archives. The display included the Queensland State Archives' signed copy of the Fitzgerald Report, which was donated by former Premier Mike Ahern AO. The launch event in September 2019 was held in the Parliament Annexe and attended by Tony Fitzgerald QC and former Premier Mike Ahern AO.

During 2019-20, the Parliamentary Service took a further step towards supporting Reconciliation with the preparation of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The RAP, launched in September 2020, was developed by a working group of Parliamentary Service members in conjunction with Reconciliation Australia. The RAP supersedes the annual Reconciliation Action Statement which appears for the last time in the 2019-20 Annual Report.

Also during 2019-20, The Queensland Parliament and the Local Government Association of Queensland have negotiated a Mutual Access Agreement. This agreement was signed in September 2020. This agreement will allow participating regional and rural councils to access facilities at the Queensland Parliament for meetings. It will also allow Members of Parliament to utilise facilities of participating councils within their electorates to meet with constituents.

Finally, I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge my fellow members of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly for their collaboration and advice to ensure the running of a modern and efficient Parliament.

On behalf of the members of the 56th Parliament, I thank the Clerk Neil Laurie, the Executive Management Group and all Parliamentary Service staff for their hard work and dedication during the 2019-20 Financial Year.



Honourable Curtis Pitt MP
Speaker of Queensland Parliament