



**ANZACATT
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR
26 – 29 JANUARY 2010
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

Session 4 – 29 January – 11 am – 12.30 pm

Workshop 4B

*Ensuring strong parliaments – support through effective staff
development and training*

Setting the scene'

Presenter: David Blunt, Deputy Clerk, Parliament of New South Wales

ANZACATT professional development seminar January 2010

Workshop 4B: Ensuring strong parliaments – support through effective staff development and training

Friday 29 January 2010

Setting the scene

David Blunt¹

Background

Staff development and training, and the related topic of professional development, have been some of the most talked about subjects at these professional development seminars over the last 10 years. Topics considered include:

- Professional development of parliamentary officers (Society of Clerk-at-the-table, Australian Chapter, professional development seminar, Adelaide, 2000)
- Training and development for members and parliamentary staff (3rd professional development seminar, ANZACATT, Canberra, 2002)
- Education / Training of parliamentary officers (4th professional development seminar, Alice Springs, 2003)
- Preparing for life at the Table (5th professional development seminar, Sydney, 2004)
- Preparation for life at the Table (6th professional development seminar, Wellington, 2005)
- Professional development and training programs and other initiatives for parliamentary officers, and Strategic human resource management in the parliamentary context (7th professional development seminar, Brisbane, 2006)
- Options for professional development of parliamentary staff (8th professional development seminar, Perth, 2007)

This is not surprising, given that the principal object of our association is “to advance the professional development of its members.”

Past President of the Association, Wayne Tunnecliffe, noted that the decision of the Clerks from each Australasian jurisdiction to establish ANZACATT:

not only acknowledged the need to provide additional training and development opportunities in what is a largely specialist area but also signalled a willingness to adopt a more across the board, co-ordinated approach to training and development which would supplement the in-house programs already being provided.²

¹ Deputy Clerk, Legislative Council, Parliament of New South Wales

² Quoted by Robyn McClelland in her paper on “Continuing professional development of parliamentary officers – Australian experience”, presented to the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments meeting, Abuja, July 2006.

The importance of professional development to our association is further demonstrated by the existence of the Education Committee and the Professional Development Committee to support the Executive Committee.

Having carefully examined a number of options for achieving the association's object to promote the professional development of parliamentary officers³, the association eventually settled on a two track approach involving the following, complimentary annual activities:

- the professional development seminar, and
- the Parliamentary Law, Practice and Procedure (PLPP) course, which is now delivered by the University of Tasmania (UTas).

The sophistication and success of these programs is a testament to the vision and hard work of previous and current members of the Executive and the committees, particularly the Education Committee.

This workshop

In view of where the association has got to with regard to professional development, and the previous extensive canvassing of the various options for external training for parliamentary staff, my co-presenters and I have decided that the most useful way for this workshop to contribute to the sum total of our knowledge on this subject is to focus on a specific aspect of staff development and training, namely the role of in-house training programs.

In doing so, we are in some ways coming full circle from the situation 10 years ago when the Clerks recognised that in-house training in itself was not meeting the professional development needs of parliamentary staff and took the view that collaborative, external training options needed to be considered. Now that those external training programs are in place and working well, it is perhaps timely to take another look at what in-house training is being delivered, to see what opportunities might exist for the sharing of materials and methodologies, and to explore the linkages that can be built between in-house training programs and the now well established external professional development activities.

To that end, a survey was circulated before Christmas to gather information on career development and training and development initiatives underway in each jurisdiction. Rick Crump will shortly be presenting the findings from the survey.

I will then invite representatives from a number of Houses who in their survey responses described innovative training programs to briefly describe those programs and how they work.

Ronda Miller, with the benefit of her extensive involvement with the development of the PLPP course through her work on the Education Committee, will tease out the potential linkages between in-house training programs, the PLPP, the professional development seminar and other external training programs.

The remainder of the workshop will be an opportunity for discussion and sharing of ideas, which will no doubt be ably reported by Catherine Cornish.

³ Including detailed consideration of the merits of the development of a competency based training scheme.

Some definitions and parameters for discussion

Professional development is concerned with the skills and knowledge attained by a person for their personal development and career advancement. In some professions there is an obligation to comply with ongoing professional development requirements in order to retain membership of a professional body or the right to practice.

In other professions or fields, such as our own, where there are no such regulatory requirements for continuing professional development, it tends to be motivated individuals who pursue professional development opportunities to maintain and improve professional competence, to enhance career progression and because of an interest in lifelong learning. I think that is probably a good description of why we are all here at this seminar.

Staff training and development refers to the programs and activities developed by an organisation to enhance the overall performance of employees.

Although the topics of professional development, career planning and training and development are linked, I have taken the use of the terms effective staff development and training in the title for this workshop as meaning that it is appropriate to focus primarily upon what staff development and training is most effective from the point of view of the needs of our Houses and their committees. Ideally, development and training that is most useful from an organisational point of view will also be most useful to those staff who participate in terms of their own personal development and career advancement.

Finally, I have assumed that the staff development and training of most interest at this workshop relates to those staff who are either already members of ANZACATT or who will be eligible for membership as their careers progress, namely current and potential clerks-at-the-table and senior committee staff. The provision of effective staff development and training to other parliamentary staff (whether they be Hansard reporters, librarians, chefs, gardeners or IT specialists) whilst an important subject, is beyond the scope of this workshop.

The position descriptions for clerks-at-the-table and senior committee staff list the knowledge, skills and experience required to perform those roles. Those are therefore the things which staff development and training must seek to build and develop.

Rather than seeking to restate those needs, I would refer workshop participants to Robyn McClelland's excellent paper presented to the 2007 professional development seminar, entitled "A parliamentary career? Career planning for parliamentary staff". That paper attached a list of the skills and knowledge required by chamber staff and parliamentary staff generally, prepared by Judy Middlebrook, while on secondment to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This list remains a very helpful starting point. Importantly, it also notes that along with skills and knowledge there are other attributes or behaviours that are essential for the provision of effective support in a parliamentary chamber.⁴

⁴ Robyn McClelland, "A parliamentary career? Career planning for parliamentary staff", paper presented at workshop on "Options for professional development of parliamentary staff", ANZACATT professional development seminar, Perth, 2007:
[http://www.anzacatt.org.au/prod/anzacatt/anzacatt.nsf/0/0EB8F93ECF9D6F8CCA2572B100224B20/\\$file/D3%20McClelland.pdf](http://www.anzacatt.org.au/prod/anzacatt/anzacatt.nsf/0/0EB8F93ECF9D6F8CCA2572B100224B20/$file/D3%20McClelland.pdf).

Some questions for possible discussion

- What lessons can we learn from one another about successes and challenges with in-house training?
- Are there opportunities for the sharing of course materials from successful in-house training programs?
- In what circumstances might those jurisdictions with well developed in-house training programs consider providing access for participants from other jurisdictions, where those programs could meet a particular development need?
- What lessons can be shared from the experience of those parliaments with shared human resource departments, or a Department of Parliamentary Services with responsibility for human resources, in relation to the role of those departments in training and professional development vis a vis the role of House departments (particularly in relation to training to develop procedural and committee related skills)?
- To the extent that performance development systems underpin effective staff development, what lessons can be shared about successful performance development programs in a parliamentary service context?
- Are there issues arising from the survey and this workshop that should be the subject of further consideration by the ANZACATT Executive and its Education Committee or Professional Development Committee?

