

PRINCE2® brings projects together at DPS

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Almost one million people visit Australia's Parliament House each year. This structure is one of the largest buildings in the Southern Hemisphere, and is situated on Capital Hill in Canberra. More than 3,500 people work in Parliament House on sitting days, and the building contains 4,700 rooms. The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) is the principal support agency for Parliament House and works closely with the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives to support the operations of the Parliament and its Committees. DPS has approximately 800 staff and an annual budget of around \$115 million.

In addition to having responsibility for the Parliament House building, DPS provides Hansard and broadcasting services for the Parliament, and ICT, library and research services to members of Parliament, parliamentary committees, and other building occupants.

The diversity of services provided by DPS, its origins in three separate departments, and the range of skill sets of staff within the Department, resulted in a number of different project management systems being used in the Department. These different systems meant that client service, business case development, cost estimating, and risk management was of variable standards and quality. In 2007 the Product and Service Development Branch made the decision to implement a single project management methodology, leading to the introduction of PRINCE2®.

What has followed has been a remarkable change in how projects are delivered, including an increased awareness by staff of their roles and responsibilities in the project management life-cycle. The strong governance principles in PRINCE2 have allowed decision making to be assigned to staff at the appropriate level and to facilitate the implementation of broader strategies. It has also enabled the more effective engagement of stakeholders in the process of project approval and management.

The common methodology across the Department has also brought considerable benefits.

All project management staff, from project officers to members of the Project Boards have received PRINCE2 training. This has established common language and expectations. Career prospects for staff are enhanced through their shared qualifications. It is now possible for project managers to move across projects and be able to contribute quickly and effectively. DPS is also able to more easily engage experienced project officers and project managers with PRINCE2 qualifications from throughout the Public Service and industry.

DPS has also started taking a more strategic view of project management, through clustering individual projects into programmes of work. They have improved project reporting with the objective of 'one report used many times' and refined the Request Approval Process (RAP) to improve planning and prioritization processes. DPS has sought to build stronger relationships with project stakeholders.

The business case requirements under PRINCE2 have allowed different options to be identified. This has led to more informed decision making, including a value for money assessment. Templates and guides have been developed to ensure PRINCE2 is 'fit for purpose' and assist authors to improve quality.

The changes within DPS are still a work in progress. Within their continuous improvement framework, DPS works to ensure that lessons learned are applied to new projects so poor experiences are not repeated.

DPS has embarked on a training and development campaign to raise the level of project management skills and general awareness across the Department. The aim of the implementation of PRINCE2 was not to develop project management by numbers, but rather to develop professional project teams. Better projects ensure quality outcomes for clients and ultimately increased value for money for all Australians.

Acknowledgements

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