

Our Year in Review

State Opening of the 58th Parliament

The 58th Parliament of Queensland sat for the first time on 26 November 2024, when Members were sworn in and the Speaker was elected. That afternoon the Speaker was presented to Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland, at Government House.

The Official State Opening of the 58th Parliament was held on 27 November 2024. This significant event requires a coordinated effort between the Parliamentary Service, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Office of the Governor, the Australian Defence Force and the Queensland Police Service.

Highlights of the Opening included:

- a 19-gun artillery salute from Kangaroo Point to mark the Governor's arrival
- an inspection of the Guard by Her Excellency provided by the 8th/9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
- the Mounted Police Escort
- performances by the Australian Army Band
- a First Peoples Welcome to Country by Shannon Ruska
- the Governor's Opening Speech
- cultural performances on the Speaker's Green by Tribal Experiences, a Brisbane-based Aboriginal dance group, and the Wagga Torres Strait Islander Dance Company.

More than 615 people attended the opening, including Members and their families, along with representatives from the judiciary, consulate, clergy and other officials. The event was also broadcast live, ensuring proceedings were accessible to audiences across Queensland.

New Members' Induction Program

Officers from across the Parliamentary Service came together to form a working group to plan and deliver the new Members' Induction Program.

The 2024 program was delivered across three sections.

Section A focused on Member-specific and electorate office matters. Held from 12–14 November 2024, it covered topics such as the role of a Member of Parliament, salaries, allowances and travel, managing electorate offices, Member entitlements, Parliamentary precinct support, and media engagement. As part of the Parliamentary precinct support sessions, the Parliamentary Library briefed Members on available services, including media monitoring, loans, library catalogue access, and information and research support on any topic relevant to their research and interests.

Section B focused on the procedural role of Members. Held from 18–19 November 2024, it addressed parliamentary protocol, parliamentary practice and procedure, and Members' interests and ethics.

For the first time, the Parliamentary Service partnered with the McKinnon Institute, which led presentations on 14 November 2024 on topics including:

- the responsibilities of being a Member
- making a first speech
- ethics of decision making
- strategies for high performance and personal resilience.

Section C was conducted on 17 February 2025 and included briefings from key statutory office holders, including the Queensland Judiciary, Ombudsman, Information Commissioner, Auditor-General, and the Crime and Corruption Commission.

The final session of Section C concluded with a follow-up activity, providing new Members with the opportunity to raise issues after reflecting on their first few months in office and to ask questions of Parliamentary Service Area Leaders.

Celebrating 100 women elected to Queensland Parliament

Following the election of Members to the 58th Parliament, Queensland reached and exceeded the significant milestone of 100 women having been elected to the Queensland Parliament. This achievement is part of a long and continuing journey towards gender equality in Queensland politics.

Reaching 100 women in Parliament is a testament to the progress made, but it also serves as a reminder that the work for fair and equal representation is far from over.

To commemorate this historic milestone, several special events and activities took place:

- On Monday 31 March, Parliamentary Education arranged an International Women's Day Debate in partnership with the Queensland Debating Union. Top tier female high school debaters gathered in the Legislative Council Chamber to debate the topic "That apoliticism is immoral". They were supported by 127 parents, students and teachers, who watched these young female leaders debate in a chamber that in its day, did not have any female representation.
- On Friday 2 May, Strangers' Restaurant hosted a sold-out, special panel Q&A luncheon event in celebration of International Women's Day featuring former and current female Members.
- A display on level 3 of the Parliamentary Annexe celebrates pioneering women in Queensland politics, highlighting Irene Longman, the State's first female Member of Parliament, and featuring a register of all 110 women who have served since Mrs Longman's election in 1929.
- Limited-edition '100 Women in Parliament' commemorative products, including tote bags, scarves and a locally produced pink gin liqueur, are available from the Parliamentary Gift Shop and the Lucinda Bar..
- The '100 Women in Parliament' video, featuring current female Members of Parliament sharing their wisdom, giving advice to future generations, and fun facts such as their go-to coffee orders and the soundtracks to their political journey, is available to [watch on our website](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/100women) (www.parliament.qld.gov.au/100women).
- A picture book about Queensland Parliament is now in development by Parliamentary Education. The working title is 'Kirra and the Statue,' and it will contain illustrations that celebrate the Queensland Parliament. It's the story of a young girl who, with the encouragement of her teacher 'Mrs Longman' (named for Irene Longman), petitions the Queensland Parliament to create more statues of notable women in public places. The book will contain a curriculum guide and teacher notes including a biography of Irene Longman and reference to the 100 women milestone.

Digital Transformation

In February 2024, under the Digital Transformation and Modernisation Program, the Parliamentary Service completed a comprehensive upgrade to the Legislative Assembly Chamber's audio system. This has significantly improved audio clarity for Hansard Reporters and laid the foundation for standardising broadcast audio across the precinct.

Two new contemporary Committee Rooms were also delivered, featuring fully integrated digital audio and video conferencing systems. These purpose-built digital facilities enable hybrid participation by Members and witnesses, in person, by phone, or virtually, replacing older analogue technologies with a more modern, flexible experience.

Additional audio-visual upgrades were implemented in the Undumbi and Dandiir seminar rooms, including new sound systems, improved controls, upgraded cameras, and enhanced display systems. Further improvements are planned for the Undumbi Room to expand video conferencing capabilities.

A new Tabled Papers management system was introduced in 2024–25 as part of the Digital Transformation Project. This system streamlines the tabling process and enhances digital access to tabled papers, improving transparency and accessibility for Members, staff, and the public.

To support regional and flexible hearings, the "Committee-in-a-box" system was launched. This portable solution enables hearings to be conducted away from Parliament House, with amplification equipment available where venues lack AV facilities. This capability was demonstrated through the 2025 Estimates process where IT Services used the "Committee-in-a-box" setup in the Legislative Council Chamber.

The Parliamentary Service has also worked to consolidate and standardise technologies across all committee facilities, ensuring systems are intuitive and consistent.

Looking ahead, upgrades will commence for the Legislative Council Chamber and Speaker's Hall following Estimates, alongside improvements during the summer recess to the Video Production System that supports the live broadcast. These initiatives are central to ensuring Queenslanders can engage with the parliamentary process through modern, accessible technologies that overcome the barrier of distance.

Reconciliation Garden

The Reconciliation Garden is a thoughtfully designed space, created in consultation to reflect First Peoples heritage. Led by the Parliamentary Service Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, the project celebrates cultural connection and reconciliation.

The initiative commenced during Reconciliation Week 2022, marked by a morning tea on the level 3 concourse, on the future site of the garden. This event brought together First Peoples community members, parliamentary staff, and local Elders to reflect on the vision and significance of the space.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, extensive community consultation was led by the First Peoples Liaison Officers and included:

- Gregory Egert (Uncle Cheg) – Centre Elder in Residence, University of Southern Queensland; Yugara, Gorenpul, and Kabi Kabi connections
- Maroochy Barambah – Representative of the Turrbal People
- Uncle David Wragge – Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts; Wakka Wakka man from Cherbourg with traditional connections to Ghungalu, Juru, Bindal, and Wulgurukba peoples
- Bruce Phillips – Butchulla man from Hervey Bay, horticulturalist, and founder of Murri Tucker.

The official opening of the Reconciliation Garden took place on 12 November 2024, celebrated with a morning tea hosted by the Hon Curtis Pitt, former Speaker, and the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RAPWG). Respected Elders, community members, and Parliamentary staff attended the event.

Maroochy Barambah, Elder, Songwoman, and Law-woman of the Turrbal people, welcomed attendees to Country and shared traditional songs and stories, adding deep cultural significance to the occasion.

The garden now features over 30 species of Australian native bush foods, many of which are incorporated into the seasonal menus of the Parliamentary Service's restaurant and function offerings. In addition to its cultural importance, the garden provides habitat for native wildlife, including birds, bees, and lizards, enhancing its ecological value.

Deaf Youth Parliament

On 9 September 2024, Parliamentary Education successfully hosted the Commonwealth's first Deaf Youth Parliament, delivered in partnership with Deaf Connect, the Parliamentary Service, Bus Stop Films, and Education Queensland.

Forty-four Deaf school students from across Queensland, including Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Eidsvold, Mackay, Townsville, Mareeba and Weipa, gathered in the Legislative Assembly Chamber to conduct a Youth Parliament entirely in Auslan (Australian Sign Language). They debated motions relevant to the Deaf community and had an opportunity to learn about the legislative process in Queensland. Each student assumed the role of a Youth Member, participating in a true-to-life Parliamentary sitting. The event featured moving and lively speeches about key issues impacting the Deaf community, ensuring that the next generation of leaders have a platform to raise their voices.

This event was a powerful example of how Parliaments can offer valuable opportunities for inclusion, giving Deaf and hard-of-hearing students from across Queensland a chance to experience governance in action.

They tackled two motions: advocating for the inclusion of Deaf jurors in legal proceedings and pushing for mandatory closed captions at all cinema screenings. These issues highlighted the importance of accessibility and equality for the Deaf community, and the Youth Members expressed their views with clarity, conviction and passion.

A Year 12 student from Trinity Bay State High School in Cairns, took on the role of Youth Sergeant-at-Arms, carrying out his duties with confidence. Another student assumed the role of Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, announcing the Speaker in Auslan. This ensured an inclusive experience for all participants, including those who are still developing the confidence to 'speak up' in such a formal and unfamiliar setting.

Attended by many Members of the Queensland Parliament and the Director-General of the Queensland Department of Education, students took the opportunity to advocate for issues of importance to them. The issue of extending a bilingual and bicultural education programme from its existing primary school setting in the Western suburbs of Brisbane to a high school setting was raised by a group of students across several forums. This meant that it wasn't just an opportunity for a mock debate, but a chance for students to influence decision makers directly.

Modernised digital onboarding project

Through the Enterprise Resource Planning Project Board, the Corporate Services and Electorate Office oversaw the delivery of a new digital onboarding process to replace manual forms with online alternatives, provide a more professional and consistent experience for all new Parliamentary and Electorate staff, and utilise a new learning management system to deliver mandatory induction courses.

This initiative commenced via the learning management system, ParLELearn, launched in November 2024. The timing of the rollout was planned to follow the 2024 State Election, with new staff the first to undertake induction and onboarding upon commencement. ParLELearn includes a welcome video, mandatory training content, bespoke learning materials, and general learning modules. Completion rates and follow-ups are automated through individual reminders. Participant feedback has been highly positive, with star ratings and comments noting the effectiveness of transferring knowledge into on-the-job performance.

In May 2025, a "buddy" system was introduced to support new starters on the precinct. As part of the program, new starters attend an informal morning tea with the Executive Leadership Group and their assigned buddy.

Modernised position description templates and an updated careers website are under development. In addition, the Recruitment, Selection and Appointment policy, procedure, and Panel guidelines were comprehensively overhauled, with training provided to Service Area Leaders in June 2025.

These initiatives aim to attract and retain high-quality staff and contribute to building a modern Parliamentary Service, in line with the Workforce Strategy 2022–2025.

O'Donovan Catalogue added to UNESCO heritage list

The O'Donovan Catalogue Origins Collection was officially inscribed on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register on 13 December 2024.

Launched in December 2000, with the support of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO, the Australian Memory of the World Program contributes to a global effort to preserve documentary heritage, joining more than 60 similar programs around the world. This significant recognition acknowledges the Collection's unique contribution to Australia's documentary heritage.

The O'Donovan Catalogue Origins Collection contains Denis O'Donovan's world-renowned 1883 catalogue of the Queensland Parliamentary Library, his hand-annotated working copy of its 1874 predecessor, and two volumes of handwritten acquisition suggestions from Members of Queensland Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly between 1860 and 1924. Together they are the origins and outcome of a work of international excellence in librarianship and bibliography, out of an infant colony's parliament.

The O'Donovan Catalogue Origins Collection provides a compelling insight into the development of political thought, social mobility, and self-education in early Australian society. It also reflects the influence of multicultural communities, evolving policymaking, and intercolonial relationships during a formative period in Queensland's history.

A rare example of a now largely obsolete catalogue format, the Collection is particularly notable for containing handwritten annotations by Denis O'Donovan and other prominent historical figures. Its preservation offers a valuable window into the intellectual and cultural landscape of the time.

Public interest in this historical Collection has been positive and is expected to increase since its inscription on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register. The Collection is available via the Parliamentary website on [Heritage Collections](https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Visit-and-learn/History) (<https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Visit-and-learn/History>).

Handwritten suggestions for the acquisition of new books and serials by Members of the Queensland Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly between 1860 and 1924 are being transcribed and will be added to the online Heritage Collections.