

Engaging the community:

the experience of the House of Representatives'
Committee Office

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Basic assumptions:

- Legislatures are quite conservative institutions
- Committees want to have community involvement and input
- Committee inquiries are better for that involvement
- Enhanced community knowledge of parliamentary functions and work is a positive thing

The good (?) old days.....

- Pre-internet
- Press advertising – an ad in each major newspaper in each capital
- regional papers if appropriate
- Direct mail to govt depts, academics, community groups (if you knew who they were)
- Press releases
- Costly, and not very effective



Changes

- Wider availability of PCs
- Internet
- Growth in on-line access
- Development of social media
- Decline in the more traditional media
- Changing expectations from the community as to how they want to interact with the Parliament



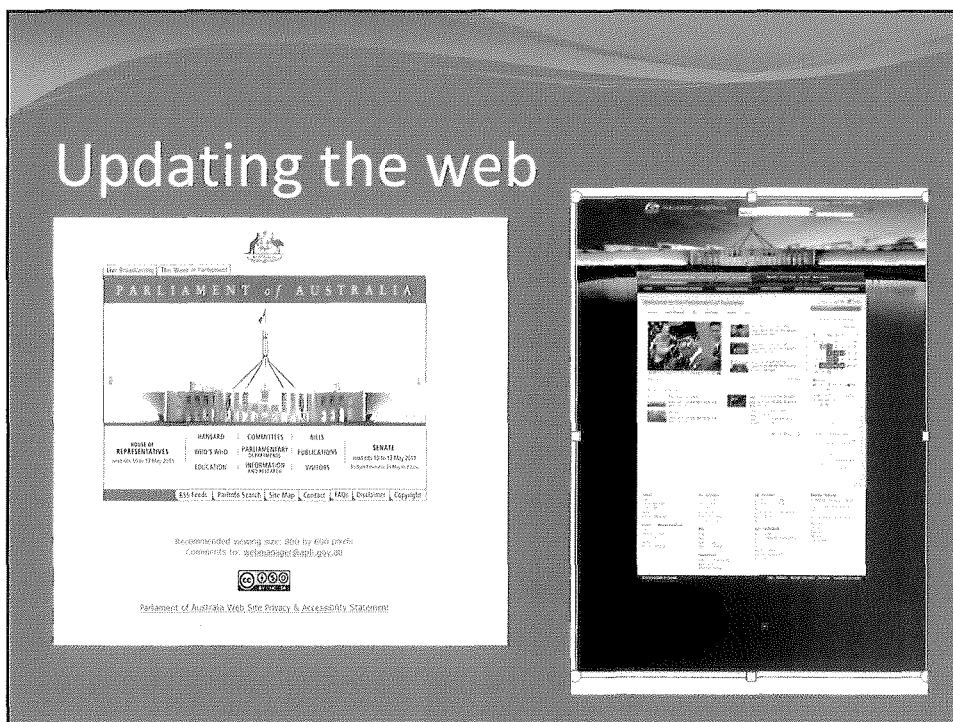
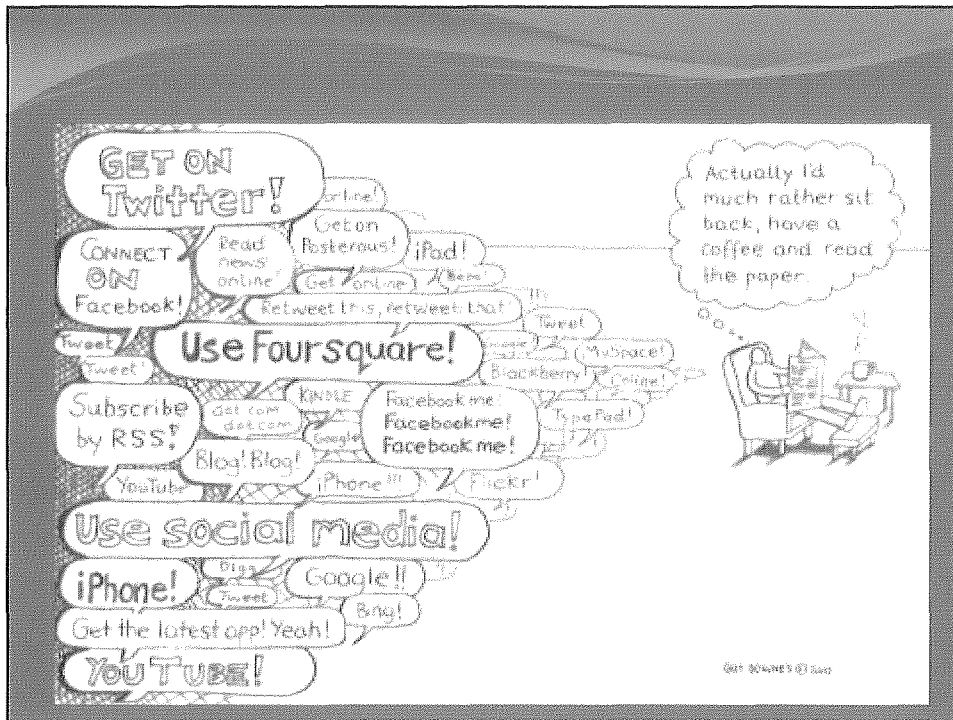
ABS 2008-09 Household Use of Information Technology Report

- 78% of Australian households have access to a computer
- 72% of Australian households have home internet access
- 76% of people 65 years or over and 76% of Indigenous people have relatively lower levels of broadband access
- Access to broadband more prevalent in metropolitan areas

What does this mean?

- Legislatures need to attend to their digital presence – hard copy is no longer enough
- Web site needs to be attractive, easy to navigate and engaging – encouraging return visits
- For younger citizens – looking for other ways to engage and get information
- Still need to cater for those with poorer digital access, or who prefer hard copy





Branding.....

About the House

- Magazine
- TV program
- Web page on the APH site
- Advertisement

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
ABOUT THE HOUSE
News and Features from Australia's House of Representatives

Home | Senate | House of Representatives | Live Broadcasting | This Week in Parliament | Find | FAQs | Contact

Latest news

Proposed budget office structure outlined
The proposed Parliamentary Budget Office (PEO) should be empowered to contribute to committee inquiries and initiate its own research, a parliamentary inquiry has found. [Full story](#)

HBN amendments pass extra sitting
Key amendments to the National Broadband Network legislation were passed during a marathon extra sitting of Parliament on Monday, despite strong opposition from the Coalition parties. [Full story](#)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HOME PAGE
Committees: COMMITTEE HOME PAGE
CURRENT INQUIRIES (by subject)
PUBLIC HEARINGS (schedule)

RSS: http://www.aph.gov.au/rss/house_news.xml

Current methods of engagement

- Advertisement (in one paper, fortnightly – dept rather than individual cttee)
- Where appropriate – specific ads (esp regional)
- Direct mail
- RSS feeds/media release

ABOUT THE HOUSE

National youth cyber-safety survey
Federal parliament's Cyber-Safety Committee is asking young internet users to share their online experiences, education and knowledge with the nation, via the 'stronger' challenge up to age 17, until the second of 1-18 next week. The survey will be anonymous and easy to complete. For more information visit www.aph.gov.au/jcr or phone (02) 6277 4267.

Overcoming the barriers
The House of Representatives Education and Employment Committee is investigating ways to assist Australians with mental health issues overcome barriers to education, training and employment. Submissions are welcome by 29 April. For more information visit www.aph.gov.au/jcr or email reps@aph.gov.au or phone (02) 6277 4074.

Outdoor advertising community forum
Visitors to Sydney are invited to express their views in a community forum on outdoor advertising on 25 March. The House of Representatives Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee is holding an inquiry into proposals which govern billboards and other outdoor advertising signs already held in a number of locations. As well as the community forum on Sydney, the committee will also hold a public hearing in Canberra tomorrow (24 March). For more information visit www.aph.gov.au/jcr or email sp@aph.gov.au or phone (02) 6277 2368.

National funding agreements reviewed
Federal parliament's Public Accounts and Audit Committee is investigating the way that money flows from the Commonwealth to the states and territories. The committee is particularly interested in examining the means by which flexibility and accountability are balanced as part of inter-governmental funding agreements. Submissions are welcome by 5 April. For more information visit www.aph.gov.au/jcr or email jpa@aph.gov.au or phone (02) 6277 4615.

The River, Our Future
The socio-economic impacts of the 'Guide to the proposed 54 focus of a continuing inquiry by the House of Representatives which will coordinate its program of public hearings in Canberra from 10 to 20 March. For more information visit www.aph.gov.au/jcr or phone (02) 6277 4162.

Defence hearing
Senior Defence Force officials will appear before parliament's public hearing into the Department of Defence Annual Report to be held on 27 March in Committee Room 215, Parliament House. For more information visit www.aph.gov.au/jcr or phone (02) 6277 2311.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

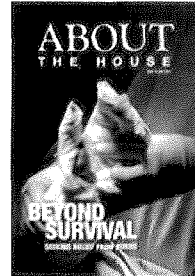
www.aph.gov.au/jcr

Current methods of engagement cont

- Magazine
- TV programs (ATH and MPI)
- Use of video on committee home pages
- On-line surveys
- Advertising on Google and Facebook
- Twitter

About the House magazine

Your free, colour magazine



- >> [Go to current issue](#)
- >> [Order a free copy](#)

Twitter

- About the House@
- As of end of March 2011, 1500+ followers
- Positive response esp. media



A case study:

- Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety
- Extensive ToR – particular focus on risks for children/cyber bullying /how to increase safety
- More traditional methods of seeking submissions, and advertising the inquiry
- As of the end of March 2011 - 125 submissions and 8 supplementary submissions but – very few from young people themselves

On-line survey

- Advertised on the committee's web page
- Emails to all schools (7000 plus)
- Launch of survey by Chair and Minister
- Video by Chair
- Advertising on Google and Facebook
- Results: (as of 12/4 – 25,000 responses)



Future possibilities.....

- Facebook (more likely for the House or Committee Office, rather than individual committees)
- Blogs – again aggregate, rather than individual
- On-line forums – possible but issues around moderation etc

But

- Resourcing.....



Procedural implications....

- To date, no need to change Standing Orders – still a model of pushing material out, rather than a two-way dialogue
- But – potential issues of privilege

