



La Trobe University
Public Sector Governance
and Accountability Research Centre
2007 Annual Report



PSGARC Summer School 2007 participants at the Parliament of Victoria.

Introduction

The Council of La Trobe University resolved to establish the Public Sector Governance and Accountability Research Centre (PSGARC) within the Faculty of Law and Management on 7 June, 2004. The Centre was formally launched at a 'signing' ceremony at Parliament House, Melbourne on 29 June 2004.

This report, to 31 December 2007, relates to the third year of the Centre's operation.

Aims

The aims of the Centre are:

1. To strengthen public accountability and governance by supporting and researching the role and function of public accountants committees or like committees, and the activities of independent auditors-general.
2. To promote research, teaching and practice which contributes to accountability, openness and transparency of government in Australia and internationally.
3. To provide a research focus within the Faculty of Law and Management on issues of accountability and governance, and thereby promote the teaching and research activities of members of staff of the University.
4. To significantly expand the opportunities for research in the field of public sector accountability and governance.
5. To promote the training of postgraduates in research in the field of public sector accountability and governance.
6. To enhance the international reputation of La Trobe University by taking a leading role in promoting public sector accountability internationally.

7. To establish links with academics, practitioners, politicians and institutions, and enhance the networks that seek to promote public sector accountability.
8. To provide research, development and academic support for parliament, parliamentary committees and parliamentary officers in issues of accountability and governance.
9. To co-ordinate and utilise the experience and knowledge in related industries of a number of scientists and technologists.
10. To do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above aims.

Membership

Ordinary Members

- Professor Raymond Harbridge, Dean, Faculty of Law and Management, (ex officio)
- Professor Zahirul Hoque, Professor of Accounting
- Professor John King, Professor of Economics
- Associate Professor Ishaq Bhati
- Ms Joanne Lye, Lecturer, Department of Accounting and Management
- Dr Ewen Michael, Senior Lecturer, School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality
- Mr Michael Schneider, Visiting Fellow, School of Business
- Professor Gordon Walker, School of Law
- Dr Premasiri Yapa, Senior Lecturer, Department of Accounting and Management

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Associate Members

Professor Max Aiken, Emeritus Professor of Accounting, La Trobe University

Mr Bruce Bennett, Head of School of Accountancy, Law and Finance, UNITEC Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

Professor Geoff Harris, School of Economics and Finance, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Professor Kerry Jacobs, Professor of Accounting, Australian National University

John Langmore, Professorial Fellow, Political Science, Sociology and Criminology Department, University of Melbourne

Professor Mark McGillivray, World Institute for Development Economics Research, United Nations University, Helsinki, Finland

Professor Themba Joseph Sono, Professor Extraordinary, Graduate School of Management, University of Pretoria and Member of Gauteng Legislature (South Africa)

Dr Peter Wilkins, Adjunct Professor, Business School, Curtin University of Technology, WA and Director, Policy Branch, Office of the Auditor General WA

Honorary Members

Mr Clayton Cosgrove MP (NZ), Chairperson, Finance and Expenditure Select Committee, House of Representatives, New Zealand

Dr Deb Foskey, Deputy Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Legislative Assembly, ACT

Mr Michael Holford MP (South Africa)

Dr Hunadi Mateme MP (South Africa)

Rt Hon. Mike Moore, Adjunct Professor in Law and Management, La Trobe University; Former Prime Minister of NZ and Director General of the World Trade Organisation

Professor Greg O'Brien

Mr Repe Rambe, Secretary to the Public Accounts Committee, National Parliament, Papua New Guinea.

Hon. Tony Sheehan, Member of La Trobe University Council and former Treasurer of the State of Victoria

Dr Bill Stent

Staff

Associate Professor Peter Loney, Executive Director Public Sector Governance and Accountability Research Centre, Faculty of Law and Management (part-time)

Management of Centre

Board of Management

Peter Loney (Executive Director), Ewen Michael (Deputy Director), Raymond Harbridge (ex officio), Bill Stent, Gordon Walker

Advisory Board

Bill Stent (Chair), Peter Loney, Clayton Cosgrove, Mike Moore, Tony Sheehan, Gordon Walker

Highlights of the Reporting Period

Staff Appointments/Changes

Peter Loney was appointed to take up the position of Adjunct Professor and Executive Director of the Centre from 1 January, 2007. This is a part-time contract position for an initial period of three years. The Centre is located within the Faculty of Law and Management, which has provided infrastructure support.

Dr Kerry Jacobs, the Centre's first Director left La Trobe University to take up a position at Australian National University from the commencement of 2007.

Dr Kate Jones, who had been working with the Centre in its first two years, returned to the School of Business at the commencement of 2007.

Meetings held with potential partners and donors

Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration

Peter Loney held discussions with the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) regarding the development by them of a Masters in Public Accountability, as well as possible PSGARC collaboration in the design and delivery of part of the program at the Melbourne (Bundoora) campus. In spite of promising initial discussions, and an agreement to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be prepared by SLIDA, the MoU has yet to be completed and signed.

Graduate School of Management

The Graduate School of Management (GSM) approached the Centre early in 2007, proposing collaboration on a two-day seminar on corporate social responsibility. The Centre was able to secure the then Victorian Treasurer, later Premier, Hon John Brumby, as the keynote speaker, and the CEO of the Victorian Public Service Authority as a presenter. However, response to the seminar was not strong, and it was cancelled. Future opportunities involving collaboration with GSM will be pursued.

Victorian Public Service Authority

Peter Loney met with John Cairns, who also addressed a meeting of the Centre's members, regarding the role of the Victorian Public Service Authority (VPSA) and how the PSGARC might fit with its role, particularly in the development of governance training in the public sector. VPSA tenders for these services from time to time, and the PSGARC will monitor these for appropriate opportunities.

Transparency International

Meetings were held with Frank Costigan QC, Chairman, and David Mattiske to discuss areas of common interest, and potential areas of collaboration and mutual support. It was agreed that as the aims the organisations were similar in a number of aspects, particularly in the building of strong parliamentary accountability mechanisms. Contact between the organisations will be maintained and that discussions about areas of potential collaboration will be continued.

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Donor organisations

Throughout the year the Executive Director held a number of meetings with potential donors both in Australia and overseas. These included AusAID, NZAID, United Nations Development Program, World Bank Institute and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. As a result, strong relationships have been formed and active collaboration is being pursued in a number of areas.

Others

Meetings were held with the CPA and several accountancy firms in Melbourne. CPA's international division has expressed interest in working with PSGARC.

The Centre submitted proposals to the World Bank Institute, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the CDI to conduct, in association with them, a residential training course in February 2007 for Parliamentarians and Auditors-General.

Programs and projects delivered

Summer school in public accounts

In February, the PSGARC conducted its second summer school for parliamentary public accounts committees on the theme "Strengthening parliament: parliamentary financial scrutiny." This was financially supported by the World Bank Institute, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and the Centre for Democratic Institutions. The summer school was attended by 45 participants — representing public accounts committee members and staff, auditors general and audit office staff from Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania. This is intended to be an annual program of the Centre.

Parliamentary committees workshop, Bougainville

Peter Loney worked with the Centre for Democratic Institutions to design and deliver a three-day workshop for Members of the Parliament of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. The program was delivered in Buka.

Induction program for new members of parliament, Kiribati

Peter Loney worked with the United Nations Development Program and the Parliament of Kiribati to design an induction program for new members of parliament (Maneaba Ni Maungataba) following their elections. He was also invited to be the on-site facilitator for the program which was delivered in Tarawa in October.

Parliamentary committees workshop, Papua New Guinea

Peter Loney worked with the Centre for Democratic Institutions to design and deliver an "effective committees" workshop for the Parliament of Papua New Guinea. He also facilitated the delivery of the program in Port Moresby.

Small Research Grants Fund

During 2007, the PSGARC established a Small Research Grants Fund, which was advertised and approved through the Faculty of Law and Management, with the assistance of Professor Peter Murphy. The first research proposal funded under these grants went to Dr Prem Yapa, a member of the PSGARC, to conduct research into the use of summons by parliamentary committees in Sri Lanka.

Joint KPMG-PSGARC research into practice and procedures of public accounts committees in Australasian parliaments

The report on this research was launched at a function at Parliament House, Canberra in February. The report has attracted significant interest internationally, and PSGARC has received requests from Dr Rick Stapenhurst of the World Bank Institute (WBI), and the Association of Public Accounts Committees in South Africa to use the research template to replicate the project in Canada and South Africa. The WBI request has been approved and discussion is on-going on the South Africa proposal.

Conferences and seminars conducted by other organisations

Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees Conference, Canberra

Dr Bill Stent (Chair) and Peter Loney attended the 2007 Biennial Conference of Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees Conference held in Canberra. PSGARC was given specific time on the agenda to present the results of the research on Australasian Public Accounts Committees. This was presented by Tom Moloney (KPMG), who conducted the research.

Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees Conference, Victoria, Canada

Peter Loney was invited to attend and participate in the Canadian conference as a Visiting Specialist on Parliamentary Accountability.

United Nations Development Program roundtable on parliamentary strengthening in the South Pacific, Fiji

PSGARC was one of only two Australian academic centres invited to take part in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) roundtable on parliamentary strengthening in the South Pacific. The roundtable was aimed at informing the development of the UNDP's next five year plan. Peter Loney has now been added to the UNDP's expert roster.

Grants awarded

The entire cost of the comparative study into parliamentary accounts committee practices in Australia and New Zealand, \$140,000, was borne by KPMG.

It is anticipated further sponsorships will be achieved in the coming year.

Future developments

The PSGARC will conduct the third summer school for parliamentary public accounts Committees at La Trobe's Beechworth campus in February 2008. It is expected that the School will be attended by up to 45 members of public accounts committees and auditors general from African, Asian and Pacific parliaments.