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The dilemmas of managing parliament: Promoting awareness of public management theories to parliamentary administrators

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Introduction

This book focuses on the apparent disconnect between practice and theory in the development of public policy. One might ask why it would include a chapter on managing parliament: the role of parliament and its internal administration might be considered irrelevant to public policymaking.[1] Indeed, the parliamentary departments in Australia's national parliament were specifically excluded from the recently concluded Thodey review of the Australian Public Service, and an opportunity for an independent review of parliament's capability, culture and operating model was thereby missed (PM&C 2019). But, the effectiveness of parliament's multifaceted role in our Westminster system, the way in which it is managed and its capacity to influence public policy, is important to all public administration scholars, not just those who are attracted to parliament's

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1   But see Russell and Cowley (2016) who present empirical evidence of the UK parliament's significant policy influence at successive stages of the policy process.

political dimensions. In the context of this book, then, parliament can be seen as a special case in the practice of policymaking, and understanding how it relates to the theory of policymaking is important not only in its own right but also for the light it throws on the broader project of policymaking in Westminster systems.

There has been longstanding debate about an identity crisis within the study of public administration and particularly between academics and practitioners (Peters & Pierre 2017; Raadschelders 1999; Sowa & Lu 2017). Prominent UK parliamentary scholar Bernard Crick (1968) suggested that theory and practice should be one field. Raadschelders's (1999, p. 289) critical point was that, despite differing opinions about what government should do, its legitimacy 'rests with the swiftness and adequacy of its response to changing environmental conditions'—a reasoning that would also apply to parliament.

Drawing on my own research, this chapter discusses parliamentary administration in the UK and Australia's national parliaments.[2] It does so in the context of parliament's key roles: to form government and pass legislation; to scrutinise government; and, in particular, to deliberate on and influence public policy in response to rapidly changing environmental conditions—in Crick's view, the most important role of all. First, it describes an insular and agonistic parliamentary culture that has resisted management reforms; second, it provides an overview of governance in the UK and Australian parliaments before presenting dilemmas relating to their governance, management and procedural and cultural reform. Finally, it considers the relevance and potential of public management practice and theory to improve parliament's capacity to influence public policy and meet public expectations. In this respect, it looks beyond traditional and bureaucratic 'old' public administration featuring hierarchy, specialised knowledge or craft, beyond 'new' public management and a narrow focus on efficiency, and towards newer concepts of public value, collaboration and co-production with a concomitant focus on motivation, agency and relationships.

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2   The chapter is derived from a qualitative and interpretive doctoral study of the two parliaments from 2015–19. The thesis title is 'Parliamentary administration: what does it mean to manage a parliament effectively?'. The award was approved on 27 March 2020. The study included interviews with more than 90 parliamentary actors—members of parliament, officials, academics and others— analysis of historical and contemporary parliamentary material, and public administration and management literature.

Why do parliaments resist management reform?

Contemporary concerns about the management and governance of the UK and Australian national parliaments have been widely documented (Australian National Audit Office [ANAO] 2015; Hansard Society 2015; House of Commons Governance Committee [HOCGC] 2014; Senate Committee of Privileges 2014; Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee [SFPALC] 2012a, 2012b, 2015). Reviews and commentaries have pointed to a lack of managerial expertise and/or competence, inadequate and/or complex governance arrangements, inherent conflict between specialist procedural and management roles, resistance to change, an absence of strategic thinking and a limited appreciation of parliamentary norms from would-be reformers. There is also a continuing decline in public trust in parliamentary effectiveness (Hansard Society 2019; Stoker, Evans & Halupka 2018) and a lack of public understanding about how parliament works (Leston-Bandeira & Thompson 2018). Public perceptions suggest that politicians are consumed by adversarial politics and personal advancement and that parliament is a members' club that operates in the interests of its 'elite' insiders (Fox 2009; Snow & Robertson 2015).

Parliamentary administration is complex—a constitutional terra incognita. Parliaments are collective institutional bodies with different and opposing agendas and strong public accountability. Those who can legitimately exercise a powerful administrative role on behalf of their parliaments—elected members—are ultimately accountable to the people who elect them. These characteristics help to explain why decision-making in parliaments in relation to their management and structure is slow and risk-averse. Understandably, Westminster parliaments see themselves as unique political institutions. They are bent on retaining their sovereignty and independence from executive government, even though in reality their powers are closely intertwined (Benwell & Gay 2011). Parliaments are also perceived as agonistic institutions, defined by contest between two of their principal purposes—on the one hand, securing a government's legislative program, on the other, facilitating effective scrutiny and calling the government to account. Inevitably, competition—for status, resources, influence and control—has, over time, pervaded the practice of parliamentary administration and impeded reform

(Geddes & Mulley 2018; Reid & Forrest 1989). Despite intermittent crises followed by reviews and some rhetorical commitment to reform, the 'exceptionalism' of parliament as a political institution continues to diminish its role in policymaking and administrative oversight.

While acknowledging the singular dimensions of parliamentary administration, I argue that a greater appreciation and application of public management theory *and* practice could help parliaments to strengthen their internal and external relationships, restore their reputation and enhance their capacity to facilitate public debate and contribute to policy deliberation. This requires challenging the notion that parliamentary administration is 'unique'—that is, that it is inherently 'parliamentary' and only coincidentally 'public'. The dilemmas and challenges explored in the following sections provide the foundation for a subsequent discussion of practice and theory in parliamentary administration.

Governance dilemmas

Parliaments lack the singular leadership of most public sector organisations; no one is officially in charge (HOCGC 2014). As Speaker Lenthall famously opined in 1642 when Charles I entered the House of Commons chamber to arrest five members of parliament for high treason:

> May it please your majesty; I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the house is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here. (UK Parliament 2019a)

Presiding officers are appointed to chair parliamentary sessions and manage politics but they also inherit administrative responsibilities without a clear mandate or interest in such matters. They do not have the formal authority of a minister of state in administering their own Houses. Their principal roles are to interpret the rules and practice of their Houses and to maintain order in debate.[3] Presiding officers must retain the confidence of the House, even if they have renounced their party affiliations (as occurs in the UK but not in Australia) and their impartiality can be called into question if their actions are not supported

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3   As the House of Lords is self-regulating, the Lord Speaker does not control or manage the House during debate. He/she has no power to call members to order, to decide who speaks next or to select amendments (UK Parliament 2019b).

by members, which can limit their inclination to propose reforms.[4] In the UK, both the House of Lords and House of Commons have established commissions to oversee their administration, chaired by their respective Speakers and supported by advisory committees. In practice, however, even when Speakers are independent from their party and the executive, they are limited by the interests of other members in what they can achieve. Day-to-day responsibility is delegated to line officials.

The Parliament of Australia does not have equivalent formal governance structures, although each House has an administrative advisory committee that is chaired by the president of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively.[5] These committees can meet jointly, as can the two House committees set up to consider issues related to their facilities, which are also chaired by their respective presiding officers, but such joint meetings appear to be non-existent. A key structural difference between the two parliaments is the existence in the Australian parliament of a separate services department, the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS), supporting both Houses, which has tended to further distance the administration role from the procedural and political functions. Historic rivalries between the Houses and between departments have also reflected the influence of a powerful Australian Senate (Reid & Forrest 1989).

Notwithstanding the Parliament of the United Kingdom's more formalised governance arrangements, serial reviews of the House of Commons administration have demonstrated a lack of management capacity. The House of Lords administration has also been slow to change. Scholars have suggested that until the Blair government reforms, the non-elected and subordinate nature of the Lords provided little pressure for change (Petit & Yong 2018). A string of reviews aimed at streamlining the Lords governance and administration culminated in the establishment in 2016 of the House of Lords Commission—a 'small cadre of Members with the time, interest and expertise' to engage strategically with administrative matters on behalf of the House, in partnership with the staff, and with two external members (Torrance 2017, p. 19).

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4   In the UK parliament, former Speaker Bercow was an exception but he has attracted regular criticism from conservative members of the House of Commons and media commentators (see e.g. BBC News 2019; Swinford 2017; Wintour 2014).
5   These are the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations, Staffing and Security and House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations and Administration.

While the history of the governance and administration of the Australian parliament is less well documented, there are similarities in terms of the slow pace of change and the institution's insularity. Historically, members and senators have been indifferent to staffing and administrative arrangements for the two Houses and have shown fragmented loyalties towards individual departments rather than to the parliament as a whole. As well, jealousies, suspicion and politicking between departments have, historically, stymied attempts at reform (Reid & Forrest 1989, pp. 416–17). The Australian parliament was subjected to numerous reform attempts between 1901 and 2004 (Adams 2002),[6] largely directed at structural changes. Parliamentary departments eventually achieved legislative separation from the Australian Public Service in 1999 with the passage of the *Parliamentary Service Act* and DPS, the combined services department, was created in 2004. Tensions among departmental heads and some well-publicised management failures led to extensive criticism from senators, two performance inquiries by the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration, and an investigation into a breach of privilege (Senate Committee of Privileges 2014; SFPALC 2012a, 2012b, 2015). Despite these apparent 'crises', no substantive reform ensued.

In the UK parliament, the clerks of the two Houses are still the official authorities and accounting officers. However, since 2015 many of the responsibilities of the House of Commons clerk have been delegated to a director-general. The clerks tend to have little formal management training or experience; their management functions relate largely to supervision of staff and financial accountability, assisted by professionally qualified managers with financial and other management skills. The House of Commons director-general is the most senior management position in the House. He is a member of the commission and chairs its executive committee, which is responsible for delivery of the strategy. The position holds considerable autonomy and is supported by a number of teams delivering communications, governance, research and information, participation, in-house services, building services, digital and security services (House of Commons 2018).

In Australia, the two House departments have been 'hollowed out' in terms of management responsibilities and are now seen by their clerks as providing a 'secretariat' to the two Houses, specialist procedural advice and some administrative support to members. Nonetheless, they are

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6   Adams cited at least 20.

'accountable authorities' under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, responsible for the proper use and management of the public resources of their departments. The DPS secretary shares the same accountabilities as the clerks, with responsibility for shared services, such as the parliamentary library, information services, building facilities and security, and internal finance and governance (DPS 2018). There is no overarching coordinating structure that brings the presiding officers, members and officials together with joint responsibility for determining and implementing a collective strategic direction.[7]

The structural differences between the two parliaments make comparison of their relative effectiveness problematic. In any case, the prospects for international adaptation may be limited: what works for one parliament may not be politically acceptable for the other. There may not be 'one best way' of organising a parliament to achieve its conflicting purposes of both enabling and scrutinising parliamentary government while facilitating public debate and contributing to policy deliberation. Effectiveness may depend on the extent to which the parliaments can resolve the dilemmas of authority and collective responsibility, related below.

Who speaks for parliament? The impact of collective responsibility

As has been noted, in parliament the 'authorising environment' (Moore 1995) is problematic. Establishing a commission comprising the presiding officers, members and senior officials will not, of itself, offset the diffuse nature of authority in a representative political body. Many factors would influence its effectiveness, in particular the willingness of all members to engage with administrative issues and to 'convey a sense of public service' (Norton 2016, p. 203). Neither will it ensure a consistent whole-of-parliament approach from two constitutionally separate Houses. However, in the UK the two Houses' overarching commissions appear to encourage a greater appreciation of the increasing need for integration between the political, procedural, cultural and managerial requirements of an effective parliamentary administration. Administrative leadership and advocacy is less apparent in the Australian parliament.

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7   The Parliamentary Budget Office, established in 2012, is an independent office of experts providing specific economic and policy costing advice primarily to members and senators. Its work falls outside of this study; however, it is a good example of parliamentary reform, reflecting political motivation and agency, achieved by collaboration between crossbench members and the 2010–13 minority government.

The UK House of Commons generally displays a greater potential for collective decision-making balanced with strategic focus. There is legislative recognition of the strategic function in the *House of Commons Administration Act 1978*.[8] The House of Lords Commission provides high-level strategic and political direction for its administration on behalf of the House. In contrast, under the Australian *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* responsibility for leadership, 'stewardship'[9] and strategic direction falls to departmental secretaries and the clerks. The parliamentary service commissioner also gives advice to the presiding officers on the management policies and practices of Parliamentary Services. The less formalised structures in the Australian parliament do not reflect the diversity and complexity of the management services provided by DPS, particularly in its public facing role, nor do they specify a strategic role for members. Recommendations following Senate committee inquiries for a more collaborative, whole-of parliament and strategic focus, which may have engaged members more fully, have not been taken up (Baxter 2015; SFPALC 2017).

In my research, I did not detect in either parliament a high level of enthusiasm for public management theory in general or, specifically, public value. However, in the UK, recent scholarly attention to the problems of legitimacy and authorisation and the need for collective action appears to be gaining traction (Leston-Bandeira & Thompson 2018; Norton 2016).

Management dilemmas

It would not be fair to say that the two parliaments have avoided management reforms entirely. Reform *has* occurred in both over several decades, albeit incrementally and principally in response to exogenous calls for greater efficiency, transparency, accountability and responsiveness. These 'new public management' reforms relate principally to more routine aspects of operational management, including procurement, financial and human resource management and structural changes. More elusive, however, have been strategic cultural and behavioural reforms to reduce public perceptions of incompetence, self-interest, insularity, inertia or unrepresentativeness (Petit & Yong 2018).

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8   Section 1 of the *House of Commons Administration Act 1978* sets out the membership and functions of the House of Commons Commission; Section 2 provides that the commission must set strategic priorities and objectives in connection with services provided by the House departments.
9   The term is undefined in the legislation.

In both parliaments, regardless of organisational structure, a hierarchy between 'procedural' and 'management' functions has existed, limiting the potential for a collective parliamentary identity and increasing the likelihood of a silo mentality. Three related management dilemmas are discussed below.

Who are the customers? Multiple roles, multiple stakeholders

The achievement of shared goals is complicated by the multiplicity of stakeholders and whether the focus of parliamentary actors is internal or external. Members of parliament are both the overseers and the recipients of services. Parliamentary officials in the UK revealed that the line of sight is not always clear: members expect officials to do what members want but it is not always easy to discern what members want and members complain when they think the officials are 'running the show' (House of Lords clerk, personal communication, 24 May 2016). Some officials think they should not 'just lie down and do what the members want' (House of Commons manager, personal communication, 9 June 2016). Some actors also expressed concern about 'new' parliamentary officials who felt that they owed responsibility more to the public than to members and who might 'dismiss members as being part of the equation'.[10]

In the Australian parliament, the challenge of responding to multiple stakeholders, often at the expense of others, was also prominent. While officials appreciated the central purpose of a parliament was to enable democracy to work, some believed they had been engaged to help the community and the parliament to get closer together; others were wholly committed to the physical building housing parliament, its preservation and its maintenance. But, in both parliaments, management and its associated tasks tended to be viewed in some quarters with disdain, reducing the potential for greater collaboration.

Business as usual or strategically securing the future?

Operational management requirements are common to both parliaments and require oversight of a large span of activities, such as information technology and communications advice, support and security; public

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10   These views were expressed by various interviewees.

access to the work of the parliaments; sustaining a working parliamentary building; human resources and financial services; and providing accommodation and facilities for members and staff. It is not difficult to understand why daily pressures can overwhelm longer-term strategy.

Notwithstanding the UK parliament's delineation of a strategic management role for members, there was a strong sense among officials that members were reluctant to set a strategic direction and accept ownership, but neither were they content to leave this to officials. The long-delayed restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster provides many examples of a lack of political agency and coordination (House of Commons Commission 2016; House of Lords 2016; Meakin 2017). On the 10-year anniversary of the UK parliamentary expenses scandal, scholars drew parallels between the decrepit state of the building and the decline in British democracy, with the chance of a catastrophic failure in both growing by the day (Flinders 2019; Hansard Society 2019).

In both parliaments there is an (often unacknowledged) interrelationship between management and procedural issues, and the public is unlikely to distinguish between them when scandals arise. There are also many missed opportunities to open a debate on how a parliamentary building and associated management issues can change the institutional culture.

Australia's 'new and permanent' Parliament House was conceived, designed and constructed in perhaps a more benign political period and was officially opened in 1988. Managing a new, iconic building carries its own challenges and controversies. An attempt in 1989 by the then government to establish a Parliament House Advisory Panel was resisted by the Senate, and subsequent attempts by interested external parties to place the building on the national and Commonwealth heritage lists have been unsuccessful (SFPALC 2012a).[11] There are continuing conflicts around the procedural, symbolic or public representation of parliament and continuing criticisms, at Senate estimates committees and in the media, of the department charged with its ongoing care.

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11   The Walter Burley Griffin Society voiced concern about the use of the 'separation of powers' argument, noting that the same argument had not affected the heritage listing of the Houses of Parliament in the UK.

An abundance of scrutiny or excess of criticism?

The apparent subordination of the importance of management skills in favour of procedural knowledge and processes does not suggest that the procedural departments in each parliament are not in themselves well managed, particularly from a routine perspective. Clerks are well regarded by members of parliament and academics for their professional expertise, discretion and integrity. As 'accountable authorities' under their respective legislation and as procedural experts they are not usually found wanting. Conversely, officials in both parliaments are under intense scrutiny. Parliamentary administration in the Australian parliament has been subjected to a number of severely critical audit reports over decades (Auditor-General 1990a, 1990b; ANAO 2015). Members appear to distance themselves from their responsibilities to oversee an effectively run parliament, often seizing opportunities to criticise its management rather than contribute to improved practices.

The media revels in bringing the public's attention to almost every management problem, no matter how trivial (Kenny 2013; Walker 2019). Every expenditure on the parliamentary building or on the services it provides for members and staff is closely scrutinised; taxpayers resent politicians 'feathering their nests'. In the UK, freedom of information laws have helped promote a higher level of transparency and openness; however, they have also increased public distrust of parliamentarians, most notably in the wake of the 2009 expenses scandal (Winnett & Rayner 2009). The Australian parliament is not covered by Australia's *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, but the requirement to disclose the use of parliamentary entitlements is cause for much malign publicity. A lack of awareness, poor administration or hubris on the part of some politicians has led to public outrage, increased external oversight and, arguably, more complexity and inefficiency in the systems that support all politicians in their representational roles.

The absence of a cohesive parliamentary identity, conflicting demands on officials, and a lack of constructive engagement by members and public perceptions of their behaviour, are key contributors to the dilemmas of parliamentary management. Tensions arise from different beliefs about the primary duties and accountabilities of parliamentary actors. For members of parliament (especially in the lower Houses), whose main focus is on serving their constituents and their party, it is perhaps understandable that their interest in management relates narrowly to their own partisan

interests in obtaining advice and resources that will help them to achieve these objectives. But, a disregard for the wider institution in an era of increasingly cynical media and public scrutiny and perceived shortcomings in parliamentary self-regulation has had negative repercussions.

The dilemmas of procedural and cultural reform

If the primary purpose of parliament is to enable democracy to work, in the public's view it does not appear to be working well. According to a global survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre (Wike et al. 2017), only 52 per cent of people in the UK were satisfied with the way democracy is working; for Australia, the figure was slightly higher at 58 per cent. The *Trust and democracy in Australia* report (Stoker, Evans & Halupka 2018) found that satisfaction with how democracy works in Australia had fallen from 71 per cent in 2013 to 41 per cent in 2018, suggesting an even starker picture. In this section I address three factors that appear to contribute to the poor public standing of both parliaments and their capacity to play an influential role in deliberation and policymaking: the extent and pace of procedural reform to meet public expectations, members' behaviour and workplace culture, and limited public engagement.

Procedural reform and public expectations

Without established precedent and formalised procedures to provide 'order, decency and regularity' when parliaments are sitting, chaos would ensue (Hatsell as cited in Evans 2014). However, as well as interpreting procedures based on centuries of precedent, there needs to be a capacity to anticipate change and to identify and adopt parliament-wide cultural and behavioural reforms that cross internal boundaries. According to Norton (2000), three conditions must be present for procedural reforms to succeed: a window of opportunity, political will and a coherent reform agenda. A window of opportunity often follows a crisis; the last two conditions are more relevant to planned strategic change.

Both parliaments have a long history of attempts at procedural reform; some succeed, others do not. Some are described as efficiency reforms (Kelso 2009), while others focus on improving effectiveness or scrutiny. Of particular interest are reforms aimed at the public interface with parliament, such as e-petitioning and greater opportunities for public

participation. A recent example is the House of Representatives Procedure Committee's call for public comments on how question time could be improved (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure 2019).[12]

Key messages from the public to the Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy in the UK parliament (Digital Democracy Commission 2015) included: 'we care about issues, not politics', 'speak in plain English', 'stop broadcasting at us', 'to take part in parliament you need to understand it', 'we don't have time to read everything' and 'we want genuine dialogue'. Emerging technologies, including social media, also pose a threat to parliament's ability to articulate and determine collective ideas of public interest (Judge, Leston-Bandeira & Thompson 2018). Initiatives designed to enhance parliamentary control and public involvement have been only partially successful (Goodwin & Atkins 2018). In Australia, parliamentary clerks have lamented members' diminishing enthusiasm for procedural reform, and have claimed that their own authority or ability to contribute is limited.

Members behaviour and workplace culture

Scholars in the UK have suggested that processes of parliamentary modernisation have generally been internally directed much more at the relationship between parliament and government than towards the external environment, in terms of adapting to societal change or sharing power more widely among citizens (Goodwin & Atkins 2018). Longstanding rituals and norms have helped to secure the prevailing dominant social relations (Rai 2010), leading to calls for more effective representation of women and minorities, behavioural and cultural reform, and cross-party support for a concord regarding 'unacceptable and unprofessional behaviour in the chamber and more widely in the House' (Childs 2016, p. 11). Undoubtedly, the public's perceptions are also influenced by the behaviour of politicians, such as the misuse of parliamentary entitlements (Fels 2015; Winnett & Rayner 2009) and reports of bullying and harassment in both parliaments (Cox 2018; Ellenbogen 2019; Murphy 2018a). The Australian Parliament House has been described as a 'prison', characterised by high stress, intense competition and long hours, where the parties are determined to hide

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12 Forty-one submissions were received, many reinforcing the perception that current practices have a negative influence on public engagement and limit accountability.

any hint of scandal (O'Malley 2018). Parliament is isolated from voters and its occupants are disconnected from each other, compounded by the parliamentary building itself (Murphy 2018b).

The dilemmas of procedural and cultural reform might be seen as challenges to be overcome by political will and a coherent reform agenda. Members of parliament, however, face difficult choices in addressing competing allegiances to their parties, constituents and the parliamentary institution. The dilemma lies in how to achieve a more participatory approach in an environment of public distrust and disengagement, especially when it is not clear whether parliament actually wants to foster greater participation (Hansard Society 2019; Kelso 2007; Uberoi 2017). The role of parliamentary committees in providing opportunities for broader participation in policy development, democratic renewal and citizen engagement is widely acknowledged (Gaines et al. 2019; Halligan, Miller & Power 2007; Hendriks & Kay 2019; Marsh 2016; Russell & Cowley 2016), but more radical measures involving institutional design and processes are increasingly being called for (Ercan, Hendriks & Dryzek 2019; Leston-Bandeira & Walker 2018). Parliament needs to do more than continue with one way communication of its work or rely on the usual contributors to committee inquiries. To achieve greater public involvement and participation, gain greater influence over the public narrative on parliament and manage public expectations of what parliament can and should deliver, may well require ceding some control. A public management approach may help in this process.

Towards a public management approach to parliamentary administration

Attention to the practice as well as the theory of contemporary public management has been limited in the two parliaments I studied, with implications for both institutions' actual and perceived success in influencing public policy and deliberation. Most of the management reform discussion has been concerned with the retention of traditional professional skills, structural efficiency and operational performance. We can recognise here elements of the tension between 'traditional' public administration with its emphasis on specialised knowledge, hierarchy and preservation of the status quo (Albrow 1970; Lindquist & Wanna 2011; Osborne et al. 2015) and new public management (NPM), which saw a shift in values towards efficiency and professional public

sector management (Hood 1991; Pollitt 2003). The principles of NPM have undoubtedly influenced parliamentary administration through numerous reviews (in the UK) and legislative requirements (in Australia), and incremental progress has been achieved. Some practitioners have described this as 'muddling through', with one recalling the days when 'administration was something to be done on a Friday afternoon' (House of Representatives clerk, personal communication, 7 April 2017).

Less attention has been devoted to strategic management in the two parliaments, including in the context of procedural and cultural reforms that could be expected to enhance parliament's public standing, relevance and effectiveness. There is clearly a need to rethink the roles of parliamentary actors and parliament's internal and external relationships to achieve an effective balance between enabling and scrutinising a government's legislative program and enhancing public confidence and participation. The discussion below draws particularly on the literature relating to public value, collaboration and co-production.

The relevance of 'public value' to parliamentary administration

Broadly applied, the public value concept aims at administration that creates substantive value, is legitimate and politically sustainable, and is operationally and administratively sustainable (Alford & O'Flynn 2009; Moore 1995). These tests equate with Lynn's (2005) dimensions of responsible public management, which must be constitutionally authorised, performed skilfully and efficiently, and reflect the values of a wider society. Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2015, p. 239) advocated public value management as a way of moving philosophically, theoretically and practically beyond older public interest debates towards public value governance across multiple sectors and stakeholders and involving multiple conflicting and contentious value judgements (see also Bevir & Rhodes 2006; Stoker 2006; Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg 2014). In applying this broad approach to parliamentary administration, I make four observations.

- First, the 'substantive public value' of the parliament is difficult to identify and promote in an environment of public disaffection, where public engagement efforts are not always effective. If parliament is to compete with and engage with many emerging players, then new forms of democracy and of public engagement and participation will be required. Importantly, Fukumoto and Bozeman (2019) distinguish

between public *value*, whereby public managers determine what is substantively valuable, as envisaged by Moore (1995), and public *values,* which are determined more democratically by improving parliament's representativeness and encouraging public participation.

- Second, strategic parliamentary administration that is 'legitimate and politically sustainable' requires an effective 'authorising environment'. While this exists in practice in the UK parliament, it has not always been considered effective (House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee 2019). UK scholars are, however, devoting more attention to administrative effectiveness. Attempts to establish overarching formalised internal governance arrangements in Australia have so far been resisted (Baxter 2015; Senate Select Committee on Parliament's Appropriations and Staffing 1981; SFPALC 2017). Interviewees have confirmed continuing resistance.

- Third, notwithstanding that a 'managerialist' focus on achievement and performance has taken hold in the two parliaments, and certainly within operational or 'management' functions, efforts to ensure whole-of-parliament organisational strategies have been hampered by competition for status and resources (Department of the Senate 2004; HOCGC 2014; Reid & Forrest 1989). In such cases, power and politics are inevitably involved (Geddes 2019). That the Australian parliament does not set its own budget independently of the executive has further influenced competition for resources, impeding the potential to align resources and goals to achieve greater public value.

- Fourth, measuring the value of parliamentary administration (particularly public engagement and outreach) has always been difficult (Weerasinghe & Ramshaw 2018). Measuring parliament's broader impact and effectiveness is also problematic (Russell & Cowley 2016; Leston-Bandeira & Thompson 2017). Moore (1995, 2013, 2016), however, provides valuable insights into how public managers, including officials and elected representatives, can recognise and account for valuable collective social outcomes in a dynamic external environment.[13] This would entail a focus not just on outputs, efficiency and cost reduction, but also on social values such as democratic representation and effective deliberation on important social issues.[14]

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13   In contrast, see Horner and Hutton (2011), who argue that 'public value is defined … through political and social interaction' and that 'any search for an absolute measure' should be avoided.
14   Evidence presented to the House of Commons Liaison Committee inquiry into the influence and effectiveness of the select committee system emphasised the need to recognise the 'public value dynamic' of the work of select committees (House of Commons Liaison Committee 2019).

Antipathy towards the public value concept has often stemmed from a concern that unelected public officials would overstep the political-administrative divide (Rhodes & Wanna 2007, 2009; Shergold 1997). Yet, as has been recognised in the UK, in the parliamentary environment this may be more likely to occur *in the absence of* well constituted governance arrangements (Judge & Leston-Bandeira 2018; Norton 2016). Stoker (2006) also recognises the pitfalls of public value, such as limits to the extent to which politics can be 'managed' and remain legitimate. He believes, however, that its strength lies in providing a motivational force for reform that does not rely on rules or incentives but on interpersonal relationships within networks and partnerships.

Those who remain sceptical about the potential commitment of politicians to an administrative or management role can also point to a lack of enthusiasm by many presiding officers and members for their administrative roles. There is, however, a constructive role for parliament's officials in managing upwards and outwards to gain political support for proposed reforms within a legitimate authorising environment. The public value approach has advantages for parliamentary actors, principally by engaging both officials and members to think of themselves as public managers as well as parliamentary custodians, exercising agency in focusing on strategic as well as operational tasks, identifying and responding to diminishing public regard for parliament, and responding constructively to external challenges to parliamentary sovereignty rather than using parliament's 'uniqueness' as a defensive shield or barrier to reform. This would require changing internal governance arrangements to mobilise authorised and legitimate decision-making.

If it is possible to relate the broad characteristics of public value to parliamentary administration, what else might be needed for it to become a 'motivational force' designed to overcome resistance to change and encourage mutual respect and shared learning (Petit & Yong 2018; Stoker 2006)? The benefits from a public value approach might become more achievable if pursued in the context of, or in concert with, approaches based on collaboration and co-production.

The potential for engagement, collaboration and co-production

In the two parliaments, internal resistance to change has in the past stymied collaboration among parliamentary actors. For example, in the UK a joint working program set up to achieve further efficiencies between

the two Houses has fallen off the political radar (Petit & Yong 2018). Among interviewees there was a strong sense of the need for efficiency and reduced wastage, but this was accompanied by scepticism about the extent of efficiencies that could be harvested from joint initiatives. In Australia, parliamentary departments have traditionally competed to displace the effect of budget cuts or to acquire additional resources (Department of the Senate 2004). Public engagement functions do not appear to be as well funded or prioritised as they are in the UK.

There is room for more concerted cross-parliament deliberations in both parliaments. Arguably, this could be achieved without introducing superfluous management layers. Existing governance bodies could move towards a new norm of meeting collaboratively to discuss matters of mutual and public interest as to how the parliament might operate. The Australian parliament could formalise a collaborative governance structure across the parliament, while the UK parliament could strengthen its collaborative governance across both Houses—the mechanisms are already in place. To be effective they need the continued involvement of parliament's elected representatives.

The skills required for effective collaboration within parliaments would not be vastly different than those expected from senior managers working within their own functional areas; any deficit in collaborative skills would probably indicate shortfalls in management skills per se. Indeed, Bartelings et al. (2017) found that, in large part, the activities of managers still fall within the 10 traditional managerial roles identified by Mintzberg (1973) in his seminal study on managerial work: figurehead, liaison, leader, monitor, disseminator, spokesperson, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, negotiator. They added a new role—orchestration— which emphasises the inter-organisational aspects of management. Whereas Mintzberg describes the manager above all as a leader, Bartelings et al. (2017) define the role as a spokesperson—an observation that resonates with the parliamentary governance dilemmas considered above. Also relevant is the work of Sullivan, Williams and Jeffares (2012) on the need to bring subgroups together to maintain internal cohesion without dissolving diverse identities. Parliamentary actors would collaborate as 'situated agents', each capable of independent action using their existing skills, experience and expertise, but their actions would be mediated by wider influences rather than limited by a narrow span of attention (Bevir & Rhodes 2006; Simon 1977). Finally, the pursuit of greater engagement with external actors and the wider community would call on

tangible skills and factors, such as integration, central coordination and information sharing to achieve substantive outcomes, and on 'soft', or less tangible, skills and factors, including personal relationships, trust and a shared collaborative language (Page et al. 2015; Cristofoli, Meneguzzo & Riccucci 2017).

What would be the main pitfalls of such an approach in the parliamentary context and how could these be overcome? Concerns include the differences in motivation, or the influences of politics and public administration, on the effectiveness of partnerships and networks (Prebble 2015); that collaboration is a fad 'that everyone believes but few practise' (O'Flynn 2009); that collaboration is 'highly resource consuming and often painful' (Huxham 2003); and that collaboration needs to overcome blind spots (Wegrich 2019). Barriers to fostering the deep engagement required for collaboration include a reluctance to redistribute power from managers to citizens, lack of trust, uncertainty over political support, diffused accountability and raised expectations (Holmes 2011). Few authors, however, dismiss the benefits of collaboration altogether; many offer strategies to address these and other challenges, and there are examples of attempts to move in this direction. These include the UK parliament's collaboration with external organisations in its public engagement activities, including with the Hansard Society, Institute for Government and universities. Some evidence has also emerged within the Australian parliament of recently forged internal collaboration, but there has been little sign of an 'authorised' and supportive collaborative space or the type of collaborative governance that could provide oversight and assurances. There has also been little evidence to date of parliament collaborating with external pro-democracy organisations.[15]

Co-production is another public management approach that may be useful, in practice as well as reflexively, in parliamentary administration. This is true, despite criticisms that the concept is 'woolly' or 'muddled' and some confusion among academics and practitioners as to what co-production actually means and where it could be usefully applied (Dewey, Blackman & Dickinson 2018; Nabatchi, Sancino & Sicilia 2017). Setting these concerns to one side, co-production would require public engagement at the highest level, including interactions, dialogue

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15   Although there seems to be a willingness to move in this direction. Democracy 2025 reports on a survey of Australian federal politicians on how they would like to reform democracy (Evans, Stoker & Halupka 2019). The survey was sponsored by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

and deliberation, allowing for the possibility of opinions being changed, rather than a simple exchange of information (Holmes 2011). Bryson et al. (2017) also highlight the role that politicians, political leadership and politics can play in public value production in a democratic society. Co-production can offer advantages in the face of challenges from the media and 'gotcha' journalism.

Scholarly discussion on whether co-production is unavoidable in public service provision (Alford 2016) suggests that citizens derive value from the opportunity to participate in deliberative processes and share in shaping society, and that the greater the skills and knowledge they possess the more likely the extent and quality of their co-production. Trust based on identification can also be restored through co-production provided self-efficacy is increased (Fledderus, Brandsen & Honingh 2014; Thomsen 2017). Citizens would need to identify more closely with parliament and feel that they are influential. Greater efforts at making parliament more representative of society as well as involving citizens in policy deliberation would also appear to be crucial.

To take the collaborative and co-production approaches beyond a focus on how parliament works, particularly in representing its citizens, greater public involvement in actual policymaking could be garnered through citizens' assemblies or similar arrangements. A basis for collaboration has already been established in the UK parliament in the form of the citizens' assembly on adult social care (Allen & McKee 2019), and has continued in the context of the recent citizens' assembly on climate change commissioned by six parliamentary committees and funded jointly through the committees' research budget and philanthropic donations (Webster 2020). Parliaments could thus move closer to Crick's ideal role as a 'broker of ideas' experimenting in public discussion with citizens, ideally in averting rather than responding to crises.

It is important to be aware of the pitfalls of co-production, particularly in light of confusion over its definition. These include difficulty identifying the benefits, particularly when distinguishing self-interest from common interests (Bryson et al. 2017; Dewey, Blackman & Dickinson 2018); and the need to establish and maintain citizens' interaction (Thomsen & Jakobsen 2015).

There is no guarantee that co-production automatically leads to greater trust, particularly when those with low levels of political efficacy, who are more likely to gain from a greater sense of control, are harder to reach, having perhaps already disengaged from politics (Fledderus, Brandsen & Honingh 2014). The challenges of co-production include conflicting values, institutional rigidity, risk aversion, lack of accountability and the conflicts inherent in all group processes. Yet, there is hope for success if managers can review their professional norms, institutional processes and past practices, appreciate the environmental interactions that impact their daily operations and avoid resentment towards the new co-producers (Williams, Kang & Johnson 2016). From a practical perspective, this would suggest a need for sustained internal reform, innovative approaches to public engagement, and greater collaboration with external organisations and citizens.

Conclusion

The theory and practice of public and parliamentary administration offers a rich field for parliamentary scholars in Australia. This is in part because the differences between parliaments and other public institutions are not as great as might be supposed. Contemporary public management theories can, therefore, offer benefits to parliamentary managers beyond the important but narrow requirements of management competence and efficiency. A key factor is parliament's role as a deliberative forum for discussing and achieving some consensus on key policy issues (as opposed to its highly politicised legislative and scrutiny roles).

Parliamentary practitioners can appear dismissive of public management theory (as can other public managers), influenced by a sense of separation from mainstream public service and policymaking and parliament's 'unique' role in the Westminster system. This separation has also been exacerbated by a lack of public or academic attention to parliamentary administration and a tendency among many parliamentary administrators to see their roles through lenses of 'administrative craft and managerial mystery' (Shergold 2015). However, for both governments and parliaments, engendering public confidence and trust in their institutions, and realising the potential to harness the collective capacity of citizens to support and/or accept policy reform necessitated by changing environmental conditions, would seem to be key factors in sustaining their legitimacy (Raadschelders 1999).

Parliament's greatest challenge is to win ongoing public support and approval while fulfilling its roles of enabling and scrutinising policy and legislation and also providing a deliberative forum for policy responses. The problem is not new. The question of parliament's public standing has been raised again and again over decades. While most members of parliament have not been actively engaged in advocating for institutional reform, either administrative or procedural, and traditional parliamentary administrators are reluctant to cross the political-administrative line (at least publicly), external actors are increasingly assuming advocacy roles.

Although incremental management reforms have been achieved in both parliaments, there has been resistance towards internal and external collaboration and a continuing focus on preservation and stewardship rather than strategic reform. External organisations are assuming a greater role in engaging with the public to restore confidence in our democratic system, including through increasing participation, and parliaments are in danger of losing their relevance in this respect. The characteristics of public value and its associated paradigms—building legitimacy, addressing public concerns and ensuring operational capacity and resources—lend themselves as well to parliamentary administration as to public administration.

The skills required for effective collaboration are not dissimilar to readily understood leadership and management skills but place an added focus on internal cohesion taking account of wider influences. Collaboration also requires greater partnership with external organisations with similar aspirations. Perhaps the greatest conceptual challenge is to think of parliamentary deliberation as a form of co-production with citizens, with parliamentary actors providing a legitimately authorised service to a collective citizenry.

Inevitably, there are barriers to the acceptance and take up of policy or management reforms. In parliament these include governance arrangements, diffused authority, the lack of an overall parliamentary identity and political conflict as well as scepticism by practitioners and a preference for learning on-the-job. There are encouraging signs, however, at least in the UK parliament, where the characteristics, practices and skills inherent in the approaches I have outlined are now being applied, albeit often as a result of external pressures.

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