From 9 - 27 September, in conjunction with the Graduate Program in Public Policy at the Australian National University, CDI conducted a training course for parliamentary officials from the region. This inaugural parliamentary training course was entitled ‘Responsible Parliamentary Government’.

The course grew out of CDI’s interest in strengthening the parliaments and parliamentary secretariats in the region. Developments throughout the 1990s in Southeast Asia have seen the gradual but substantial growth of democracy in the region, as elsewhere around the globe. Regional parliaments however, tend not to have strong parliamentary traditions. The establishment of a short intensive training course for mid-level officials, is intended to support these parliaments in their expanding roles, through exposing participants to a range of parliamentary activities and processes. Although Australia’s parliamentary traditions differ markedly from most Southeast Asian nations’, the long history of Australia’s parliament provides a comparative touchstone for the participants’ thinking about their own parliaments.

The course was conducted largely at the Australian National University but included numerous activities at the Commonwealth Parliament, and others in and around Canberra. It involved 12 participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. The program manager was Mr John Nethercote.

**Aims of the program**

The program was designed with several objectives in mind. These included:

- Providing participants with an informed understanding of the constitutional and parliamentary framework for representative government on a democratic and elective basis
- Assisting participants to better understand the working of representative and responsible government under modern conditions
- Promoting participants’ understanding of the practical contributions which parliamentary staff can make to the effective operation of a democratically elected parliament
- Enhancing participants’ knowledge of a parliament’s relationship with other institutions essential to a fully democratic polity, in particular the courts and the media.
Key components of the program

The course comprised several key components:

- Australia’s constitutional and parliamentary arrangements, including the federal character of the nation’s government
- The parliament, including the roles of Governor-General, the presiding officers, the clerks, the library and research services, the role of the opposition.
- Media coverage of parliament
- The enactment of legislation, including regulations etc
- Scrutiny and management of public expenditure
- Roles, activities and servicing of parliamentary committees
- Relations with courts and tribunals, administrative review
- Parliamentary administration, including the Parliamentary Services Act, the Joint House Department and security at Parliament House
- Conduct and ethical issues surrounding parliamentary service

Special features of the program were visits to Parliament House to see Question Time in both houses, and visits to key locations such as the Leader of the Opposition’s suite and a minister’s office.

The group also had the opportunity of meeting the Governor-General and visiting the room where the Federal Executive Council meets. They were also able to visit the study used by the Governor-General at the time of the dismissal of the Whitlam Government - a major constitutional and political event in Australian history.

Visits to Cooma-Monaro Shire Council and the ACT Legislative Assembly demonstrated that basic principles of representative and responsible government can be found at local and territory levels as well as the national.

At the conclusion of the program, additional sessions were arranged at the request of participants on the electoral system (by the Australian Electoral Commission) and the major political parties (by spokespeople from the Liberal Party and the Australian Labor Party).

During the three weeks, the program was addressed in total by 44 major speakers in addition to an array of sessions presented by the program manager, John Nethercote.

Apart from the Governor-General, the career backgrounds of the ‘session leaders’ were:

- Academic (2)
- Serving or former parliamentarians (6)
- Serving or former parliamentary staff (14)
- Serving or former public servants (14)
- Journalists (3)
- Lobbyists (3)
- Party staff (2)

Two projects were assigned course participants. Each was undertaken by six participants. The first project involved tracing the passage of a bill through the
The second focussed on various issues surrounding the successful functioning of committees. The projects were essential in assisting the participants to understand the central themes of the program such as scrutiny, discussion, debate, accountability and responsibility. They allowed an opportunity for self-driven learning of materials received during the course, and provided a degree of reinforcement of information learned during the course.

**Reading material**

To facilitate the program, all participants were provided with a range of reading material about the various topics covered. These were mainly drawn from information sheets prepared by the two houses of the parliament and similar documentation from other sources. It was brief and generally in plain English. Many session presenters supplied notes, including transcriptions of presentations. A range of more substantial reading was also distributed during the course of the program, mainly at the request of participants.

**Assessment**

The program provided comprehensive coverage of the relevant fields through an intensively delivered three week course. CDI and GPPP staff, and Mr John Nethercote, met at the conclusion of the course to discuss participant feedback, and assess the course. Several issues arose with regard to the course’s content and structure. These issues, listed in brief below, will provide a framework for programming future parliamentary officials courses.

Issues flowing from the course:
- **Course focus** - should the course have a broad focus, covering all major parliamentary activities, or a more select focus of key aspects of parliament’s activities?
- **Length of program** - what is the idea length for the program? Three full-day weeks is quite taxing for participants, but longer courses might not draw high quality officials because parliaments will not be willing to lose valuable staff for long periods
- **Amount of comparative analysis** - should the course spend time on comparative study, comparing the Australian parliaments to others (or comparing participants’ parliaments)? Or should it concentrate on conveying key aspects of the Australian model to participants?
- **Targeted analysis** - Should the course focus on any very specific activities where the parliaments of attending officials are likely to be particularly weak (committee procedures for example)? If certain issues were targeted for detailed analysis, on what basis would the key issues be selected?

**Conclusion**

Overall the program was a success. The participants’ parliaments sent high quality participants with good English language skills. The participants were also highly motivated and committed. These factors in combination with the commitment of the program manager ensured an engaging and thought provoking course for the participants. A fact born out by the positive feedback received from participants at the conclusion of the course.
Participants

Cambodia
Mr Panhavuth HIV
Mr Rithy SOK

Indonesia
Mr Robert Juheng PURBA
Mr Muchtar EFFENDI
Mr PRAYUDI
Ms Rahayu Setya WARDANI
Mr Rohani BUDI
Mr Djaka Dwi WINARKO

Thailand
Miss Kaewkate THAWORNPHUN
Mr Supannat PERMPOONWIWAT

Vietnam
Mr Dao Van THACH
Ms Hoang Thi YEN
Program

Monday 9 September
9.00-10.15am Welcome and Introduction
• Professor Glenn Withers, AO, Graduate Program in Public Policy
• Dr Robert Campbell, Director Australian National Internships Program
• Roland Rich, Director - Centre for Democratic Institutions, Research School of Social Sciences
• John Nethercote, Program Director
10.15-10.45am Morning tea
10.45-12.30pm Constitutional Foundations and Federalism
• Professor Richard Mulgan
12.30-1.30pm Luncheon
1.30pm-2.30pm Representative and Responsible Government
• Professor Richard Mulgan
2.30-3.00pm Afternoon tea
3.00-4.30pm The Parliament
• Professor Richard Mulgan

Tuesday 10 September
8.20am Meet at Sir Roland Wilson Building to travel to Parliament House.
9.00-10.00am The Parliamentary Day / Calendar
• Peter Mason, Director, Programming, House of Representatives
10.00-10.30am Morning tea
10.30-11.10am Visits to the Senate and House of Representatives
• John Nethercote
11.10am-12.10pm The Presiding Officers
• Sue West, former Deputy President, The Senate
• Phil Bergin, former Senior Adviser, The Speaker, House of Representatives
12.10-1.00pm Luncheon
1.00-1.50pm The Roles of the Clerks
• Harry Evans Clerk, Senate
• Ian Harris Clerk, House of Representatives
2.00-2.30pm Visit to the Leader of the Opposition’s Suite
• John Cook
• Katrina Bramley
2.30-3.15pm Tour of the Building
3.15-3.45pm Afternoon tea
3.45-5.00pm Parliament and the Governor-General
• Sir David Smith, KCVO, AO, Official Secretary to the Governor –General, 1973-1990

Wednesday 11 September
8.45-9.30am The Parliamentary Authorities- Odgers’ Australian Senate Practice and House of Representatives Practice
• John Nethercote
9.30-10.25am Parliamentary Privilege
• Bernie Wright, Deputy Clerk, House of Representatives
10.25-10.45am Morning tea
10.45-12.30pm  Research and Information Services
•  Dr June Verrier, head, Research and Information, Parliamentary Library

12.30-1.30pm  Luncheon

1.30-3.00pm  Project Briefing
•  Gillian Gould
•  Peter Grundy

3.00-3.30pm  Afternoon tea

3.30-5.00pm  Media and Parliament
•  Peter Sekuless

**Thursday 12 September**

9.00-10.30am  Media coverage of parliament
•  Fran Kelly, Political Correspondent, 7.30 Report, ABC
•  Michael Millett, Political Correspondent, Sydney Morning Herald
•  Jack Waterford, Editor-in-Chief, Canberra Times
•  Peter Sekuless

10.30-11.00am  Morning tea

11.00-12.30pm  Making legislation - overview
•  John Nethercote

12.30-1.30pm  Lunch

1.30-3.00pm  Making legislation - the government stage
•  Vince Robinson First Assistant Parliamentary Counsel

3.00-3.30pm  Afternoon tea

3.30-5.00pm  Parliament, The Courts and Tribunals
•  John McMillan, Professor of Administrative Law, Australian National University

5.15pm  High Court of Australia - Australia/Canada Dialogue-
Justice Iacobucci, Supreme Court of Canada Justice Kriby, High Court of Australia

**Friday 13 September**

9.00-10.30am  Making legislation
•  John Nethercote

10.30-11.00am  Morning tea

11.00-11.45am  Making legislation: financial legislation
•  John Nethercote

11.50am-12.45pm  Making legislation: regulations and ordinances
John Nethercote

12.45-1.45pm  Luncheon

1.45-3.00pm  Plenary session: comparisons/contrasts/review/stocktake/comments
•  Professor Glenn Withers, AO
•  Dr Rob Campbell
•  John Nethercote

3.00-3.30pm  Afternoon tea

3.30-5.00pm  Visit to High Court of Australia

**Monday 16 September**

9.00-10.30am  Public budgeting and the parliament
•  Stephen Bartos

10.30-11.00am  Morning tea

11.00am-12.30pm  Public budgets and the economy
Greg Taylor, AO

12.30-1.30pm Luncheon
1.30-3.00pm Projects
3.00-3.30pm Afternoon tea
3.30-5.00pm Parliament and international relations
  - TBA

Tuesday 17 September
9.00-10.30am Public budgets - documents
  - Lewis Hawke
10.30-11.00am Afternoon tea
11.00am-12.15pm Public budgets and federalism
  - Mike Woods
12.15-1.15pm Luncheon
2.00-2.35pm House of Representatives - Question Time
2.40-3.10pm The Senate - Question Time
3.10-3.25pm Visit ministerial suite
3.30-4.00pm Afternoon tea (Room 1R3)
4.00-5.15pm Leading the opposition

Wednesday 18 September
9.00-10.15am Parliamentary scrutiny of government: Committee operations
  - John Nethercote
10.15-10.45am Morning tea
10.45am-12.15pm Parliamentary scrutiny of government: The Auditor – General and the Joint Committee on Public Accounts
  - Pat Barrett, AM, Auditor–General of Australia
12.15-1.15pm Luncheon
1.15-2.30pm Parliamentary Committee - a chair’s perspective
  - Barney Cooney
2.30-3.00pm Afternoon tea
3.00-4.10pm Parliamentary Committee - a secretary’s role
  - Peter Grundy
4.15-5.15pm Parliamentary Committee - witness perspectives
  - A.S.Blunn, AO
  - P.D. Gourley

Thursday 19 September
Visit Goulburn as guests of Goulburn City Council

Friday 20 September
9.00-10.30am Government and the citizen - Australia’s system of administrative review
  - Professor John McMillan
10.30-11.00am Morning tea
11.00am-12.30pm Government and the citizen - the role of the Ombudsman
  - Oliver Winder, Deputy Ombudsman
12.30-1.30pm  Luncheon
1.30-2.45pm  Plenary Session
•  Professor Glenn Withers
•  John Nethercote
2.45-3.15pm  Afternoon tea
3.15-5.00pm  Parliamentarians and their electors

**Monday 23 September**
9.00-10.15am  Parliamentary Services Act
•  Andrew Podger, Parliamentary Services Commissioner; Public Service commissioner
10.15-10.45am  Morning tea
10.45-11.45am  Managing Parliament House
•  Michael Bolton, Secretary, Joint House Department
11.45am-12.30pm  Security matters
•  Michael Lucas, Security Controller, Parliament House
12.30-1.30pm  Luncheon
1.30-3.00pm  Order in the house
•  John Nethercote
3.00-3.30pm  Afternoon tea
3.30-5.00pm  Ethics matters
•  Dr Andrew Brien, Committee Secretary, House of Representatives

**Tuesday 24 September**
9.00am-12.30pm  Ethics matters
•  Dr Andrew Brien, Committee Secretary, House of Representatives
12.30-1.30pm  Luncheon
1.30-2.00pm  Plenary session
•  Professor Glenn Withers
•  John Nethercote
2.00-5.00pm  Projects

**Wednesday 25 September**
9.30-10.15am  Meet his Excellency the Governor-General of Australia, the RT Revd Dr Peter Hollingworth, AC at Government House, Canberra
10.15am  Morning tea with his Excellency
11.00am  Program for remainder of the day to be advised

**Thursday 26 September**
9.00-9.30am  Projects
9.30-10.30am  Presentation of project reports -1
•  From a bill to an Act of Parliament
10.30-11.00am  Morning tea
11.00am-12.00pm  Presentation of project reports -2
•  A Year in the Life of a Committee
12.00-1.00pm  Luncheon
Afternoon at the ACT Legislative Assembly