

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY
INFORMATION AND
REFERENCE

CASEWORK SERVICES

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat was approached by the CPA Scotland Branch about an enquiry on the level of support that legislatures offer to Members, and their staff in the production and delivery of casework/casework services to the public.

Research Report | February 2025 | By Faith Oyenekan

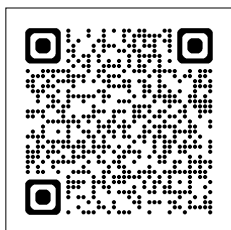
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CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	1
QUESTIONS	1
REGIONS AND BRANCHES RESPONSES	1
SUMMARY FINDINGS	2
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
CITATION	

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BACKGROUND

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat was approached by the CPA Scotland Branch about an enquiry on the level of support that Legislatures offer to Members, and their staff in the production and delivery of casework/casework services to the public. This research aims to support a collaboration between Glasgow University and the CPA Scotland Branch in their work to establish a Caseworker Forum for Members and their staff. This enquiry was conducted in 2024.

QUESTIONS

The Scotland Branch outlined three questions they wanted to gather information on:

1. Do you currently provide any level of support to Members and/or their staff in the delivery of their casework service to the general public?
 2. If so, what is the nature of this support?
 3. Would you be willing to engage with the Scottish Parliament on our work into exploring how Legislatures can be innovative in providing resources and well-being support to Members and their staff in the delivery of their casework service? This would possibly include attendance at a follow-up conference where the findings of the work would be shared, and colleagues can discuss them.
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REGIONS AND BRANCHES RESPONSES

The CPRS received 16 responses from the CPA Member Branches. There were 3 responses from the Africa Region, 2 responses from the Australia Region, 3 responses from the British Islands and Mediterranean Region, 4 responses from the Canada Region, 1 response from the Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic Region, and 3 responses from the Pacific Region.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

From the responses received from CPA Branches just over half of the Parliaments provide some level of support to their Members and staff on the production and delivery of casework services.

The type of support that these Branches provide to their Members and staff include financial support, legal support, induction programmes for Members and their staff, professional development conferences and sessions, administrative support, advisory support, IT support, and advice on data protection among others. The support provided by some Branches is highlighted below.

Jersey has a Constituency Support Team to assist the Members with casework among other services. This team provides assistance, upon request, with research, production of a finding paper or reports, liaising with third parties and other government departments on behalf of the members of the public (with consent) and providing suggested solutions to the Member.

Canada Federal provides a range of support to its Members on the production and delivery of casework services. There is an MP Employee Onboarding Program. This program involves consultation with the Whips offices and a series of interviews conducted with senior caseworkers from all parties. This project involves a collaboration between the Parliament's library, members of human resources services, the office of the law clerk and parliamentary council and the Member's onboarding and training program. A webinar program runs four times a year and is an introduction to casework, where the background to casework is covered as well as an introduction to the other services available to support them, including research support, legal support, HR and communication support and mental health support. There is also a Member's Orientation Program (MOP) which is currently under development. This program aims to provide newly elected MPs with the necessary information they need by meeting with subject matter experts before they first receive the keys to their constituency office. This is based on the just-in-time principle of the program. There is also regular in-house training for Members and their employees, and a program on de-escalating potential violent situations with strategies for dealing with difficult situations that are linked to casework files.

Cyprus provides general support which assists Members in the delivery of these services. Each MP can employ a parliamentary assistant, the MPs have access to a range of services that are staffed by competent employees and the House's official website keeps the public informed about all relevant developments. Additionally, research, studies, and brief analysis conducted by the Research, Studies and Publications Service are made publicly available to support parliamentary work.

Québec provides administrative support to Members in relation to casework services. There are also various measures that have been put in place to support the work of Members within their constituencies. These include IT services portal, manuals, guides, training days, etc. The Assemblée Nationale library also offers a range of services to constituency offices such as the library newsletter, research on grants and financial aid for organisations, business and/or citizens in the constituency, research dossiers on local issues, monitoring and press reviews on local issues, and loans on documents that can be delivered to constituency offices. Each Member of Parliament also receives an annual budget from the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity for the Volunteer Support Program. The aim of this is to provide financial support to local organisations in the fields of recreation, support, and community life.

In **New Zealand**, there is a Constituent Case Forum in place, and this is a monthly Teams meeting across all Member support staff that work with constituents. The purpose of this meeting is to create an opportunity for members' staff to connect and share cases, issues, and resolutions. One of the parliamentary librarians is also in attendance to provide support for issues raised and current information on topics discussed. The chat function of this forum stays open all month for updates and other relevant information. There is also an Officer Manager Call which is a weekly Teams meeting across all member support staff who have office management responsibilities. The purpose of this call is to provide the latest updates from parliamentary staff business units and create a space to connect and provide support to each other.

Vanuatu provides a range of support for their Members and staff. These include an induction programme at the beginning of every legislative term, administrative assistance, legal and policy advice, training and capacity building sessions, information and research services, liaison with government agencies, technical support. The objective of this comprehensive support framework is to ensure that Members of Parliament can fulfil their responsibilities to the public and ensure that the needs of their constituents are met. The Parliament also has goals that it aims to achieve by conducting these programmes and providing these resources and these include strengthening legislative competence, enhancing public service delivery, promoting effective governance, and fostering regional and international collaboration.

Cook Islands provides advisory support to its Members.

Kenya provides financial support to its Members and this covers constituency offices operational budget and constituency staffing costs.

The **Isle of Man** provides a range of services to Members and their staff as a way of providing support and these include reception services, IT support, administrative support, an interface for IT requests, and advice on FOI and data protection. In Victoria, the Members are entitled to electoral officers who work in the Member's electorate office. These officers provide support to individual constituents, provide advice, referrals and follow-up services. An annual conference is also held for these officers in order to improve their capabilities in providing quality work and support to the Members and their constituents.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In **Samoa**, parliamentary officials assist Members with a range of tasks. While some of these support an MP's legislative work in Apia, several relate to personal/constituency responsibilities, which can sometimes lead to officials in Parliament's secretariat assisting with party-political requests. All 51 constituencies in Samoa have recently been assigned funds through the Government's District Development Project. This initiative, which is relatively new, sees all constituencies allocated \$1 million Tala to be spent on local infrastructure projects and related constituency initiatives. To this end, it was flagged during stakeholder conversations that part of this fund could be used by Members of Parliament to establish functioning constituency offices and employ at least one full-time staffer to support the important local work carried out by MPs.¹

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our gratitude to the CPA Branches that contributed to this CPRS enquiry on Casework Services by sending in responses and providing relevant details. Detailed responses to this inquiry can be made available to CPA Branches upon request.

CITATION

F. Oyenekan, *Casework Services*, Commonwealth Parliamentary Research Service, CPA, 2025

1. CPA Benchmarks Outcomes Report for the Parliament of Samoa, https://www.cpahq.org/media/hi4dqa0k/samoa_benchmarks_outcome_report_june_2024.pdf



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