

HOUSE REVIEW



Selected features of House of Representatives business

Sitting period 13 – 16 November 2023 (no. 64)

The second to last sitting week for the year featured several extended sittings to consider legislation.

Legislation

Seventeen bills were introduced during the week. This included two private Members' bills, relating to lobbying and political advertising, five bills received from the Senate and 10 government bills initiated in the House. Fifteen bills were read a third time.

Private Senators' bills

Bills initiated in the Senate are transmitted to the House under cover of a formal message and introduced to the House by the Speaker reading the terms of the message to the House. The bill is then read a first time. Under standing order 166, Senate bills coming to the House for the first time proceed, to the necessary extent, as though they were a House bill. When a private Senator's bill is received, it is open to a minister to move a motion relating to the second reading, in which case the bill is treated as government business. Alternatively, a private Member may take carriage of the bill by moving that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting. The bill is then treated as private Members' business.

On Monday, during government business time, the Speaker reported a message from the Senate transmitting the Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Small Business Redundancy Exemption) Bill 2023, a private Senators' bill. After the bill was read a first time, the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations moved that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting, to which the Manager of Opposition Business moved an amendment to read 'the bill be considered immediately'. Debate continued until it was interrupted for Members' statements and was not resumed.

That afternoon, the Speaker reported a message from the Senate transmitting a second private Senators' bill relating to workplace relations. The bill was read a first time.

A message transmitting a third private Senators' bill relating to workplace relations was then reported. After the first reading, as it was not open to a private Member to move that the bill be considered immediately, the Manager of Opposition Business moved to suspend standing and sessional orders to enable him to move that the bill be brought on for debate immediately. The motion was defeated on division. When a fourth private Senators' bill was read a first time, the Manager of Opposition Business moved a similar motion. After this was defeated on division, he then moved a suspension of standing orders to allow the second bill in the package to be considered immediately. The House divided again, and the motion was defeated.

Debate management motion

During government business on Tuesday afternoon, the Leader of the House, pursuant to notice, moved a suspension of standing and sessional orders relating to the consideration of the Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Bill. The motion provided for debate on the second reading to continue until 10.30 pm following the adjournment debate that evening and the following evening, with any questions necessary to complete the second reading of the bill to be put immediately following prayers on Thursday morning, with proceedings to be adjourned once any

messages from the Governor-General under standing order 147 had been announced. It also provided for detail amendments to be moved in sets, with one question to be put on all government amendments, one question to be put on all opposition amendments and separate questions to be put on any sets of amendments moved by crossbench Members, with debate on any question to be limited to 20 minutes unless a further period was set by a Minister. An amendment moved by the Manager of Opposition Business to omit the provision to limit debate on sets of detail amendments to 20 minutes was defeated on division. The original motion was then agreed to on division.

Pursuant to the House's resolution, debate on the second reading continued until almost 10.30 pm on Tuesday evening. On Wednesday evening, when no further Members rose to speak, the questions were put on a series of second reading amendments. Three of the amendments were negatived on the voices and a division was called on the question that the final amendment be agreed. As it was after 6.30 pm, the division was deferred and was called on the following morning. When the amendment was defeated, the question on the second reading was put and passed on division. Messages from the Governor-General recommending appropriation for the purposes of the bill and amendments to be moved by a Minister were announced, and proceedings then adjourned, in accordance with the resolution.

Bill passes both Houses on one day

On Thursday morning, the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs introduced the Migration Amendment (Bridging Visa Conditions) Bill 2023 and moved the second reading. After his speech, debate was adjourned in accordance with standing order 142. The Leader of the House then moved a contingent motion to suspend standing orders to enable debate on the second reading to resume immediately, with the time limit for Members speaking to be five minutes and the second reading to continue for no more than one hour, after which the bill would be passed through all remaining stages without delay. To this, the Manager of Opposition Business moved an amendment to provide for greater time limits of 10 minutes for the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister. During debate, the Leader of the House moved closure of question. When this was agreed to on division, the question on the amendment was put and passed on the voices.

The House then divided on the question that the suspension motion, as amended, be agreed to. This was passed and debate on the second reading resumed. In accordance with the resolution, debate was interrupted after an hour and the question was put. The House divided but, as only three members voted 'no', in accordance with standing order 127 a full count was not required. After the bill was read a second time, leave was granted for the third reading to be moved immediately. The question was agreed to on the voices and the bill was read a third time.

The bill was transmitted to the Senate for its concurrence. After Question Time, anticipating that the Senate would complete its consideration of the bill that evening, the Leader of the House moved that standing order 31 (automatic adjournment of the House) and standing order 33 (limit on business after normal time of adjournment) be suspended, which was agreed to on the voices. This meant that there was no requirement for the Speaker to propose the question 'That the House do now adjourn' at 4.30 pm (as is usual under standing order 31), and there was no limit on new business being introduced after 8 pm. After the discussion of the matter of public importance, a motion relating to committee membership and the reporting of a Senate message, six members were each granted leave to make a short statement of no more than five minutes at the time the adjournment debate would normally take place.

Shortly before 5 pm, the Speaker left the Chair. When he resumed the Chair at 9.37 pm, the Speaker reported that the Senate had returned the bill with amendments. The amendments were considered immediately and agreed to on division, following debate. The House then adjourned at 9.59 pm.

Fifth anniversary of the national apology to victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse

On Monday, immediately before Question Time, the Prime Minister moved that the House commemorate the fifth anniversary of the national apology to victims and survivors of institutional

child sexual abuse. The Leader of the Opposition also spoke to the motion before debate was adjourned. It was referred to the Federation Chamber, where debate resumed on Thursday morning.

Ministerial statement

On Wednesday, the Minister for the Environment and Water made a ministerial statement regarding Australia's international environment leadership, by leave. As provided for under the standing orders, the shadow minister then addressed the House in reply. A take note motion was then moved and referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Statements by leave

On Tuesday, following Question Time, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition made statements, by leave, relating to the death of Helena Carr.

Motions to suspend standing and sessional orders

On Monday afternoon, the Member for Brisbane moved to suspend standing and sessional orders to enable him to move a motion in relation to the criminal trial of a whistleblower. The suspension motion was defeated on division following debate.

During Question Time on Wednesday, the Leader of the Opposition moved to suspend standing and sessional orders to enable him to move a motion relating to the Prime Minister and the government. The suspension motion was defeated following debate.

Parliamentary committees

On Monday morning, following the acknowledgement of country and prayers, the Chair of the Petitions Committee, Ms Templeman, presented a report from the committee, along with petitions and ministerial responses, and made a statement, in which she noted that one of the petitions presented had raised concerns about e-petitions and the signature collection process. It had been brought to the committee's attention that giveaways were being offered for signing the petition and that some signatories appeared to have signed the petition more than once using the same name but different email accounts. The Chair placed on the record the committee's condemnation of offering any kind of incentive for signing a petition. In order to spell out the clearly the requirement that people sign petitions only once, the committee is making changes to the process so that all signatories will be required to check a box confirming that they have signed the petition only once.

Communication with the Senate

In addition to the communications listed above, other message traffic related to committee membership and legislation.

The House is scheduled to meet next on 27 November, with the Senate scheduled to sit on 17 November.

Further information on the work of the House

[Bills and legislation](#)—access bills, explanatory memoranda, amendments, speeches, information about key stages of a bill's consideration, and a tracking option

[Live Minutes](#)—a real time summary of House decisions and proceedings. When used in conjunction with the [Daily Program](#), the Live Minutes are a simple way to track the House's work each day

[House of Representatives Practice](#) 7 ed., 2018—the most authoritative guide to House procedure

[House of Representatives Standing and Sessional Orders](#), as at 2 August 2022—the House's rules of procedure

[Procedural Digest](#)—a record of selected procedural events in the House of Representatives Chamber and the Federation Chamber. It includes Speaker's rulings, precedents and unusual situations.