

HOUSE REVIEW



Selected features of House of Representatives business

Sitting period 15 December 2022 (no. 54)

This sitting period consisted of only one sitting day, an additional sitting not scheduled in the sitting pattern, to consider a government bill. The Federation Chamber did not meet.

Additional sitting

The House sat for an additional day on 15 December to consider legislation relating to energy prices. The Speaker set the new day under standing order 30(c), which allows the Speaker to set an alternative day or hour for the next meeting when the House is not sitting.

At the beginning of the day, the Deputy Leader of the House moved to suspend standing orders to arrange business for the sitting. The motion provided for the introduction of the Treasury Laws Amendment (Energy Price Relief Plan) Bill 2022 and set the arrangements for debate on the bill (see below), provided for a condolence motion to be moved and debated and also provided for the suspension of the House at no later than 1.30 pm until the ringing of the bells, at which time only a Senate message regarding the bill could be considered.

The Manager of Opposition Business moved an amendment proposing an alternative order of business for the day. This was defeated on division (81:45). The original motion to suspend standing orders required an absolute majority (that is, at least 76 Members) to pass, as it was moved without notice. The motion was carried on division (81:45).

Later in the day, the House agreed to a motion varying the terms of the resolution to allow debate of the condolence motion to continue until 3 pm.

Legislation

Under the standing orders, notice must be given before a bill is introduced (unless it is an appropriation or taxation bill) and debate must be adjourned once the Member presenting the bill has made their second reading speech. The energy price relief plan bill was not an appropriation or tax bill and no notice had been given. Therefore the resolution agreed earlier in the day suspended standing orders to allow the bill to be introduced and debate to continue immediately after the Minister had made his second reading speech. It also provided for speaking times of 10 minutes for the Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and five minutes each for all other Members during the second reading debate. Times were set for the conclusion of the second reading debate and for any other questions to be put to conclude the consideration in detail stage.

During the second reading debate, the Leader of the Opposition moved an amendment to the question 'That the bill be now read a second time'. Mr Bandt then moved an amendment to this amendment, before Dr M Ryan moved an amendment to Mr Bandt's amendment. Each amendment was considered in turn and disagreed to before the original question was agreed to and the bill read a second time.

After the Speaker announced a message from the Governor-General recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the bill, the House then proceeded to consider the bill in detail. The resolution agreed earlier in the day provided for amendments to be moved and considered in sets, with 10 minutes of debate allowed for each set of amendments. Ms Tink moved three detail amendments

together, which were negatived on the voices. Debate then continued until noon, when the question 'That the bill be agreed to' was put as required by the resolution. The bill being agreed to, on division, the House agreed to the motion for the third reading and the bill was read a third time.

Leave of absence granted to all Members

The resolution agreed earlier in the day also provided that a Minister could move leave of absence for all Members, which the Deputy Leader of the House did in the early afternoon. Under section 38 of the Constitution, a Member's place becomes vacant if, without permission of the House, that Member does not attend the House for two consecutive months of a session of the Parliament. It is therefore routine for a motion that leave of absence be given to every Member 'from the determination of this sitting until the date of the next sitting' to be moved at the end of a period of sittings.

Condolence motion

Immediately after making an acknowledgement of country and reading prayers, the Speaker made a statement regarding the recent deaths of Constable Matthew Arnold, Constable Rachel McCrow and Mr Alan Dare. As a mark of respect, all Members present stood in silence.

Later, following consideration of the energy price relief plan bill, the Prime Minister moved that the House record its deep regret at the death of Constable Arnold, Constable McCrow and Mr Dare. The motion was seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. Nineteen other Members spoke to the motion.

The motion was referred to the Federation Chamber for further debate and the sitting was then suspended, in accordance with the resolution agreed earlier in the day, at 2.25 pm.

Communication with the Senate

Following its passage by the House, the energy price relief plan bill was transmitted to the Senate for concurrence. The Senate fully considered the bill that afternoon and made no amendments. Once the bill had passed through all stages in the Senate, in accordance with the resolution passed earlier in the day the bells were rung for five minutes, the Speaker resumed the Chair and, as the House did not need to consider any Senate message relating to the bill, adjourned the House at 5.06 pm.

The House is scheduled to meet next on 6 February 2022.

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.