

HOUSE REVIEW



Selected features of House of Representatives business

Sitting period 16-19 October 2023 (no. 63)

This single sitting week featured: reactions to the recent attacks by Hamas, the passage of bills and several motions to suspend standing and sessional orders.

Rearrangement of business to permit discussion of attacks by Hamas and the ongoing conflict

During private Members' business on Monday, the Prime Minister moved to suspend standing orders to arrange business for the day. The motion made provision for government business taking priority until 1.30 pm and the Prime Minister moving a motion relation to Hamas attacks on Israel and the ongoing conflict, to be debated immediately. Further statements would then be permitted at a later hour. Under the terms of the suspension motion, following the presentation of documents after Question Time, private Members' business could continue for a maximum of 60 minutes.

After the motion to suspend standing orders was agreed to on the voices, the Prime Minister moved his motion relating to the attacks on Israel by Hamas. In accordance with the suspension motion, the Leader of the Opposition was then permitted to speak for a time equal to the Prime Minister. At the conclusion of his speech, as a sign of respect for the lives lost, all Members present rose in their places, before debate recommenced.



Photo courtesy of Auspic (Paul Furness and David Foote).

The Leader of the Australian Greens then moved an amendment to the Prime Minister's motion, which was negated on division when the question was put soon after 1.15 pm, as required by the terms of the suspension motion. When the question was put on the original motion, there being only four Members voting no, the Speaker declared the decision of the House in the affirmative without completing a count, in accordance with standing order 127, and noted that some of the members voting no wished to have their names recorded. When some Members voting aye indicated that they also wished to have their names recorded, the bells were rung again and a complete count was conducted and the results recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

Following Question Time and the presentation of documents, the House continued its consideration of items of private Members' business that the Selection Committee had scheduled for the morning. Earlier in the day, in light of the anticipated interruption to private Members' business, the Member for Mackellar had fixed the following week as the new day for presenting her private Member's bill.

By leave, the Member moved that the postponement be rescinded, and, when the House agreed, presented a bill relating to the water trigger mechanism.

Later in the afternoon, Members made further statements on Hamas attacks on Israel and ongoing conflict.

The Daily Program, or blue, was predicated on the initial motion to suspend standing orders being moved immediately following prayers. When this did not occur, business followed the order in the *Notice Paper* for the day until the suspension motion was moved and agreed. This underscores the blue's status as an informal guide, rather than an official document of the House.

On Tuesday, by leave, a minister moved that further statements on Hamas attacks and the ongoing conflict be permitted in the Federation Chamber. This was agreed on the voices. Statements were made between Members' constituency statements and the grievance debate.

The following day, on motion by a minister, the House resolved to suspend standing orders to permit further statements on the matter immediately following conclusion of the discussion of the matter of public importance and the presentation of any reports from committees. The resolution provided for the usual adjournment debate from 7.30 pm to 8 pm but also permitted statements resuming from 8 pm until no further Members rose to speak. Statements concluded at 8.40 pm and the House immediately adjourned in accordance with the resolution.

Marking the death of a former Member

On Monday, the Speaker informed the House of the death of a former Member for Cowper, Garry Owen Barr Nehl AM. As a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased, all Members present stood, in silence. By indulgence, the Prime Minister also made a short statement about Mr Nehl.

Condolence motion

On Monday, before Question Time, the Prime Minister referred to the deaths of Captain Danniell Lyon, Lieutenant Maxwell Nugent, Warrant Officer Class 2 Joseph Phillip Laycock and Corporal Alexander Naggs while taking part in Exercise Talisman Sabre and moved that the House place on record its appreciation of their service and tender its profound sympathy to their families and colleagues. The Leader of the Opposition seconded the motion. After a brief debate, the question was put and passed, all Members present having risen, in silence.

Motions to suspend standing and sessional orders

During Question Time on Monday, the Leader of the Opposition moved to suspend standing and sessional orders to allow him to move a motion relating to Indigenous Australians. In accordance with standing order 47(e), the Leader of the House required that further proceedings take place at 5.30 pm, and Question Time continued. The Leader of the Opposition's motion was seconded and debated at 5.30 pm, before being defeated on division.

On Tuesday, the Member for Kennedy moved to suspend standing and sessional orders to allow him to move a motion relating to runoff regulatory impositions and the Great Barrier Reef. The suspension motion was debated before being defeated on the voices.

On Thursday, immediately after acknowledgement of country and prayers, the Leader of the Opposition sought leave to move a motion calling on the government to support a number of Opposition proposals relating to Indigenous communities and programs. When leave was not granted, he moved to suspend standing orders to allow him to move the motion. The suspension motion was defeated on division.

Statements by indulgence

On Monday, both the Prime Minister and the former Prime Minister, the Member for Cook, made statements congratulating Mr Adam Thomas for his 25 years of service as the house manager at Kirribilli House.

During Question Time on Tuesday, following a question to the Minister for Industry and Science, both the Prime Minister and the shadow minister for science and the arts congratulated the winners of the Prime Minister's Prizes for Science.

Before Question Time on Wednesday, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, by indulgence, made statements in relation to the visit to Australia by the Prime Minister of Fiji, who was present in the Chamber. Following Question Time, both the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition made statements regarding the death of Richard Mainey during bushfires in New South Wales.

Following Question Time on Thursday, the Prime Minister made a statement in relation to his upcoming visit to the United States. The Leader of the Opposition then made a statement in reply.

Ministerial statement and statements on significant matters

On Tuesday, by leave, the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories made a statement on Northern Australia. She noted in her opening remarks that she was making the annual statement on Northern Australia on behalf of the Minister for Northern Australia, who was unwell. The Leader of the Nationals then made a statement in response. Under standing order 63A, when the House has granted a minister leave to make a statement, the opposition speaker is deemed to have leave to speak in response for an equal amount of time.

On Thursday morning, the Minister for Social Services, pursuant to notice, made a statement on a significant matter, relating to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. The Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme then addressed the House in reply.

Later that day, the Minister for Government Services, by leave, made a ministerial statement relating to the government response to the Security Risk Management Review, before the shadow minister for government services and the digital economy made a statement in reply.

My First Speech competition winners

On Tuesday, the Speaker informed the House that the winners of the My First Speech competition – Chelsea Adams, Amy Forchert and Aled Stephens – were present in the gallery and offered his congratulations.

Legislation

Eleven government bills were introduced. These included a bill to make minor amendments to various Commonwealth Acts, following the accession of His Majesty King Charles III, to update references to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to 'the Sovereign', to provide flexibility to the application and operation of existing and future legislation, in the event of the accession of a new Sovereign.

Two private Members' bills were introduced. These related to a curfew and related restrictions on aircraft movements at Brisbane Airport and an expansion of the circumstances in which certain petroleum mining developments must be assessed and approved by the environment minister.

Six government bills passed the House during the week.

Sittings in 2024

A calendar of proposed parliamentary sittings for 2024 was debated and agreed to on Thursday. An Opposition amendment to add an additional sitting week was defeated on division. The calendar is now available online at www.aph.gov.au/calendar.

Communication with the Senate

Message traffic this week related to bills. Four bills were returned from the Senate with amendments. Two of these were considered shortly before the adjournment debate on Thursday.

The House is scheduled to meet next on Monday, 13 November. Senate estimates and a week of Senate sittings will take place during the intervening weeks.

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.