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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Use of electronic devices in the Chamber and Federation Chamber

House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Procedure

September 2014  
Canberra

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## Foreword

On 27 February 2014, the Procedure Committee resolved to inquire into the use of electronic devices in the House of Representatives Chamber and the Federation Chamber.

This inquiry was generated by a genuine concern from Members regarding the appropriate use of electronic devices in the Chamber and Federation Chamber – what rules apply and what guidance might assist Members to be aware of and understand their responsibilities.

The report covers a range of issues including relevant aspects of parliamentary privilege, Members' obligations when using electronic devices, and the nature and content of their communications from electronic devices. The Committee has made two straight-forward recommendations. I believe all Members would benefit from the proposed resolution on the use of electronic devices: this will provide clarity and complement our standing orders.

The Committee also recommends current guidance on the status of Members' records and correspondence be updated to include communications by electronic devices. By addressing the broader context of communications by Members and the diverse nature of the forms of communication they use currently, this will provide a more comprehensive resource for all Members.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank Members who contributed to discussions and provided written submissions. I would also like to thank my Procedure Committee colleagues for their work and support during the inquiry.

Don Randall MP  
Chair



## Membership of the Committee

Chair Mr Don Randall MP

Deputy Chair Hon Michael Danby MP

Members Mr Russell Broadbent MP

Ms Jill Hall MP

Mr Scott Buchholz MP

Mr Chris Hayes MP

Mr Ian Goodenough MP

## Committee Secretariat

Secretary Ms Catherine Cornish

Inquiry Secretary Mrs Lynne Eveston

Research Officers Ms Naomi Swann (to 14.3.2014)

Ms Susan Dinon (from 17.3.2014)

Ms Penny Branson



## Terms of reference

To inquire into and report on the use of electronic devices in the House of Representatives Chamber and Federation Chamber for public communications, including but not limited to:

1. The adequacy of the current regulatory framework; and
2. Members' awareness of the regulatory framework.



## List of abbreviations

ACTLA Deb	Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Debates (Hansard)
HC Deb	House of Commons Debates (Hansard)
HR Deb	Parliamentary Debates (Hansard – House of Representatives)
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MP	Member of Parliament
NSWLA Deb	New South Wales Legislative Assembly Debates (Hansard)
NZ Deb	New Zealand Debates (Hansard)
SO	Standing order
US HR	United States House of Representatives





## List of recommendations

### 2 Current use of electronic devices

#### Recommendation 1 (para 2.44)

The Committee recommends that the House of Representatives Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests consider reviewing and updating its 'Guidelines for members on the status and handling of their records and correspondence' to include communications by Members via electronic devices.

### 3 Committee conclusions

#### Recommendation 2 (para 3.7)

The Committee recommends that:

- the House consider and adopt a resolution in the terms set out in the proposed resolution on the use of electronic devices extracted at Appendix B;
- the terms of the resolution be included with published versions of the Standing Orders; and
- the terms of the resolution be drawn to the attention of all Members, in particular to new Members as part of their orientation program.