



DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

No. 298

13 November 2015

For the sitting period 9 - 12 November 2015

LEGISLATION

Several bills were passed during the week, including the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015 which was agreed to with amendments moved by non-government senators. The amendments included the repeal of the *Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (Better Targeting the Income Tax Transparency Laws) Act 2015* which was agreed to in the last sitting period (see Bulletin [No. 297](#)), and which removed previously legislated transparency measures relating to the amount of tax paid by large private companies. Reasons advanced for the removal included privacy and security concerns, despite the lack of any evidence that publication of details of private companies could expose their principals to personal safety risks. Some senators were critical of a lobbying group which had made submissions to the Economics Legislation Committee advocating the removal of the transparency measures, claiming it to be a so-called "astroturfing" operation representing moneyed interests, as opposed to a grassroots body representing community concerns. The House of Representatives disagreed with the amendments on 12 November and the matter remains unresolved.

The question for the second reading of a package of three bills concerning foreign acquisitions was divided on 11 November at the request of the Government. Two of the bills proceeded to third reading while debate on the main bill was adjourned.

Bills implementing aspects of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement were passed on 9 November with Opposition support. The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate (Senator Wong) tabled correspondence from the trade minister providing certain undertakings in relation to labour market testing, to be implemented through regulations, which reflected the basis of the Opposition's support for the bills.

The House of Representatives agreed to the Senate's amendments to the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014 (see Bulletin [No. 297](#)).

"Anthea's Law", co-sponsored by the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis, and Senator Xenophon (see Bulletin [No. 297](#)) was passed without amendments on 12 November.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The President made a [statement](#) on 9 November, giving precedence to two matters of privilege, raised by Senators Di Natale and Gallacher, relating to possibly false or misleading evidence given to the former Select Committee on the Recent Allegations relating to Conditions and Circumstances at the Regional Processing Centre in Nauru. The references to the Privileges Committee were agreed to as formal motions on 10 November.

PROCEDURE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Procedure Committee's *Third report of 2015* was presented on 10 November, recommending a minor change to update the terms of reference of the Senate Publications Committee, and the trial of a temporary order giving senators the right to take note of ministerial statements without notice. The recommendations were adopted on 11 November with the temporary order to operate for the remainder of the Parliament.

2016 SITTINGS

Days of meeting for 2016 were agreed to on 10 November. An amendment moved by the Australian Greens to remove overlap between proposed sittings in the second half of 2016 and school holidays was not successful. An election is due in the second half of 2016.

RECORDS - CONFIDENTIALITY PERIOD

A motion agreed to on 11 November noted the 40th anniversary of the dismissal of the Whitlam government and called on the Government to seek the earlier release of correspondence between then Governor-General and the Queen, which is currently embargoed till 2027.

NEW SELECT COMMITTEE

The controversial issue of coal seam gas extraction continues to interest the Senate which has inquired into the matter several times since 2011, including in respect of legislation and in the context of inquiries into the management of the Murray Darling Basin, and certain aspects of Queensland government administration. Senator Lazarus initiated a select committee inquiry into the matter, with himself as chair, agreed to by the Senate on 12 November after an amendment to the Committee's membership ensured that it better reflected the composition of the Senate. Despite an increase in government representation on the committee, the Government nonetheless opposed the establishment of the committee which brings to five the number of select committees in operation.

DISORDER IN QUESTION TIME

No senator has been suspended for disorder since 2003. On 12 November, after repeated interjections and a warning from the President, Senator Conroy was reported to the Senate (or "named") by the President for persistently and wilfully disregarding the authority of the chair ([SO 203\(1\)\(e\)](#)). When called on to make an explanation or apology, Senator Conroy apologised.

RELATED RESOURCES

The [Dynamic Red](#) records proceedings in the Senate as they happen each day.

The [Senate Daily Summary](#) provides more detailed information on Senate proceedings, including progress of legislation, committee reports and other documents tabled and major actions by the Senate.

Like this bulletin, these documents can be found on the [Senate website](#).

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