



Procedural Information Bulletin

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For the sitting period 12 to 22 August 2024

Senators and the Senate

Senator Payman informed the Senate that she had resigned from the Australian Labor Party and would sit as an independent senator on the crossbench. Senator Darmanin, who took her seat on 24 June, gave her first speech on 21 August.

On the weekend following the sittings, it was reported that Queensland LNP Senator Gerard Rennick would resign from the LNP and establish the Gerard Rennick People First Party, taking the number of crossbench senators to 21.

Legislation

On 12 August, the Minister for Workplace Relations took the unusual step of seeking leave to introduce a bill. The bill sought [to amend the Fair Work \(Registered Organisations\) Act 2009](#) to place the Construction and General Division of the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union into administration. The bill was debated throughout the first sitting week. The government tried to impose a limitation of debate (a 'guillotine') by motion on notice on 14 August and by way of a suspension of standing orders the following day, but those efforts were opposed by the Opposition and most of the crossbench. On 19 August, after further debate, the government initiated another attempt to limit debate, this time finding support from all parties in the Senate other than the Australian Greens. The bill was passed with amendments from the Opposition, Senator David Pocock and the Jacqui Lambie Network.

The bill to '[Get the NDIS Back on Track](#)' returned to the Senate, having been referred to a second committee inquiry in June: see [Bulletin 382](#). Before debate resumed, the chair informed the Senate that the various second reading amendments that had been moved to refer the bill back to the committee had been overtaken by events and would be regarded as spent. The bill was read a second time on 12 August. A committee stage (of some 7 hours and 50 minutes) ensued over several days, although it involved general debate and questions to the minister, rather than progressing through the many amendments circulated to the bill. On 21 August the Senate agreed to guillotine the bill and a handful of others at lunchtime the following day. The bill ultimately passed the Senate with a mix of government, opposition and crossbench amendments.

Three other government bills passed without amendment as part of that guillotine, and another three government bills passed under a separate guillotine, initiated by the government by suspension of standing orders after question time on the final sitting day. Several of these bills passed without any Senate debate, including the [Public Service Amendment Bill \(No. 2\) 2024](#), which empowers the Australian Public Service (APS) Commissioner to investigate whether former Agency Heads have breached the APS Code of Conduct. Others included the bills to establish a [Net Zero Economy](#)

[Authority](#). The main bill passed with amendments from the Australian Greens, to expand its objects and insert provisions for independent review of its operation, as well as amendments from Senator Thorpe to increase the size of the proposed authority's board. Government senators did not support the latter amendments so it will be interesting to see whether they are accepted in the House of Representatives when it returns in September.

On 21 August the Senate also passed a private senator's bill introduced by Senator Dean Smith to require people entering Australia to [disclose overseas organ transplants](#), as part of a framework to combat trafficking in human organs. Senator Smith initiated amendments to narrow the scope of the bill during a brief committee stage. Government senators did not support the bill, which suggests it is unlikely to pass the House.

Orders and explanations

The Senate agreed to 11 new orders for documents in the sitting period, including orders relating to national disaster governance funding arrangements (13 August), funding agreement schedules for land transport infrastructure projects (14 August) and a report into the Anindilyakwa Land Council (20 August). Two proposed orders were defeated, including an order relating to the costs associated with civil claims against the AFP (15 August).

Documents were provided in compliance with two orders, in relation to the alternative fuels used in Cement Australia's Railton project (14 August) and for the government response to the report of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee on its inquiry into the shutdown of the 3G mobile network (19 August). In responding to an order concerning the cost of charter flights connected to the recent release of Mr Julian Assange, the Government maintained its previous position that orders for documents can only require the production of existing documents (see [Bulletin 363](#)), but nevertheless provided the information required by the order.

A response was provided out of sitting relating to an order agreed to in an earlier period concerning speechwriting services provided to the NDIS Minister (see [Bulletin 382](#)) to the effect that complying with the order would require a 'significant undertaking' to search, identify and compile the relevant material. On 22 August, the Senate rejected this as grounds for non-compliance, and again ordered the documents be produced.

Replacement document

Standing order 170 provides that a tabled document may not be amended or altered except by authority of the Senate. On 15 August, following an explanation from a minister that a previously tabled document inadvertently contained personal information, leave was granted for a document to be tabled that replaced the original document.

Urgency motions

On 21 August, the Senate debated an urgency motion on Taiwan proposed jointly by an opposition and a government senator. It is unusual for government senators to propose matters for discussion or debate under standing order 75, which provides for urgency motions and matters of public importance. In its second report of 2022, the Procedure Committee recommended that the opportunity to propose such matters should be allocated among non-government parties and independent senators on a proportional basis, rather than being subject to a daily ballot. At the same time, the committee accepted that there might be circumstances in which the whips would agree to allocate time to a matter proposed by a government senator.

Abortion and reproductive rights are topics on which Liberal Party senators traditionally exercise a conscience vote. So it was in relation to an urgency motion on abortion debated on 20 August. A speech by New South Wales Liberal Senator Maria Kovacic highlighted the difficulties involved in exercising binary votes on sensitive topics where only limited debating time is available.

Select committees

The Senate established two select committees, on the [Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme](#) reporting on 26 November 2024 and on [PFAS \(per and polyfluoroalkyl substances\)](#) reporting on 5 August 2025. With a reporting date clearly post the next election, the PFAS select committee will need to be re-established in the 48th Parliament to complete its work to this date.

Inquiries

One bill was referred for inquiry and report as a result of [Report No. 8](#) of the [Selection of Bills Committee](#). While [Report 9](#) of the committee recommended that the Housing Investment Probity Bill 2024, a private senators bill, be referred for inquiry, the government successfully moved an amendment to the motion to adopt the report that instead 'deferred' consideration of the bill, meaning that the bill remains on the committee's schedule for consideration at its next meeting.

Three reference committee inquiries were established, all referred to the Economics References Committee, relating to [the production of inflation rate statistics by the Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) (which included a direction that the committee hold a public hearing to hear from ABS officials), ['Big box' retailer price setting](#) and [the financial regulatory framework and home ownership](#).

Reports

References committees tabled 2 reports, including the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee which tabled the [report](#) on its inquiry into missing and murdered First Nations women and children, the culmination of a lengthy and significant inquiry.

The eight legislation committees each tabled their second 'reports on annual reports' for 2024, pursuant to standing order 25(20), which requires the committees to examine the annual reports of departments and agencies within their portfolios. These reports deal with annual reports tabled between 1 November 2023 and 30 April 2024. One bill [report](#) was also tabled, by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee on the Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Bill 2024, which subsequently passed the Senate.

The Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society tabled a brief [interim report](#) to note its progress and flag that, following a change in membership and the position of chair, it will be presenting a substantial interim report in the coming weeks, ahead of its final report which is due before 18 November.

Reports tabled out of sitting

Two references committee reports were presented out of sitting, including the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee's [interim report](#) on its inquiry into the shutdown of the 3G mobile network which recommended that the shutdown, scheduled for the end of August, be delayed due to concerns about the impact of the shutdown. The report was tabled on 1 August and on 13 August Telstra and Optus announced that the shutdown had been delayed by 2 months.

The Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience tabled its [final report](#), setting out a number of recommendations to improve Australia's preparedness to respond and recover from natural disasters.

Legislation committees presented seven reports out of sitting, including a further [report](#) by the Community Affairs Legislation Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024: the bill had been re-referred to the committee to examine the amendments that had been circulated to the bill, as well as the positions of the state and territory governments. The final two reports on the Budget Estimates 24/25 (from the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee and the Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Committee) were also presented, the reports of the other six legislation committees having been tabled in the last sitting period.

The Senators' Interests Committee also tabled its regular [report](#) on registrable interests, for the period 1 January to 30 June 2024.

RELATED RESOURCES

[Dynamic Red](#) – updated continuously during the sitting day, the Dynamic Red displays the results of proceedings as they happen.

[Senate Daily Summary](#) – a convenient summary of each day's proceedings in the Senate, with links to source documents.

Like this bulletin, these documents can be found on the Senate website: www.aph.gov.au/senate

Inquiries: **Clerk's Office (02) 6277 3350**