

The Senate

---

Procedure Committee

---

Closing the Gap statement

Indigenous Australian languages

Second report of 2019

October 2019

© Commonwealth of Australia 2019

ISBN 978-1-76093-009-7

## Membership of the Committee

Senator the Hon Scott Ryan (President of the Senate, Deputy Chair)

Senator Sue Lines (Deputy President and Chair of Committees, **Chair**)

Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann (Leader of the Government in the Senate)

Senator the Hon Penny Wong (Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)

Senator Catryna Bilyk (Tasmania)

Senator Slade Brockman (Western Australia)

Senator Johnathon Duniam (Tasmania)

Senator Katy Gallagher (Australian Capital Territory)

Senator Rachel Siewert (Western Australia)

Senator Dean Smith (Western Australia)

Committee on Procedure

The Senate

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Telephone: (02) 6277 3350

E-mail: [clerk.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:clerk.sen@aph.gov.au)

Internet: [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au)

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Australia License.



The details of this licence are available on the Creative Commons website:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/au/>

Printed by the Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra.

# Procedure Committee

## Second report of 2019

The committee reports to the Senate on the following matters, referred by the President of the Senate on 13 March 2019, at the request of the then Manager of Opposition Business, Senator O'Neill. Senator O'Neill's letter is reproduced at Appendix 1. Each matter proposes procedural changes.

### **Closing the Gap statement**

The first proposal asks that the Senate add to its practices surrounding consideration of the Prime Minister's annual 'Closing the Gap' statement. Senator O'Neill proposes a short suspension of Senate sittings to enable senators to attend the presentation of the statement in the House of Representatives.

The committee noted the proposal from Senator O'Neill that the Senate suspend each year to enable senators to attend the presentation of the Prime Minister's annual 'Closing the Gap' statement in the House of Representatives. The committee agreed to recommend that the Senate adopt the proposal, with an amendment that the suspension commence 10 minutes prior to the presentation of the statement, rather than 30 minutes as initially proposed.

### **Recommendation**

#### **1.1 That the Senate adopt a resolution, as follows:**

That each year, on the day on which the Prime Minister presents the annual report on progress in meeting the 'Closing the Gap' targets, the sitting of the Senate be suspended 10 minutes prior to the time set for the presentation of the report in the House of Representatives, until the ringing of the bells, to enable senators to attend.

### **Indigenous Australian languages**

The second proposal is that, where evidence is taken before a Senate committee in an Indigenous Australian language, the Senate requires that the evidence be transcribed in Hansard both in that language and in English.

The committee noted the proposal from Senator O'Neill to amend standing order 35 and adopt a standalone resolution relating to recording Indigenous Australian languages in committee *Hansards*. The committee agreed to recommend that the Senate adopt the proposal. The committee noted that, as a matter of practice, any committee recording evidence as proposed should ensure it is aware of the resources required. The committee agreed to keep a watching brief on resource implications.

**Recommendation**

**1.2 That standing order 35 be amended and the Senate adopt a resolution, as follows:**

*At the end of standing order 35, add:*

- (3) If evidence is heard by a committee in an Indigenous Australian language the transcript of that evidence shall record both:
  - (a) the evidence as submitted in the Indigenous Australian language; and
  - (b) an English translation of the evidence.

*Resolution:*

The Senate resolves that, where a committee has heard evidence in an Indigenous Australian language, the transcription by *Hansard* staff of the evidence as submitted, and its translation into English, should be assisted by the person who gave evidence or a person from their community.

Senator Sue Lines  
**Chair**

# Appendix 1



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

**PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE**  
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE SCOTT RYAN

REF: D19/90926 PC19-000060

Senator Sue Lines  
Deputy President and Chair of Committees  
Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Procedure

Dear Senator *Sue* Lines

As you know, in March this year, I referred to two matters to the committee, which formally lapsed following the prorogation of the 45th Parliament. In its first report of 2019, the committee discussed the proposals in the following terms:

### **Closing the Gap statement Indigenous Australian languages**

The President referred the above matters to the committee, on 13 March 2019, at the request of the Manager of Opposition Business, Senator O'Neill. Senator O'Neill's letter is reproduced at Appendix 4. Each matter proposes procedural changes.

The first proposal asks that the Senate add to its current practices surrounding consideration of the Prime Minister's annual 'Closing the Gap' statement. Senator O'Neill proposes a short suspension of Senate sittings to enable senators to attend the presentation of the statement in the House of Representatives.

The second proposal is that, where evidence is taken before a Senate committee in an Indigenous Australian language, the Senate requires that the evidence be transcribed in Hansard both in that language and in English.

The committee asks that senators consider these two matters, with the expectation that they will be considered further by the committee in the next Parliament.

In order to facilitate the committee's further consideration, I again refer the matters to the committee, in accordance with standing order 17(3).

I have copied this letter to Senator O'Neill, and will table it in the Senate at the next convenient opportunity.

Yours sincerely

*SCOTT RYAN,*

*29* July 2019



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE  
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE SCOTT RYAN

REF: D19/19667

Senator Sue Lines  
Chair  
Senate Standing Committee on Procedure  
Suite SG.44  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Sue', written over the printed name 'Sue Lines'.

**Reference of matters to the Senate Standing Committee on Procedure**

I have received a letter from the Manager of Opposition Business, Senator O'Neill, asking that I refer two matters to the Procedure Committee, pursuant to standing order 17(3). Those matters involve:

- suspending the sittings of the Senate to enable senators to attend the presentation of the annual Closing the Gap statement, and
- the transcription of Indigenous Australian languages into Hansard.

I am happy to refer the two matters, as requested. A copy of Senator O'Neill's letter is attached.

Yours sincerely

SCOTT RYAN

13 March 2019



**Senator Deborah O'Neill**  
**NEW SOUTH WALES**

Monday, 25 February 2019

Dear Mr President,

In accordance with standing order 17(3), I request that the following matters be referred to the Procedure Committee:

**Closing the Gap Statement**

A resolution, or amendment to the existing continuing order relating to parliamentary consideration of the Closing the Gap report, requiring that the sittings of the Senate be suspended for the presentation in the House of the annual Closing the Gap Statement:

*That each year, on the day on which the Prime Minister presents the annual report on progress in meeting the 'Closing the Gap' targets, the sitting of the Senate be suspended 30 minutes prior to the time set for the presentation of the report in the House of Representatives, until the ringing of the bells, to enable senators to attend.*

**Indigenous Languages and Hansard**

When committees take evidence in Indigenous languages that the Hansard record of proceedings recorded the language in which the evidence was given, the Indigenous language, as well as an English translation. An amendment to the standing orders along the following lines may achieve that end:

*At the end of standing order 35, add:*

(3) *If evidence is heard by a committee in an Indigenous Australian language the transcript of that evidence shall record both:*

(a) *the evidence as submitted in the Indigenous Australian language; and*

(b) *an English translation of the evidence.*

The phrase 'Indigenous Australian language' has been used noting that it appears to be the term used by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

In addition, alongside this amendment the following resolution expressing a preference that the transcription of the evidence as submitted and its translation be supported by the witness or a person from their community, along the following lines:

*The Senate resolves that, where a committee has heard evidence in an Indigenous Australian language, the transcription by Hansard staff of the evidence as submitted, and its translation into English, should be assisted by the person who gave the evidence or a person from their community.*

Yours sincerely,

**SENATOR DEBORAH O'NEILL**