



THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE MP
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Mr Don Randall MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Randall

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some comment on the operation of the Federation Chamber. The Committee's inquiry is most timely.

The Federation Chamber provides a number of important opportunities to Members to speak on issues of importance to their electorate. Its key value, however, lies in its use as an alternate chamber to the Main Chamber, allowing lengthy debates to run longer than might otherwise be the case, depending of course on the Government's priorities.

I am concerned with the manner in which items of legislation are referred to the Federation Chamber for debate. Currently, whilst the Government can refer legislation to the Federation Chamber, such a referral can be effectively vetoed by the Opposition by withdrawing their quorum. This limits the Government's ability to program the consideration of legislation.

It will be noted by all Members that the rate of referral of legislation to the Federation Chamber has been quite low thus far in the 44th Parliament. This has regrettably meant that the Government has been forced to curtail debate more often than it would otherwise need to do, thus depriving members of both sides of speaking opportunities.

I look forward to the recommendations of the Committee on how to make better use of the Federation Chamber, whilst maintaining the important spirit of cooperation in which it was created.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Pyne MP