



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Standing Committee on Procedure report:

Maintenance of the standing and sessional orders

MAY 2024

Recommendation 1: The committee recommends that sessional order 65A be adopted as a standing order, with the expectation that relative proportions are updated at the start of each Parliament in accordance with the membership of the House.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

As sessional order 65A relies on the relative proportions of the numbers of Government, Opposition and crossbench Members in the House to determine a fair allocation of speaking opportunities, it is more appropriate as a sessional order rather than a standing order.

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends the House revisit the following recommendations of the Procedure Committee's 2021 *A window on the House: Practices and procedures relating to Question Time* report:

- **Recommendation 6, relating to the reduction of the time limit for answers to two minutes, on a trial basis only**
- **Recommendation 7, relating to points of order on direct relevance in the first 30 seconds of an answer**
- **Recommendation 8, relating to the addition of an option for the Speaker to direct Members to leave the Chamber for three hours, implemented as proposed on the Notice Paper in July 2024**
- **Recommendation 9, relating to a trial of restricted mobile phone use**
- **Recommendation 10, relating to the timing of statements on indulgence and motions of condolence, not occurring immediately before or after Question Time, and**
- **Recommendation 11, relating to improved promotion of the work of the House.**

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Albanese Government has adopted a number of changes to the standing orders relating to Question Time, including limiting all questions to thirty seconds and ensuring a fair allocation of questions to crossbench Members.

The Government has also committed to implementing recommendation 2 of the Procedure Committee's 2023 *Raising the standard - Inquiry into recommendations 10 and 27 of Set the Standard* report to provide the Speaker with the additional ability to direct Members to leave the Chamber for three hours.

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that, subject to feasibility and reasonable cost, minor cosmetic changes be made to the Federation Chamber to benefit its status as a second Chamber of the House and less like a committee room.

This recommendation is a matter for the Speaker and/or Deputy Speaker.

Recommendation 4: The Committee recommends that the House consider revising the number of committees so that there are fewer.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Government agrees with the Committee's comments regarding the important role of House committees and their contribution to the work of the Parliament. The Government notes the total number of House committees is broadly in line with the number of committees in previous terms of Parliament since 2010.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends amending standing order 127 to update 'four or fewer' to 'ten or fewer', with the amended standing order to read:

If, after the doors are locked, there are ten or fewer Members on one side in a division, the Speaker shall declare the decision of the House immediately, without completing the count. The names of the Members who are in the minority shall be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

The Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Government notes the Committee's comments regarding the significant increase during the 47th Parliament of the number of divisions with between four and ten Members on one side, and agrees this amendment to standing order 127 will assist with the efficiency of the House.