



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Procedure report:

A window on the House: practices and procedures
relating to Question Time

MARCH 2022

Response from the Government to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure report *A window on the House: practices and procedures relating to Question Time*.

Opening Statement

As highlighted in the report, question time is a unique and very visible part of the parliamentary day. Question time is a long-standing tradition that remains a valuable forum for scrutiny of the executive. Government is keen for this tradition to continue on this basis.

Recommendation 1

4.51 The Committee recommends that the House amend standing orders to provide that questions during Question Time cannot ask about alternative approaches.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for question time is working well.

Recommendation 2

4.59 The Committee recommends that the House adopt a standing order that permits one non-government Member to ask a supplementary question during Question Time each day. The Committee recommends that the time limit for the question be 30 seconds and the time limit for the following answer be 90 seconds.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for question time is working well.

Recommendation 3

4.88 The Committee recommends that the House adopt a standing order that ensures Question Time consist of a minimum of:

- at least 10 questions from opposition Members
- five questions from government Members, on a rostered basis
- five constituency questions from government Members, on a rostered basis
- one question from a non-aligned Member.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for question time is working well.

Recommendation 4

4.105 The Committee recommends that the standing orders be amended so that the Prime Minister cannot refer a question to another minister to answer without first speaking to the matter of the question themselves.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for question time is working well.

Recommendation 5

5.39 The Committee recommends that standing orders be amended to reduce the time limit for all questions to 30 seconds.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for question time is working well.

Recommendation 6

5.47 The Committee recommends that standing orders be amended to reduce the time limit for answers to two minutes.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for question time is working well.

Recommendation 7

5.86 The Committee recommends that the House amend standing orders so that no points of order on direct relevance can be taken in the first 30 seconds of an answer.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for question time is working well.

Recommendation 8

5.87 The Committee recommends that the House amend standing order 94 so that the Speaker can direct a Member who is disorderly during Question Time to leave the Chamber for a period of either one or three hours (on an escalating basis) to be served during Question Time and the discussion of a matter of public importance.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for question time is working well.

Recommendation 9

6.19 The Committee recommends a short-term trial of very limited use of mobile phones by Members during Question Time. On completion of the trial, the House would decide whether to restrict their use during Question Time on an ongoing basis.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for question time is working well.

Recommendation 10

6.33 The Committee recommends that consideration be given to making statements on indulgence or moving motions of condolence after Prayers.

The Government does not support the recommendation, considering the current arrangements for making statements on indulgence or moving motions of condolence is working well.

Recommendation 11

7.6 The Committee recommends improved promotion of the other work of the House, including resources for Members and/or asking the Department of the House of Representatives to develop additional public information products.

While the Government agrees in principle with this recommendation it is a matter for the Speaker.