

Omissions, defects and anomalies in the existing procedures

Introduction

3.1 The findings of the committee's previous inquiries into opening procedures were outlined in chapter 1. In general, the committee concluded that the existing procedures are complex and can be confusing for both observers and participants. In this chapter, the existing procedures will be examined according to three general criteria, compatibility with:

- requirements of the Constitution;
- requirements of the institution; and
- requirements of the community.

3.2 The following discussion will refer to ceremony and ritual. These terms have specific meanings in the literature of anthropology or theology, however in this discussion 'ritual' implies a standard set of actions for a narrow, discrete purpose while ceremony implies a more encompassing and adaptable set of actions for broader, less coherent, purposes.

Requirements of the Constitution

3.3 The Constitution imposes minimal requirements on the opening of a new Parliament or of a new session of Parliament:

- section 5 requires that ‘After any general election the Parliament shall be summoned to meet not later than thirty days after the day appointed for the return of the writs’;
- section 6 requires that ‘There shall be a session of the Parliament once at least in every year’;
- section 35 (and similarly section 17 for the Senate) requires that the House ‘before proceeding to the despatch of any other business, choose a member to be the Speaker of the House’; and
- section 42 requires that ‘Every senator and member of the House of Representatives shall before taking his seat make and subscribe before the Governor-General, or some person authorised by him, an oath or affirmation of allegiance in the form set forth in the schedule’.

3.4 Each of these requirements is met by the existing procedures. There is a minor technicality in the manner in which section 6 is observed: on a literal reading it may appear that there should be at least one session, in the parliamentary sense of that term, each year. However the practice over the last quarter of a century has been to allow the first session to extend for the life of the Parliament. The intention of section 6 is met by ensuring that Parliament meets each year.

3.5 In his submission to the inquiry,¹ the Clerk of the Senate observed that the opening procedures were based on British custom, which itself no longer reflected the reality of constitutional arrangements there, and were thus ‘even more at odds with the Constitution of Australia than the British custom is with British practice’. He claimed there were four principal constitutional anomalies in the opening procedures:

- the appointment of justices of the High Court as Deputies of the Governor-General is contrary to the separation of legislative, executive and judicial functions entrenched in the Constitution and a violation of the principle that judicial officers exercise only judicial functions;
- the Governor-General’s opening speech, which sets out the government’s program, involves the Governor-General, who is otherwise supposed to be a politically neutral head of state, in speaking as if he or she were the actual head of government and in making contentious and partisan political statements;
- the Governor-General purports to direct the two Houses as to where they are to meet, which is not authorised by the Constitution; and

1 Evans submission

- the Governor-General attends in the Senate chamber and summons the House of Representatives to attend there, as if the Governor-General had some particular relationship with the Senate as distinct from the House of Representatives, analogous to the relationship between the monarch and the House of Lords, there being no such relationship under the Australian Constitution, which provides for two elected Houses as coequal participants in the legislative process.

Involvement of the judiciary

- 3.6 The active role of members of the judiciary in the opening of Parliament is inherited from British practice. The Lord Chancellor heads the Commissioners who act in the sovereign's stead in declaring the Parliament open. The Lord Chancellor—as a minister of the crown, a member of Parliament and a judicial officer—exercises executive, legislative and judicial powers. This blurred separation of powers would also have been present in the colonial administrations preceding federation and thus it would probably not have been considered untoward for a judicial officer to play a ceremonial role in the opening of the early Australian Parliaments. To this day a tension exists in the Australian political system between 'separation' and 'fusion' of all three powers.²
- 3.7 Moreover, the Chief Justice of the High Court ranks highly in the Commonwealth Table of Precedence. It is difficult to specify a consistently available individual, or pair of individuals when two Deputies are required, with sufficient prestige and distance from practical politics to conduct the ceremony. Certainly there is no legal difficulty in appointing justices of the High Court as Deputies of the Governor-General: Dr Greg Taylor alluded in his submission³ to the rule of *persona designata* which holds that 'although it is impermissible to supplement the judicial functions of a federal judge by adding non-judicial functions, a person who happens to be a federal judge may validly be appointed or assigned to perform non-judicial functions provided that the appointment or assignment is addressed to the individual person'.⁴
- 3.8 Opinion among those lodging submissions with the committee is divided on this issue—some claiming involvement of High Court justices is inappropriate or even a conflict of interest;⁵ others suggesting it is valuable

2 HR Practice (2001), 42; Lucy, 321-4

3 Taylor submission

4 Blackshield & Williams, 542

5 Evans, Morris and Sheil submissions

to recognise all branches of government, the opening of Parliament being one of the few occasions when all three have a role.⁶ Despite the cloudy theoretical aspects of this issue there would be symbolic value in asserting the separation of powers by discontinuing the active role of judicial officers in the opening of the legislature.

Neutrality of the Governor-General

3.9 The delivery of the opening speech by the Governor-General also reflects an inheritance from British practice. While it is true that for the Governor-General 'to take part in political argument would both be overstepping the boundaries of office and lessening his own influence',⁷ the formal announcement of the newly commissioned Government's program by the Governor-General demonstrates an essential characteristic of the Australian political system:

Combining the ideas of a constitutional monarchy and of a parliamentary democracy, we have as head of state a Queen who is herself above party and outside politics. The actions of the government done in her name are done by Ministers or on the advice of Ministers who have the support of a majority in Parliament. We have people who express their will at elections and, as a result of those elections, they decided who shall be the Ministers who advise the Queen or who act in the name of the Queen.⁸

3.10 The fact that the Governor-General may announce a program fundamentally at odds with one he announced three years previously clearly demonstrates not only his impartiality but that he acts not according to self-will but only on the advice of the Government of the day. This view is supported Dr Greg Taylor and Dr Glenister Shiel in their submissions.

The Governor-General's power to direct

3.11 The fine detail of some of the rituals during the opening of Parliament is at odds with the tenor of the Constitution. For example, as the Clerk of the Senate indicates in his submission, the Constitution does not empower the Governor-General to direct the two Houses as to where they are to meet as may appear in the Proclamation summoning Parliament. Section 5

6 Gourlay and Taylor submissions

7 Hasluck, 20

8 Hasluck, 9

provides that the Governor-General ‘may appoint such times for holding the sessions of the Parliament as he thinks fit’; section 125 leaves it to the Parliament itself to determine where it will meet (as it has done in the *Seat of Government Act 1908*).⁹

- 3.12 Similarly it is questionable whether the Governor-General’s Deputy should apparently direct the ‘Members of the House of Representatives to retire to the place where you are to sit and there proceed to the choice of some person to be your Speaker’.¹⁰ Section 35 of the Constitution requires that the House ‘shall, before proceeding to the despatch of any other business, choose a Member to be the Speaker’. Standing order 2 provides that as soon as Members have been sworn the House shall proceed to elect a Speaker. There is little need for the House to be directed to choose a Speaker.
- 3.13 Similar constitutional provisions apply in Canada. At the opening of the Canadian Parliament Members of the House of Commons are summoned to the Senate Chamber. However there they are informed by the presiding officer of the Senate, on behalf of the Governor General’s Deputy, that the causes for summoning the Parliament will not be declared ‘until the Speaker of the House shall have been chosen according to Law’. The hour at which the Governor General will declare the causes for calling Parliament is then given.

The place of the Senate

- 3.14 The Senate and the House of Representatives are essentially coequal.¹¹ There is no special affinity in the Australian political system between the ‘Upper’ House and the Crown, as there may have been historically in Britain. Neither is the Senate shackled in the exercise of its powers as is the House of Lords. While Members of the House may complain that existing arrangements imply latent inferiority for their Chamber, Senators might rejoin that their Chamber was being imposed upon. There is a strong case for seeking the middle ground.
- 3.15 The existing opening ceremony involves three separate processions of Members of the House of Representatives, two of those to the Senate Chamber. Senators, on the other hand, appear to be relatively uninvolved. A more symmetrical opening ceremony—in the use of the space in Parliament House and in the respective involvement of members of the

9 HR Practice (2001), 105

10 Votes and Proceedings, 10 November 1998, 5

11 eg Quick & Garran, 673

two Houses—would demonstrate more clearly the equality of the two Houses.

Requirements of the institution

To serve by example

- 3.16 In an age when all sectors of society and the economy are being subjected to rapid change the Parliament needs to avoid fostering an impression that it is inefficient, profligate and remote. Above all, in a democratic society Members should not be seen to be insulated from the travails of their fellow citizens. Adapting the opening procedures entails striking a delicate balance between tradition, efficiency and inclusion.

Importance of ritual

- 3.17 Ritual pervades parliamentary practice. For a parliamentarian, the quality that matters most is whether a procedure delivers the desired outcome. However an external observer, not appreciating the usefulness of a time-honoured procedure, may scoff at its obvious archaism. But parliamentary procedures can be like successful biological species and remain unchanged for countless generations.
- 3.18 The passage of a bill through Parliament is a complicated process. It is essential that those participating in the process know exactly the stage that has been reached. For that reason the boundaries between stages are clearly marked so there is no cause for doubt. Sometimes the marker is a simple declaration from the Chair; at the more important boundaries, a ritual, like the reading of the bill, takes place. Just as clear markers are needed to separate one stage in the passage of a bill from the next, so the institution of Parliament needs memorable events to mark the various stages of transition.
- 3.19 There are two general aspects to institutional requirements for symbolic ritual, the collective and the individual, which can be summarised in the following quotes:

An organization maintains its identity and its continuity through its symbolic representations. Since over time the people making up

an organization, including its leaders, change, it is only through symbols that we think of the organization as being the same.¹²

One of the most common uses of ritual within an organization is to socialize new members to the values and expectations that make up its culture.¹³

- 3.20 Identifying institutional requirements is a more subjective process than identifying constitutional requirements. Thus the committee sought the views of Senators, Members and others intimately acquainted with the institution of Parliament.

The opinions of Senators and Members

- 3.21 In its 1995 report on opening procedures the committee proposed:
- the elimination of the procession of Members from the Chamber to hear the Deputy of the Governor-General open the Parliament (two Deputies would simultaneously make the declaration in each House);
 - retention of the current procedures for the swearing-in of Members;
 - the Chair to be taken by a senior Member for the election of Speaker;
 - election of the Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker to take place immediately following the election of Speaker;
 - elimination of a separate ceremony and procession for the presentation of the Speaker to the Governor-General; and
 - consultation be held with the Senate and the Governor-General with a view to the Governor-General's opening speech being delivered in the Great Hall of the Parliament.
- 3.22 The committee later modified its position on the elimination of the presentation of the Speaker to the Governor-General, believing it could be combined with the procession to hear the Governor-General's speech.
- 3.23 For this inquiry the committee sent questionnaires to all Senators and Members. The former were invited to comment on the proposals to eliminate the first procession of Members to the Senate and to conduct the delivery of the Governor-General's speech in the Great Hall. Members were invited to indicate whether they supported each of the earlier recommendations and whether they had any other comments. About 28%

12 Kertzer, 18

13 Kertzer, 29

of Senators responded and 40% of Members. The results are summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1—Senators

	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Against	Strongly against
Discard first procession	1	2	0	2	16
G-G's speech in Great Hall	0	1	0	3	17

3.24 The response from Senators is overwhelmingly negative. In part, this may be attributed to the way in which the survey was conducted. It was not considered practical to include with each questionnaire a copy of the report containing the justification for the proposals. In the absence of supporting argument, many respondents may have opted for safety. The apparent rejection is not grounds for abandoning proposals for change, more a demonstration of the need to ensure that the new proposals are adequately sold and that proper consultation between the two Houses takes place.

3.25 The committee has also responded to the conservative attitude of Senators by taking a wider perspective than it did in 1995. It has put forward proposals which encompass a stronger role for Senators in ceremonial aspects of the opening.

Table 2—Members

	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Against	Strongly against
Discard first procession	26	12	6	5	11
Retain same swearing-in	39	14	6	0	1
Senior Member presides	17	8	15	10	10
Contiguous elections	26	21	12	1	0
Discard Speaker's intro to G-G	17	2	13	15	13
G-G's speech in Great Hall	27	5	5	9	14

3.26 The response from Members indicates three levels of acceptance toward the six proposals—

Definite support

- retain the same swearing in procedures (53 for — 1 against)
- elect the Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker immediately after electing the Speaker (47 for — 1 against)

Qualified support

- discard the procession to the Senate to hear a Deputy declare Parliament open (38 for — 16 against)
- the Governor-General's speech be delivered in the Great Hall rather than the Senate (32 for — 23 against)
- a senior Member preside over the election of Speaker rather than the Clerk (25 for — 20 against)

Opposition

- discard the introduction of the Speaker and Members to the Governor-General (19 for — 28 against)

3.27 The committee had detected significant opposition to the last listed proposal within a year of presenting its 1995 report. It qualified its recommendation by proposing in its 1996 review of reports which had not received a response that the introduction to the Governor-General take place while the Speaker and Members were proceeding to the Great Hall to hear the Governor-General's speech.¹⁴

The opinions of former participants

3.28 Former Governors-General, Senators and Members were invited to comment generally on the existing opening procedures and the committee's earlier proposals for change. Submissions were received from two former Governors-General, a former Member and a former Senator. Some consistent threads can be drawn from their views as well as some points of disagreement.

3.29 Sir Ninian Stephen, Dr Sheil, and Mr Lamb all drew attention to the requirements of the Constitution and suggested that certain features of the

ceremony should be brought into line with those requirements. These included:

- changing terminology used in some rituals to reflect the reality of constitutional powers, for example by using the words ‘invite’ or ‘request’ rather than ‘direct’ or ‘require’ where appropriate;¹⁵
- avoiding the appointment of High Court Judges as Deputies of the Governor-General. Dr Shiel suggested the senior State Governor as a suitable person to be appointed a Deputy of the Governor-General;¹⁶
- recognising the equality of the Houses by holding those parts of the ceremony in which the two Houses meet together in a neutral location.¹⁷

3.30 The Hon Bill Hayden, a former Governor-General and Member of the House of Representatives, argued strongly for the importance of ceremony and ritual in the opening of Parliament. He suggested that:

If the procedures related to the Opening of a new Parliament were founded on efficiency and simplicity of understanding alone, it could be reduced to a series of simple steps which would take, at most, a few hours. But there would be neither inspiration nor any sense of awe in, and certainly no reason for respecting, such a diluted ceremony.

...I am rather grateful for much of the heritage from which we benefit in the community’s public political life as a result of the long evolution, often marked by struggle, but achieved mostly through civilised measures, within British political processes. I find no reason not to honour that history as a way of reminding us that what we may otherwise take for granted within our political processes is not something that came easily or made some sudden casual appearance at some point somewhere in the past.¹⁸

3.31 At a more specific level Mr Lamb and the present Clerk of the House, Mr Ian Harris, referred to the emotional importance to Members, especially new Members, of the presentation of Members to the Governor-General and the swearing in ceremony.

15 Lamb submission

16 Sheil submission

17 Harris, Lamb and Stephen submissions

18 Hayden submission

- 3.32 The 'inspiration and a sense of awe' referred to by Mr Hayden can be articulated into a set of emotional objectives for the ceremonial opening of a new Parliament. These being to give Members a sense of:
- a new beginning;
 - belonging to a group with a unified purpose;
 - commitment to the people they represent;
 - the significance of the role they have committed themselves to; and
 - connection with the institution of Parliament, its long history and the struggle to achieve democracy.

Conclusions

- 3.33 In the light of the committee's earlier inquiries and the responses received from Senators, Members, as well as former Governors-General and members of Parliament, the following aspects of the existing opening procedures also bear closer examination:
- election of presiding officers;
 - formal business; and
 - appointment of an 'address in reply committee'.

Election of presiding officers

- 3.34 In its earlier reports the committee recommended changes to the election of the presiding officers: first, that a Member and not the Clerk should preside at the election of Speaker; and second, that the election for the Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker should be held immediately after the election of Speaker.
- 3.35 There is strong support for the second proposal, a benefit of which would be to allow the Deputy Speaker and the Second Deputy Speaker to be introduced to the Governor-General in those capacities.
- 3.36 Members seem equivocal on the question of who should preside at the election of Speaker. Nevertheless for the same reasons it produced in its earlier reports the committee maintains the view that the Clerk is not well placed to deal with some of the more contentious problems which could conceivably arise in the course of electing a Speaker. It would be appropriate to recognise the service of one of the longest serving Members in this way and the Clerk would be freed to concentrate on the conduct of any ballots required and other administrative matters.

Formal business

- 3.37 There is a fundamental flaw in the manner in which the House has traditionally asserted its ‘right of deliberating without reference to the immediate cause of summons’.¹⁹ The ‘privilege bill’ is presented by a Minister and remains listed on the Notice Paper as an item of Government Business. It is therefore indistinguishable from other business ostensibly covered by the program announced in the opening speech—in the United Kingdom the Queen’s speech usually describes specific legislative proposals making it easier to identify a bill not so described as not being part of the government’s program. It would be preferable to undertake some business which is more clearly an expression of the House’s rather than the Government’s will.
- 3.38 The committee also believes that there would be some virtue in developing a consistent form for the formal business which would acquire its own sense of ritual with usage.

Address in Reply committee

- 3.39 Under the existing procedures a committee is formed to prepare an address in reply. The address takes a standard form which except in special circumstances—like the speech being given by the sovereign in person or there being a change in Governor-General between delivery of the speech and adoption of the address—has varied minimally in one hundred years. The ‘address in reply committee’ is therefore redundant. The United Kingdom House of Commons abandoned this procedure in 1888. The House of Representatives abandoned a similar redundant mechanism when it eliminated the ‘committee of reasons’ in 1998. It should be possible to retain in a revised mechanism the special recognition conferred on the two new Members traditionally appointed to the ‘address in reply committee’.
- 3.40 The elimination of the Prime Minister’s overt role in the address in reply proceedings would help make clear that it was a response from the House. This would overcome the present somewhat anomalous situation of the Government appearing to play a leading role in the response to a declaration of its own intentions.

Requirements of the community

Importance of ceremony

- 3.41 As the then Governor-General of New Zealand, Sir Michael Hardie Boys said at the opening of the Youth Parliament in Wellington on 26 May 1997:

I began by talking about the ceremony that goes with the opening of Parliament. Ceremony is sometimes, I suspect, dismissed as being of little consequence. Yet I suggest this is a mistaken view, for ceremony is a useful way of demonstrating, in visual metaphors, the relationships that exist within the constitution. A further example here: from time to time, as Commander-in-Chief, I accept Royal Salutes from military Guards of Honour. The colours of the unit giving the Salute are always dipped while it is taking place. There's a meaning to that gesture; one that in days gone by, must have been of great assurance to democrats. Because dipping the flag is a military acknowledgment of the legitimacy of state authority, of the rule of law. Here, military might is not right.²⁰

- 3.42 As a public ceremony, the opening of Parliament as now practised runs the risk of misrepresenting the ideal power relationships within the Australian political system. If the ceremony seems purely for the benefit of a privileged elite and is understood only by the players within then it can only contribute to a sense of alienation from the institutions of government, lending weight to the views of the cynics.
- 3.43 The ceremony should be a clear reflection, symbolically, of the basis for the authority vested in the Parliament, of the democratic basis of our parliamentary system of government.
- 3.44 Ceremonies need to be inspiring and dignified but also honest and meaningful, not only to those physically taking part, but for those contributing to the institution at a broader level.

People first

- 3.45 The Commonwealth of Australia came into being because of a collective expression of the will of the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia.²¹

20 available online at http://www.gov-gen.govt.nz/speeches/hardie_boys/1997-05-26.html [accessed 13 July 2001]

21 *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900*, preamble and section 3

- 3.46 Each new House of Representatives is the result of views of the people of Australia about who should form the Government. Each individual Member is chosen directly by the people in his or her constituency. Those people have expectations about how their representatives should work—‘... ultimately the people the Parliament serves are paramount.’²²
- 3.47 The Senate, whilst not completely renewed with each election like the House, also owes its existence to the people of the community with all Senators directly elected.
- 3.48 The current form of the opening ceremony for Parliament recognises only in an implicit way, through the tabling of the election writs, the role of the people in its formation and not at all the continuing obligation of Members to serve the people’s interests.
- 3.49 The committee received several submissions from people outside the Parliament which urged that the opening ceremony should be made more relevant to the community, more Australian and more modern—several putting forward suggestions for achieving this.²³ Dr Taylor cautions that all parts of Australian society should be represented, not just a specific group.²⁴ These sentiments are echoed in the words of the then Governor-General, Sir William Deane, at the commemorative centenary sitting of the Parliament in Melbourne on 9 May 2001:
- All of us who are privileged to hold public office, be it elected or appointed, owe a duty of trust to the present and future generations of Australians to put the pursuit of the common good above personal gain or ambition. As we celebrate the centenary of the first meeting of our national parliament, let us be conscious of that duty and of the basic fact of our democracy; namely, that the ultimate source of all government power and authority in this land is the people—all the people—of our Commonwealth.²⁵
- 3.50 The committee believes it is possible to devise a ceremonial procedure which will represent the voice of all Australians and remind Members and Senators of the pre-eminent place of the people in our democratic system.
- 3.51 As well, the obligations Members owe to the people should be recognised in the formal commitment they make on becoming a Member (oath or affirmation of allegiance) and the address in reply to the Governor-General’s speech.

22 Lamb submission

23 eg Gourlay, Isnard, Lamb, MacKinnon, unknown author submissions

24 Taylor submission

25 House of Representatives Debates, 9 May 2001, 26648

- 3.52 There is a lack of consistency in the forms of oaths, affirmations, declarations and pledges used in official and civic ceremonies within the Commonwealth.²⁶ For example, the ministerial oath of office and the citizenship pledge have been reviewed and modernised in recent years. Some thought should be given to the form of the oath and affirmation used by members of Parliament, particularly to include an acknowledgment of responsibility to the people of Australia.
- 3.53 The committee does not put forward any particular form of words but asks that steps be taken to review the oath and affirmation in the context of considering its proposals for the opening of Parliament. Such a change would require an amendment of the Constitution and might take some time to achieve. Any review might initially consider the versions passed by both Houses (but not approved at referendum) in the Constitution Alteration (Establishment of Republic) Bill 1999 resulting from the 1998 Constitutional Convention.
- 3.54 The form of the address in reply has varied a little over the years but is still in essentially the same form as it was in 1901. As with the oath and affirmation, the committee believes that it is timely to consider modernising the form of words used in the address and including an expression of commitment to Australia and its people.
- 3.55 The committee notes that at least two other Australian Parliaments have taken steps to recognise their obligations to the communities they serve. The ACT Legislative Assembly has a daily reminder in the form of the opening proceeding for each sitting when the Speaker says ‘Members, at the beginning of this sitting of the Assembly, I would ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.’²⁷ The Tasmanian House of Assembly has gone a step further by providing in its standing orders for Members, at the start of a new Parliament, to subscribe to a code of conduct which commences with a recognition of their obligations to the people of Tasmania.²⁸

First people

- 3.56 While it is important to recognise the role of the Australian people in general in the formation and purpose of the Parliament, special recognition of indigenous culture and identity is a key to acknowledging

26 For a detailed survey see Campbell

27 Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, Standing Order No. 30

28 Tasmanian House of Assembly, Standing Orders Nos. 2 and 2A

that the Parliament exists to serve these people too. As Australia works to achieve reconciliation the Parliament can take a lead in reinforcing a message of inclusiveness and unity.

- 3.57 The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has recommended that ‘All Parliaments, governments and organisations observe protocols and negotiate with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders or representative bodies to include appropriate Indigenous ceremony into official events’.²⁹ Having agreed to a resolution expressing commitment to reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians,³⁰ the Parliament has an opportunity, in reviewing its opening procedures, to take a practical step to affirm and symbolise this commitment.
- 3.58 Canberra, as the seat of Government, and Parliament House within it, exist on land originally peopled by the Ngunnawal. These people are best placed to advise on an appropriate ceremony, possibly of welcome or cleansing, which could be incorporated in the procedures for the opening of Parliament.

Televising

- 3.59 The major focus of two of the committee’s recent reports³¹ has been to look at ways in which the procedures of the House can assist, or at least not hinder, the community’s understanding of how the House works and what its role in society is. A key to reducing the scepticism of the community about the Parliament and its members is to help people to better understand what the House does and to become aware of the range of its work beyond the theatre of question time.
- 3.60 The ceremonial opening of a new Parliament is an obvious area of procedure where the Parliament’s obligations to the people of Australia can be recognised and stated.
- 3.61 The opening of Parliament ceremony is primarily for the initiation of members into their service in a new Parliament. Ideally, however, as noted earlier, involvement should extend to the broader community that is responsible for its existence.
- 3.62 Having introduced a greater recognition of the importance of the Australian people into the ceremony, the committee believes that the opportunity should also be taken to show that to the community. If the

29 Ridgeway submission

30 Votes and Proceedings 26 August 1999, 804-7; Senate Journals 26 August 1999, 1580-81

31 *It’s your House* and *Promoting community involvement*

proceedings were televised people would have an opportunity to learn more about their Parliament and to observe the seriousness with which members of Parliament take their duties. At least one submission to the committee remarked on the need to televise the opening saying 'the greater the involvement of Australians in the ceremony the better for democracy it will be'.³² The opening of Parliament could be shown live or as an edited package to be shown at a time when a wider audience might be drawn.

32 Gourlay submission