

Parliamentary Paper
No. 22/1978

The Parliament of the
Commonwealth of Australia

COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

Report on the Appropriate Means of
Ensuring the Security of Parliament
House

May 1978

The Commonwealth Government Printer
Canberra 1978

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Senator the Hon. T. C. DRAKE-BROCKMAN (Chairman)

Senator J. N. BUTTON

Senator D. S. JESSOP

Senator J. O'BYRNE

Senator A. M. THOMAS

Senator the Hon. J. M. WHEELDON

Senator the Hon. R. C. WRIGHT

THE SENATE COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

REPORT TO THE SENATE

On 4 April 1978 the Senate referred to the Committee of Privileges the matter of 'the appropriate means of ensuring the security of Parliament House'.

At its first meeting the Committee decided to invite all Senators to forward submissions to the Committee for consideration and to hear evidence from security, police and parliamentary officers. The Committee received a number of replies from Senators and took evidence from the witnesses listed in Appendix A.

The Committee having considered all the documents, evidence and other information available to it, reports to the Senate as follows:

1. Currently, at both the national and international level, there is, regrettably, a great need for authorities to provide security, or protective services. The recent statements by the President (and the Speaker of the House of Representatives) were clearly and, in the Committee's view, justifiably made in the exercise of his jurisdiction and responsibility.
2. The following actions are necessary:

(a) Parliamentary precincts

There is no generally accepted definition of the parliamentary precincts. It is the firm view of the Committee that legislative provision should be made which would express clear and appropriate boundaries for the precincts of the Parliament and provide for the application of the laws of the Australian Capital Territory within those precincts, subject to the appropriate powers of Parliament.

(b) Parliamentary authority for police involvement

The Committee was informed of the situation existing at the Parliament at Westminster, where the physical security of the House is, with the authority of both Houses, in the hands of a special subdivision of the Metropolitan Police, located within the Parliament.

At the commencement of each Session the Houses pass a Sessional Order which reads as follows:

ORDERED, That the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis do take care that during the Session of Parliament the passages through the streets leading to this House be kept free and open and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passage of Members to and from this House, and that no disorder be allowed in Westminster Hall, or in the passages leading to this House, during the Sitting of Parliament, and that there be no annoyance therein or thereabouts; and that the Serjeant at Arms attending this House do communicate this Order to the Commissioner aforesaid.

We recommend that Parliament, at the commencement of each Session, should establish the police authority for its own protection by Resolutions of both Houses to this effect.

(c) Unity of protective police force

The present police protective duties are divided between the A.C.T. Police, for external security, and the Commonwealth Police, for internal security. It is obvious that this division should not continue. External and internal police involvement should, in the Committee's view, be within the jurisdiction of one force.

(d) Parliamentary Security Co-ordinator

Following the statements by the Presiding Officers, arrangements were completed for the appointment of a Security Co-ordinator within Parliament House, on an interim basis. It is the opinion of the Committee that this position should be made permanent and should be directly responsible to the Presiding Officers. Its duties should be clearly defined as requiring the co-ordination of protective services, both police and parliamentary. The Co-ordinator should have the responsibility to act, in cases of emergency, upon his own judgment.

(e) Matters of internal identification

- (i) Objection has been raised to Members of Parliament wearing identification discs, but it would be consistent with practice in other Parliaments where it is considered a matter of honour for members to wear a badge of office. This practice the Committee recommends.
- (ii) The Committee believes that when a visitor has been identified, his signature has been obtained and he has been received by a member of Parliament, it should not then be necessary for that visitor to be escorted within or out of the building.
- (iii) It is most undesirable, in the Committee's opinion, that the entrance doors of Parliament House should appear to be garrisoned by groups of officers. The number of officials at the doors, with the exception of the front door, should not exceed two parliamentary officials and one police officer, except in emergencies.

(f) Excessive population in Parliament House

It is axiomatic that the greater the number of people occupying or having access to a building the greater the difficulty of supervising any effective protective system. This should be borne in mind when authority is given for personnel to carry out duties within Parliament House.

3. In concluding its Report the Committee wishes to emphasise its considered view that an effective protection system is necessary for Parliament House and its occupants. Measures taken to date have provided the basis for a sufficiently effective system and are not, in the Committee's opinion, in any way inconsistent with the privileges of members of the Senate. The details of the agreed system of protection should be incorporated in Standing Orders.

T. C. DRAKE-BROCKMAN
Chairman

LIST OF WITNESSES

12 April 1978

Mr A. P. Fleming, Director, Protective Services Co-ordination Centre, Department of Administrative Services

Mr W. Worth, Interim Co-ordinator of Security in Parliament House

2 May 1978

Mr J. R. Odgers, Clerk of the Senate

Mr R. E. Bullock, Deputy Clerk of the Senate

Mr H. G. Smith, Usher of the Black Rod

Mr J. A. Pettifer, Clerk of the House of Representatives

Mr I. C. Cochran, Serjeant-at-Arms

Mr J. M. Davis, Commissioner, Commonwealth Police Force

Mr A. J. Watt, Assistant Commissioner, Operations, Commonwealth Police Force

Mr J. C. Kelly, Senior Superintendent, Commonwealth Police Force

Mr P. D. McConaghy, Superintendent and Officer in Charge of General Policing, Australian Capital Territory Police Force