

Recommendations

- 5.1 The committee recommends that the standing orders be amended as necessary, all relevant parties be consulted as appropriate and other action be taken to implement the following specific recommendations.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Parliament adopt procedures for the opening of Parliament as follows:

Summons by the Governor-General

The Governor-General issues a proclamation setting a day and hour for Parliament to assemble.

Forecourt ceremony

Senators and Members assemble at the forecourt of Parliament House where a brief ceremony—comprising an indigenous welcoming and a message from the Australian people—is conducted.

Procession of Senators and Members to their respective Chambers

Senators and Members proceed through the main entrance, foyer, Great Hall and Members' Hall to their Chambers and take seats.

Simultaneous declaration of opening of Parliament by Governor-General and a deputy

In each Chamber:

- the Clerk reads the Governor-General's proclamation summoning Parliament

In the Senate:

- the Governor-General declares the Parliament open

In the House of Representatives:

- the Clerk reads the Governor-General's instrument appointing a deputy
- the Governor-General's Deputy declares the Parliament open

Swearing of Senators and Members

In the Senate:

- if necessary, new Senators are sworn in before the Governor-General
- the Governor-General retires

In the House of Representatives:

- new Members are sworn in before the Deputy
- the Deputy informs Members that when their presiding officers have been elected the Governor-General will receive them in the Great Hall
- the Deputy retires

Elections of Presiding Officers

Senators (if necessary) and Members elect presiding officers including, in the case of the House of Representatives, the Deputy Speaker and the Second Deputy Speaker. A senior Member presides at the election of Speaker.

Presentation to Governor-General

The Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker, and other Members proceed to the Members' Hall where they meet

the Governor-General. Senators may also participate. Senators and Members then proceed into the Great Hall.

Governor-General's speech

The Governor-General delivers the opening speech in the Great Hall.

Formal business

The Speaker and Members return to the Chamber. A resolution of commitment to the Australian people is adopted. The ministry, party leaders and whips are reported to the House.

Address in Reply

The Speaker reports the Governor-General's speech to the House.

At the first or a later sitting a new Member moves the address in reply to the Governor-General's speech in the form of a resolution and makes his or her first speech. Another new Member seconds the motion and also makes a first speech. Debate ensues over a number days.

- 5.2 The following recommendations add additional detail to the outline form in recommendation 1 and are described more fully in the relevant paragraphs in chapter 4.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that representatives of the ACT indigenous community be consulted to advise on a suitable indigenous ritual to be included in the opening procedures.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the incumbent Australian of the Year be invited to take part in the opening proceedings on each occasion to present a formalised message on behalf of the Australian people.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the Deputy appointed by the Governor-General to declare open the Parliament in the House of Representatives and witness the swearing in of Members be the State Governor who, at that time, would be appointed as Administrator of the Commonwealth in the event of the absence of the Governor-General.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the form of the oath and affirmation of allegiance taken by Members and Senators be reviewed with a view to including recognition of the people of Australia and that a proposed new form be put to the people in a referendum.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the Member presiding at the election of Speaker be the person, not being a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, party leader or party whip, or a candidate for the Speakership, who has the longest cumulative service in the House. In the case of equal service the presiding Member shall be chosen by lot. The presiding Member during the election of Speaker shall have all the powers vested in the Speaker during debate except that he or she:

(a) shall be entitled to vote in the election of Speaker but shall not have a casting vote in the event of there being an equal number of votes cast for two candidates; and

(b) in all other cases shall have only a deliberative vote and shall vote by stating to the House whether he or she is voting with the 'Ayes' or the 'Noes'.

Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that the form of the address in reply be reviewed with a view to modernising it and including a recognition of the Australian people.

Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that efforts be made to enable the opening of Parliament to be shown on national television.

Gary Nairn MP
Chair
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