



## **Appendix B: 1998 recommendations**

### **House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure, *Ten years on: A review of the House of Representatives committee system*, June 1998**

#### **Summary of recommendations and government responses**

- |   |  |                |
|---|--|----------------|
| 1 | The total number of committees on which Members of the House serve be reduced.<br><br>The reduction in the number of committees be achieved by not reappointing the following committees in the 39th Parliament: The Joint Standing Committees on Electoral Matters; Migration; and the National Capital and External Territories. | Not supported. |
| 2 | The following committees not be reappointed in the 39th Parliament: The Joint Parliamentary Committees on the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation; Corporations and Securities; the National Crime Authority; and Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund.                                  | Not supported. |

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 3 | The standing orders be amended to provide that general purpose standing committees consist of ten Members, six government and four non-government Members.  | Recommendations 3 and 4 supported in part:<br><br>The Standing Orders should expressly provide that the two supplementary members should include one government and one non government member. |
| 4 | The standing orders be amended to provide for the appointment of up to two additional Members for a particular inquiry.   |  |
| 5 | The membership of the Procedure Committee be reduced to seven.  | Supported.   |
| 6 | Standing orders be amended to enable committees to determine their own references.  | Not supported.   |
| 7 | Standing orders be amended to provide for reports of the Auditor-General to stand referred to general purpose standing committees for any inquiry they wish to make. Each committee shall notify the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit in writing when it intends to examine a report. | Supported.   |
| 8 | The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit develop procedures to ensure that the views of general purpose standing committees are sought prior to the determination of Parliament's audit priorities.   | Supported.   |
| 9 | As a general rule, bills should only be referred to House committees or, if necessary, the House may refer a bill specifically to a committee consisting of House members of a joint committee, rather than to the joint committee as a whole.  | Supported.   |

- 
- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 10 | Standing orders be amended to provide for petitions to stand referred to general purpose standing committees for any inquiry the committee may wish to make.   | Not supported.                             |
| 11 | Standing orders be amended to enable the Selection Committee to determine the balance between committee and delegation business and private Members' business within an overall allocation of time each Monday.  | Supported for a trial period of 12 months. |
| 12 | The order of business and the times of sitting be reviewed to enable debate on committee reports, in the Main Committee, to commence during the same week as tabling.  | Supported in principle.                    |
| 13 | The standing orders be amended to require the Government to respond to committee reports within three months of tabling.   | Not supported.                             |
| 14 | The standing orders be amended to enable a Member to request the Speaker to write to the Minister if, after three months, a response has not been made.  | Not supported.                             |
| 15 | The standing orders be amended to require the Speaker to table in the House, at six monthly intervals, a schedule of government responses to the reports of House of Representatives and joint committees, and reports presented to which responses are outstanding. | Not supported.                             |
| 16 | The standing orders be amended to provide for a specified time (eg immediately prior to the presentation of committee and delegation reports on Mondays) for the presentation of government responses to committee reports.  | Not supported.                             |
| 17 | The standing orders be amended to provide for automatic placement on the Notice Paper of government responses to committee reports when presented.   | Not supported.                             |

- |    |   |                         |
|----|---|-------------------------|
| 18 | The order of business and times of sitting be reviewed to enable government responses to committee reports to be debated, either in the House or the Main Committee.  | Not supported.          |
| 19 | The standing orders governing the appointment of members to serve on committees be amended to provide for appointment by resolution of the House in all cases.  | Supported.              |
| 20 | The Speaker and the President of the Senate confer on the development of suitable joint standing orders concerning the operation of joint committees which should then be agreed to by both Houses.   | Supported.              |
| 21 | The standing orders be amended to recognise as appropriate inquiry procedure, the less formal processes used by committees in the gathering of information.   | Supported.              |
| 22 | The existing procedures relating to the use of electronic communication devices by committees be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Procedure prior to the end of the 39th Parliament with a view to their incorporation in the standing orders. | Supported.              |
| 23 | The standing orders be amended to recognise, as evidence, documents received by committees by electronic means.   | Supported.              |
| 24 | The House agree to a resolution providing procedures for dealing with witnesses in the terms set out in appendix 2 to this report.  | Supported in principle. |

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 25 | The House adopt the 1991 recommendations of the Standing Committee on Procedure relating to the disclosure of in camera evidence, except for that recommendation relating to penalties.  | Supported in part for a trial period of 12 months.   |
| 26 | Penalties for unauthorised disclosure be decided by the House on a case by case basis following investigation and report by the Privileges Committee. The terms of the proposed resolution are set out in appendix 3 to this report. | The Government agrees with the Committee's concerns about the treatment of penalties as proposed in the 1991 report. Further, the Government does not support the 1991 report's recommendation that decisions to release in camera evidence should be for the committee concerned (whereas standing order 340 currently provides it is a decision of the House). |
| 27 | The standing orders be amended as set out in appendix 4 of this report to implement the recommendations and make other related changes.  | Supported as appropriate.  |

## Summary of issues still relevant in the House committee system

The following matters, raised in *Ten years on*, can be considered to still be relevant to the House committee system today:

- reduction in the overall number of committees on which Members of the House of Representatives serve;
- a need to reassess the ongoing relevance and purpose of certain committees;
- the ability of committees to determine their own references;
- petitions being referred to general purpose standing committees for inquiry;
- formalising the requirement for government responses to be tabled within a certain timeframe, and instituting procedures for responding to responses or to any delays in responses being tabled; and
- formalising procedures for dealing with witnesses.

