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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Options for nursing mothers

House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Procedure

June 2007  
Canberra

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## Foreword

On 15 February 2007 the Standing Committee on Procedure was asked to consider a proposal to allow nursing mothers a proxy vote. While the committee spent considerable time discussing this proposal, it could not reach a unanimous decision either in support or against proxy voting. A significant obstacle for a number of committee members was the concern that a somewhat dangerous precedent could be established by introducing proxy voting, even on a limited basis, for nursing mothers in the House of Representatives.

Given the level of dissent, the committee resolved to present a report detailing the arguments for and against this proposal. Perhaps most importantly, this report represents an acknowledgement that women in the House of Representatives face a level of difficulty when nursing new born infants. While women themselves are not necessarily calling for any special attention, it is important that the House appreciates women's dual roles in the early months of their children's lives and that some accommodating measures be implemented. This could be in the form of a blanket allowance of three months' maternity leave, or the provision of adequate child care in the House. The committee sincerely hopes this report will encourage greater awareness and discussion of the issue.

Margaret May MP  
Chair





## Membership of the Committee

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## Terms of reference of the committee

To inquire into and report on the practices and procedures of the House generally with a view to making recommendations for their improvement or change and for the development of new procedures.

