



## **Appendix D**

### **Conduct of proceedings of committees of the House of Representatives**

#### **Guidelines for use of audio visual or audio links**

Committees of the House are authorised by standing order 339 to conduct proceedings using audio visual or audio links with members of the committee or witnesses not present in one location. Under the standing order committees must decide by resolution when they wish to use this method of conducting proceedings.

The following guidelines were adopted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure on <date> and presented to the House on <date>. They are for the guidance of committees of the House in deciding whether to conduct meetings using audio visual or audio links and should be used by each committee as it sees fit.

1. Audio visual or audio links may be used for deliberative meetings or for hearing oral evidence from witnesses or for any other proceeding described in standing order 339.
2. Audio visual or audio links should only be used to hear evidence *in camera* if the committee is satisfied that the evidence will not be overheard or recorded by any unauthorised person and that the transmission is secure.
3. The following factors should be considered by a committee in deciding whether an audio visual or audio link is suitable for use in any particular circumstance:

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- (a) whether use of the link will confer any benefit not available using traditional meeting processes eg cost or time savings, access to evidence not otherwise obtainable;
  - (b) any benefit of traditional methods which may be lost. These may include the value of the committee being present at a location away from Canberra; the value of the public being able to observe the committee at work; or possible restrictions on the committee being able to interact freely with a witness;
  - (c) real cost comparisons of alternative means of evidence collection;
  - (d) the type of evidence to be heard. Specialist or expert evidence may be suited to hearing in this way. Audio visual or audio links may make it feasible to hear evidence from witnesses located outside Australia, however, the committee should take into account the fact that the protection afforded by parliamentary privilege would not extend beyond Australia; and
  - (e) whether evidence is likely to be contentious or a witness needs to be tested rigorously for truthfulness or there is any concern about the identification of the witness. If the committee wishes to administer an oath an authorised officer must be present with the witness to administer it.
4. Any other factors which the committee considers relevant should be taken into account and a decision made appropriate to the particular circumstances of the proceeding, inquiry or witness.

Standing order 339 does not preclude committees from using other types of electronic communication, eg fax, email, Internet chat facilities, for purposes other than conducting formal proceedings.