



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

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26 May 2008



Mr Stephen Palethorpe
Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Palethorpe

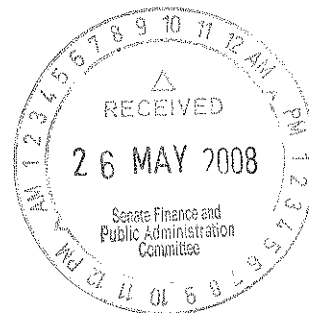
ESTIMATES HEARINGS - DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE

At this morning's estimates hearings I was asked for a copy of the twenty parliamentary reform proposals I submitted to the 2020 Summit. Attached is a copy of that list. Items (1) (2) (6) (12) and (16) were adopted and appear in some form in the final report of the summit.

Yours sincerely

(Harry Evans)

15911
15 April 2008



PARLIAMENTARY REFORM AGENDA

The following parliamentary reforms, which would greatly enhance the accountability of the executive government to Parliament, could all be put in place by a government commitment and/or resolution of each House, without the need for statutory enactment or constitutional amendment.

- (1) Independent arbitration of public interest immunity claims by ministers in respect of information required by a House or a committee
- (2) minimum time and process standards for passage of legislation, including committee scrutiny
- (3) negotiation on time limits for urgent bills before any majority-imposed limits
- (4) full ministerial response to any amendments proposed by committees or individual members to government bills
- (5) minimum standards for explanatory documentation for government bills
- (6) reframing of appropriation bills to specify projects and programs
- (7) full accounting of all government expenditure from all sources
- (8) confirmation of 1999 Senate resolution concerning scope of questioning at estimates hearings
- (9) minimum time and process standards for committee inquiries
- (10) sharing amongst parties and groups of chairs of committees
- (11) allowing committees to choose subjects of inquiry, subject to direction by relevant House
- (12) ministerial advisers to appear in parliamentary forums to explain their executive actions
- (13) general instruction by government to departments and agencies concerning their duty to co-operate with parliamentary inquiries
- (14) government contracts and advertising projects to be listed on the Internet, in accordance with Senate resolutions
- (15) impartial determination of government grants and full accounting of grants

- (16) parliamentary approval motions before treaties are ratified and before war-like overseas commitments of Defence Force personnel, subject to genuinely urgent cases
- (17) published selection criteria and merit-based selection processes for government appointments, including judicial appointments, with statements of compliance tabled in each House
- (18) adherence to existing rules about question time
- (19) parliamentary code of conduct and ethics advisory mechanism
- (20) increase in sitting days to at least 80 per year.