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# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PRACTICE

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SECOND EDITION

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# Preface

The publication of the first edition of *House of Representatives Practice* in 1981 was a significant event for the House of Representatives as it represented the production of a comprehensive, detailed text on the law and practice of the House for the first time.

Members and Clerks throughout the Commonwealth of Nations have been extremely generous and universal in their praise of the first edition. More particularly, the officers of the House of Representatives, that is, the day to day practitioners, found that in a practical sense it met their needs almost 100 per cent, which was a remarkable achievement for a text of such magnitude. The names of those principally involved with the first edition are recorded on the reverse of the title page of this edition in recognition of their contribution.

Much has happened in the life and workings of the House since 1981. For instance, we have moved to a new home, major changes have been made in the law concerning parliamentary privilege, an active Procedure Committee has been appointed, there has been a substantial increase in the amount and nature of private Members' business and the time given over to it, and a committee system of considerable breadth has been established.

These matters and numerous other developments have led to the need to review and update the text and also gave the opportunity to develop and refine many points. The emphasis of the text on procedural matters continues, but relevant associated matters are also referred to. It has always been envisaged that some material of an historical nature should be excluded from the second edition, and this has been done. An attempt has been made to provide the user with a better index in this edition.

The text and the appendixes cover events up to the end of 1988, but, where possible, significant developments in the early months of 1989 have been included.

Work on the project commenced in 1986 and my warm thanks are extended to those who have been closely involved in the ensuing period. The Assistant Editors, Bernard Wright and Peter Fowler, have been responsible for reviewing the text, undertaking the associated research and drafting copy. The quality of their work has been of the highest order and the success of the task is largely attributable to them. They were ably assisted by Margaret McCormack (Atkin), Paul Thomas, Susan Cardell and Jim Pender whose contributions have been positive and valuable. I also wish to record the expert assistance provided by the officers of the Attorney-General's Department, the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, The Australian Electoral Commission, the Australian Government Publishing Service and the Parliamentary Library.

This edition, like the first, contains many quotations from *May's Parliamentary Practice*, which have been produced with the permission of Butterworths and the May Memorial Fund. Once again our thanks are extended to those bodies.

The work on this edition has proceeded during a period when the department has been involved in a number of other major one-off tasks. This placed severe strains upon our limited human resources, but my officers, from the Deputy Clerk, Lyn Barlin, down, willingly closed ranks to ensure that the book was produced on time. I am grateful for their loyalty to the department and to the institution.

It has given me a great deal of personal satisfaction to have been closely involved with the first edition as assistant editor and with the second edition as editor with all the responsibilities which that entails. The institution of Parliament

is precious to the officers of both Houses who provide continuity and stability in our parliamentary system. They are ever willing to defend the Westminster system of parliamentary government as we practise it in Australia.

Through our publications we are not only able to provide Members with a comprehensive statement of the procedure and practice of the House but also able to draw their attention to the basic principles and considerations upon which the detailed rules and practices have been built. It is our belief that a well-informed membership on these matters is important to the ability of the House to continue to discharge its responsibilities.

I accept it as a duty and have found it a pleasure and a privilege to promote one of the world's strongest democracies through this project.

*September 1989*

A. R. BROWNING  
Clerk of the House of Representatives

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