

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE SENATE 1901–2008

Date	Event
1 January 1901	Australian Constitution came into force, vesting legislative power in a federal Parliament consisting of the Queen, a Senate, and a House of Representatives
February–March 1901	Writs issued for the election of 36 senators
29-30 March 1901	Senators elected at elections throughout Australia
9 May 1901	Opening of Parliament at the Melbourne Exhibition Building and swearing in of senators First meetings of the Senate held in the chamber of the Legislative Council of Victoria Election of the first President of the Senate, Senator Richard Baker
5 June 1901	Appointment of the first Senate committee: the Standing Orders Committee
June 1901	Senate had first supply bill amended to show items of expenditure Senate changed second supply bill to reflect Australian rather than British constitutional arrangements
26 July 1901	First Senate select committee appointed: steamship communication with Tasmania
August 1901	First senior officials called to give evidence before a Senate committee, including the Clerk of the Senate and the Secretary of Defence Private citizens also called to give evidence

Date	Event
1902	Senate first insisted on requests for amendments to a bill it could not amend
1902	Commonwealth Electoral Act passed, including the right of women to vote and stand for election
1 September 1903	Adoption of Senate Standing Orders
16 March 1904	Senate amended Acts Interpretation Bill to insert provision for disallowance of regulations
April 1904	First case of privilege investigated by a Senate Committee
11 October 1906	Senate rejected Customs Tariff (British Preference) Amendment Bill 1906 and disagreed to Governor-General's amendment to Customs Tariff (British Preference) Bill 1906
1907	Committee of Disputed Returns and Qualifications inquired into election of Senator Vardon
1909	Senators' terms ceased on 30 June, rather than 31 December as previously, under constitutional amendment of 1907
13 December 1909	Private senator's bill, the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Bill 1908, extending employees' protection against dismissal, passed into law
30 July 1914	For the first time, the Senate and the House of Representatives dissolved simultaneously under section 57 of the Constitution
February–March 1917	Senate forced government to abandon proposal to extend the life of the House of Representatives by an act of the British Parliament

Date	Event
12–13 November 1918	Senator Gardiner presented a 12 hour address in the Senate on the Commonwealth Electoral Bill
1919	Preferential voting introduced for the Senate
15 August 1919	Time limits imposed on speeches in the Senate
December 1921	First conference held between the Senate and the House of Representatives
31 July 1924	Private senator's bill, the Commonwealth Electoral Bill, to provide compulsory voting, passed into law
9 May 1927	Senate met in Canberra for the first time
1929	Senate established a select committee to consider a system of standing committees
10 July 1930	First reference of a bill, the Central Reserve Bank Bill, to a select committee
6 May 1931	Chairman of Commonwealth Bank called before the Senate to give evidence on economic crisis
11 March 1932	Regulations and Ordinances Committee established to scrutinise delegated legislation
1 July 1941	Voting between two candidates for Presidency of the Senate tied, and decided by lot
21 August 1943	Senator Dorothy Tangney first woman elected to the Senate
10 July 1946	Parliamentary proceedings first broadcast on ABC Radio

Date	Event
1949	Introduction of proportional representation for Senate elections
1950	From 30 June, the states represented by 10 senators each
19 March 1951	Second simultaneous dissolution under section 57 of the Constitution
9 May 1953	For the first time, a Senate election was held separately from that of the House of Representatives
27 September 1961	Senate adopted procedures to examine estimates before appropriation bills had passed the House of Representatives
1965	Compact of 1965 between the Senate and the government, on the content of appropriation bills
1966	Senator Annabelle Rankin first woman to administer a government department
5 April 1967	Select committees on container cargo and metric system appointed
19 May 1967	Senate first adopted procedures for recall of Senate at request of majority of senators
October 1967	Senate forced government to disclose documents relating to Air Force VIP squadron
1968	Senator Ivy Wedgwood first woman senator to chair a committee
11 June 1970	Standing committee system established
	Estimates committees established

Date	Event
13 May 1971	Senate first found persons guilty of contempt, for unauthorised release of draft committee report
11 June 1971	First Aboriginal Senator, Neville Bonner, sworn in
9 December 1971	Senate declared that statutory authorities are accountable for all expenditures of public funds
14 March 1973	Senate required government to respond to Senate committee reports within three months
11 April 1974	Third simultaneous dissolution under section 57 of the Constitution
6 and 7 August 1974	Joint sitting convened to resolve a deadlock following simultaneous dissolution election
16 July 1975	Senior officials called before the Senate to investigate overseas loans affair; government claimed crown privilege
October–November 1975	Senate declined to pass appropriation bills, resulting in fourth simultaneous dissolution under section 57 of the Constitution
1975	Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory elected senators for the first time
1977	Section 15 of the Constitution, governing casual vacancies in the Senate, amended by referendum
1981	Select Committee on Parliament's Appropriations and Staffing recommended separation of parliamentary and government appropriations
19 November 1981	Establishment of the Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills

Date	Event
25 March 1982	Establishment of the Appropriations and Staffing Committee
4 February 1983	Fifth simultaneous dissolution under section 57 of the Constitution
22 October 1984	Senate first authorised publication of tabled documents out of sittings Senate asserted its right to meet after dissolution of House of Representatives
1984–86	Senate conducted first inquiry under section 72 of the Constitution into allegations concerning a judge
1985	Senators increased to 12 for each state
1985	Group ticket (above the line) voting introduced for Senate elections
1985-86	Senate amended loan bills to ensure annual approval of government authority to borrow
1986	Senator Janine Haines the first woman to lead a parliamentary party
14 April 1986	Deadline for the receipt of government bills first adopted
1987	<i>Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987</i> initiated in the Senate by the President and passed into law, to codify parliamentary immunities
5 June 1987	Sixth simultaneous dissolution under section 57 of the Constitution
October 1987	Senate forced abandonment of Australia Card Bill, which was the subject of the simultaneous dissolution

Date	Event
25 February 1988	Privilege resolutions passed by the Senate, codified the rights of witnesses at committee hearings and granted right of reply to persons referred to in debate
28 September 1988	30 day rule for questions on notice adopted
8 November 1988	Senate declared principles under which it would consider retrospective tax legislation
29 November 1988	Senate required government to explain any delay in proclaiming bills passed by Parliament
December 1988	Select Committee on Legislation Procedures recommends new procedures for referring bills to committees
21 November 1989	New Standing Orders adopted
5 December 1989	Selection of Bills Committee established to refer bills to committees
14 December 1989	Annual reports of departments and agencies referred to standing committees
31 May 1990	Televising Senate question time authorised
23 August 1990	Senate committees authorised to televise their proceedings
1993	Senate committees reported on constitutional and other problems with government's major tax legislation, resulting in its restructuring

Date	Event
24 August 1994	<p>Standing committee system restructured to reflect composition of the Senate and share chairs</p> <p>Estimates and standing committees amalgamated</p> <p>Performance of government departments and agencies referred to standing committees</p>
9 June 1995	Senate first divided a bill into two bills
30 May 1996	Senate required government departments to publish indexed lists of their files
20 August 1996	First territory and woman President of the Senate, Senator Margaret Reid, elected
2 December 1998	Reference of New Tax System bills simultaneously to a select committee and three standing committees
31 August 1999	Senate authorised publication of its proceedings live on the Internet
22 November 1999	<p>Senate declared all questions going to operations or finances of departments and agencies relevant to estimates hearings</p> <p>Procedures for urgent bills amended to ensure that non-government amendments are put</p>
29 June 2000	Senate declared that it would not pass tariff increases to validate certain tariff proposals
20 June 2001	Senate required government departments and agencies to publish details of contracts on the Internet
2001-02	Senate resolved cases of seizure of documents under search warrant, to determine immunity from seizure

Date	Event
2002	Action against a senator by his party considered as a matter of privilege
19 March 2002	Senate censured a senator for an attack on a High Court justice
15 May 2003	Resolution calling for removal of Governor-General
12 August 2003	Customs and excise tariff bills deferred until documents produced
30 October 2003	Resolution declaring basis on which Senate would consider claims of commercial confidentiality
11 February 2004	Select committee established on a treaty, the free trade agreement between Australia and the United States
9 March 2005	Agreement with the government over the execution of search warrants in senators' premises tabled
21 October 2005	High Court judgment in <i>Combet v Commonwealth</i> placed responsibility of Parliament for ensuring that appropriations are properly expended
9 November 2005	Senate adopted procedures allowing any senator to take action in the Senate in relation to unanswered estimates questions on notice or orders for documents
14 August 2006	Standing committee structure changed to return to pre-1994 structure
24 June 2008	Senate made orders requiring information, in time for estimates hearings, on government grants and appointments

(See Supplement)

