
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Provisions for a more family-friendly Chamber

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Procedure

November 2015
Canberra

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Foreword

In this report, the Committee responds to calls for the House of Representatives to better support the needs of its Members with infants. The Committee sought the views of all Members during the inquiry and there was overwhelming agreement – Members want to ensure that colleagues caring for infants are supported.

Members understand that juggling parliamentary duties while also meeting the needs of a baby is a challenging task and one that an increasing number of Members face. We also know that to encourage a more representative Parliament, we need to create an environment where Members can balance work and family.

The current provision allowing nursing mothers to vote by proxy is a practical measure that ensures a Member caring for her baby will have her vote counted. Feedback to the Committee revealed that a number of nursing mothers have used and valued the option to vote by proxy since it was introduced in 2008. The Committee therefore strongly supports its ongoing use.

The Committee has also recommended that the House amend standing orders to allow Members to bring their infants into the Chamber and Federation Chamber to breastfeed, bottle feed and at other times when needed. This would mean the House of Representatives has the most comprehensive family-friendly arrangements to support the participation of Members caring for infants.

Promoting a family-friendly workplace assists all Members with children, but female Members in particular will benefit. Such positive and practical changes make the challenges to women serving in the Parliament a little easier to manage.

Dr Andrew Southcott MP
Chair



Membership of the Committee

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Deputy Chair Michael Danby MP

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Scott Buchholz MP

Ian Goodenough MP

Jill Hall MP

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Terms of reference

To inquire into and report on the provisions for nursing mothers in the House of Representatives.



List of recommendations

1 Introduction

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that standing order 257 be amended to add paragraph (d) as follows:

257 Admission of Senators and visitors

...

(d) A visitor does not include an infant being cared for by a Member.

