
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PRACTICE

SIXTH EDITION

Editor

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TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Preface

It is now a little over seven years since the publication of the 5th edition of *House of Representatives Practice* in May 2005. Although it is always difficult to see the present in a reasonable perspective, those who have been involved in the work of the House and other observers would probably agree that these years have been of particular interest and importance in institutional terms.

The most significant developments have been those resulting from the elections of 21 August 2010 which, for the first time since 1940, saw no party or coalition win a majority of seats in the House. Negotiations prior to the formation of a new government resulted in agreement to change many provisions governing the operations of the House. The new Parliament saw changes to provisions for the consideration of bills, for the operation of committees, and in relation to Question Time. There was a considerable increase in the amount of time available for private Members' business and new roles for the Selection Committee.

Amendments to the standing orders implementing the revised procedures are covered in the updated text. As would be expected, the new provisions and the fluidity inherent in minority government have necessitated a considerable number of important interpretations and decisions, and these are also reflected in the text. Annual statistics in appendixes have been updated to 2011. Otherwise, the content of the publication is up to date as at the end of the Budget sittings on 28 June 2012.

House of Representatives Practice is the premier publication of the Department of the House of Representatives, and I am grateful for the input and assistance of colleagues throughout the department. I also acknowledge the valued contribution of the former Clerk, Ian Harris, who, prior to his retirement in 2009, had cleared the updates to that point. I thank the Australian Electoral Commission for its assistance in reviewing the text of Chapter 3, 'Elections and the Electoral System'. I am also grateful to my colleague, Dr Rosemary Laing, Clerk of the Senate, for providing an advance copy of the 13th edition of *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice* so that our many references to *Odgers* could be updated. My special thanks are due to Peter Fowler, who has coordinated the production of each edition since the 2nd edition in 1989. Once again Peter has managed the pre-publication stages, and has contributed substantially to the content. Peter's editorial skills and his wealth of knowledge of the practice and procedures of the House are evidenced throughout the publication.

We hope that this new edition will be of assistance to Members and informative to all who are interested in the work of the House and of the Federal Parliament.

Bernard Wright
Clerk of the House
August 2012

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