

# Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Outcome/Program:** 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Topic:** Commonwealth Table of Precedence

**Senator:** Senator Dean Smith

**Question reference number:** 97

**Type of Question:** FPA, Tuesday 27 May 2014, page 108-109

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 11 July 2014

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

Senator SMITH: In addition to my previous question, perhaps the department can tell us where the order of precedence for the Commonwealth appears on Wikipedia, and you might like to share with us where that order of precedence is wrong, as displayed on Wikipedia. It is actually a publicly available document and I am not too sure how accurate it is. I do not understand why the order of precedence—

Ms Kelly: Senator, is that the order of precedence in relation to office holders?

Senator SMITH: It is an extensive order of precedence, because it starts with the Queen and then moves through the federal executive council.

Ms Kelly: That is definitely available. I do not believe that is the document that Senator Collins is referring to.

Senator SMITH: So there is more than one order of precedence? Or are there subsets of documents in the order of precedence?

Ms Kelly: I understand it is a different document, but it might be best to take it on notice.

Senator Abetz: Let us take it on notice and try to resolve it

CHAIR: Very wise.

**Answer:**

There are two separate orders of precedence.

1. A ministerial order of precedence which is determined by the Prime Minister of the day and is not a public document.
2. The Table of Precedence for the Commonwealth of Australia as published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No. S206, Tuesday 5 October 1982 (copy attached).

The Commonwealth Table of Precedence on Wikipedia does not accurately reflect the Commonwealth Table of Precedence gazetted on 5 October 1982.



Government House  
Canberra 2600  
1 October 1982

HIS Excellency the Governor-General has been notified that Her Majesty The Queen has been graciously pleased, on the advice of Her Majesty's Australian Ministers, to approve the following Table of Precedence. The Table of Precedence notified in the *Australian Government Gazette* No. S 21, dated 17 February 1977, as amended by the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No. S 53, dated 29 March 1979, is hereby cancelled.

**TABLE OF PRECEDENCE FOR THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**

October 1982

1. The Governor-General.
2. (a) The Governor of the State.
- (b) Governors of the other States according to the date of appointment.
- Note: A Lieutenant-Governor of a State who is not also Chief Justice shall, when not administering the Government of the State, have, within the State, precedence immediately after the Chief Justice of the State.
- (c) The Administrators of the Northern Territory and Norfolk Island within their own Territories.
3. The Prime Minister.
4. The Premier within his own State. The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and the Chief Minister of Norfolk Island within their own Territories.
5. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives according to the date of appointment; if they are appointed at the same time, the President shall have precedence.
6. The Chief Justice of Australia.
7. (a) Ambassador and High Commissioners according to the date of presentation of their Letters of Credence or Commission, or, in the case of High Commissioners who do not present letters of Commission, according to the date of arrival in Canberra.
- (b) Charges d'Affaires en pied or en titre according to the date of presentation of their Letters of Credence.
- (c) Charges d'Affaires and Acting High Commissioners according to the date of assumption of duties.
8. Members of the Federal Executive Council under summons.
9. The Administrators of the Northern Territory and of Norfolk Island.
10. The Leader of the Opposition.
11. (a) Former Governors-General according to the date of leaving office.
- (b) Former Prime Ministers according to the date of leaving office.
- (c) Former Chief Justices of Australia according to the date of leaving office.
12. The Premiers of the States according to the population of their respective States and then the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and of Norfolk Island.

Note: A person acting on behalf of any of the foregoing shall enjoy the precedence of the person for whom he is acting with the understanding that, where there is more than one person in the class the person acting on behalf of another will take precedence after other persons in that class who are attending in their own right.

13. The Lord Mayor within his City.
14. Justices of the High Court according to seniority.
15. (a) The Chief Judge of the Federal Court of Australia.
- (b) The President of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.
16. The Chief Justice of the State and, after him, the other Chief Justices according to seniority.
17. Privy Counsellors.
18. The Chief of Defence Force Staff.
19. Chief Judges of Federal and Territory Courts according to the respective dates of first appointment to any one of those offices.
20. Members of the Parliament of the Commonwealth.
21. Other Judges of Federal Courts and the Deputy President of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission according to the respective dates of first appointment to any of those offices.
22. Lord Mayors of capital cities according to population.
23. Heads of religious communities according to the date of assuming office in Australia.
24. Presiding officer or officers of the State legislature and after him or them the presiding officers of the other State legislatures according to the date of appointment, then the Presiding Officers of the Northern Territory and Norfolk Island legislatures.
25. Members of the State Executive Council under summons to the Council and, after them, the members of the other State Executive Councils according to the population of their States, then the members of the Executive Council of the Northern Territory.
26. The Leader of the Opposition in the State and, after him, the Leaders of the Opposition in the other States according to the population of their States, then the Leader of the Opposition in the Northern Territory.
27. Judges of State and Territory Supreme Courts according to seniority.
28. Members of the Federal Executive Council not under summons.
29. Members of the State legislature and, after them, members of the other State legislatures according to the population of their States, then Members of the Legislative Assemblies of the Northern Territory and of Norfolk Island.
30. The Permanent Heads of Departments of the Australian Public Service and their peers and the Chiefs of the Australian Naval, General and Air Staffs, according to the date of first appointment to an office within this group.
31. Consuls-General, consuls and vice-consuls according to the date on which recognition was granted.
32. Members of the House of Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory.
33. Recipients of decorations and honours taking precedence over Knights Bachelor and Knights of Various Orders (including Knights Bachelor), all according to the precedence promulgated in *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No. S 187 of 31 August 1982.

A married couple shall enjoy the precedence of the spouse with the higher precedence and a husband or wife shall enjoy the precedence of the spouse.

By His Excellency's Command,

DAVID I. SMITH  
Official Secretary to the  
Governor-General