

8. Notices of motion

What is a notice of motion?

All decisions of the Senate begin as motions moved by senators. Most motions require the senator proposing the motion to give at least a day's **notice** of their intention to move it.

How is notice given?

Each day, time is set aside in the routine of business for giving notice. A senator gives a notice by:

- handing a signed copy to the Clerk or lodging it with the Sub-Table Office physically, or by email to table.notices.sen@aph.gov.au, before the time for giving notices; or
- seeking the call in the Senate at the time for giving notices, giving the notice orally and handing a signed copy to the Clerk.

A notice of motion to refer a matter to a Senate legislation or references committee may be given at any time before the adjournment is proposed. Notices are circulated to senators shortly after they are lodged and are then published in the *Notice Paper*.

Senators may withdraw their notice at anytime, although special rules apply to the withdrawal of disallowance notices (see [Guide No. 19](#)—Disallowance).

Are there rules about the content of notices?

The standing orders set out the rules for notices ([standing order 76](#)). In essence, a notice must:

- be signed by the senator giving it;
- show the day proposed for moving the motion—usually the next sitting day, a specific date or a number of sitting days into the future;
- be clear and succinct;
- relate to matters over which the Senate has the power to act; and
- **not** contain statements, quotations or other matter not strictly necessary to make the proposal intelligible

Notices may be edited by the Table Office before they are published in the *Notice Paper* and the President may delete extraneous matter or require the senator to make changes if it does not comply with the standing orders.

Amending a notice of motion

Senators may make changes to their notices before the day the motion is to be moved. They do this by delivering a letter under [standing order 77](#) identifying the changes to the Table Office (physically, or by email to table.notices.sen@aph.gov.au). Such letters must be received before adjournment on the day prior to the day they intend to move the amended notice and will be circulated to senators. The amended notice is then published in the *Notice Paper*. A template for a standing order 77 letter is available on the senators' intranet ([Senate Connect](#)).

Alternatively, the senator may seek leave of the Senate to amend the notice before moving it. Leave will be granted to amend the notice if nobody present in the Senate objects. It is common practice for senators intending to seek leave to amend a notice of motion to circulate the proposed changes to other senators well in advance of seeking leave to do so.

Postponing a notice of motion

A notice may be postponed to a later day under [standing order 67](#), but cannot be brought forward. The senator/s responsible for the notice should fill in a postponement form and lodge it with the Table Office (or by email to table.notices.sen@aph.gov.au). Forms are available on the [senators' intranet](#) (Senate Connect) or can be provided in hard copy by the Table Office or Procedure Office. At the time for the placing of business on each sitting day, the Clerk reads out a list of any postponements received, at which point they are considered to be postponed unless any senator requires that the proposal be put to a vote.

A senator may also postpone business at the last minute by seeking leave to do so.

Adding co-sponsors or changing sponsors

Senators may add their names to another senator's motion. Leave is not required and they may do so as follows, ideally after discussing with the owner of the motion:

- Before the day on which the notice is to be moved—notifying the Table Office (table.notices.sen@aph.gov.au) that they wish to co-sponsor the motion; or
- On the day on which the notice is to be moved—informing the Senate that they wish to co-sponsor the motion when the motion is moved.

Formal business

On each sitting day, there is an opportunity for some motions to be “fast tracked”; that is, moved and determined (or voted on) without debate. This is known as formal business and it occurs shortly after the time provided each sitting day for notices to be given for another day ([standing order 66](#)). Types of general business motions that may be dealt with as formal motions are restricted to:

- the consideration of legislation by the Senate (including the introduction of bills);
- the conduct of Senate business;
- the conduct of Senate or joint committee business (including the appointment of a select committee); and
- proposing an order for the production of documents (including proposing further action in relation to an order for the production of documents).

At the request of the sponsor of a motion, the motion may be dealt with as formal unless any senator present in the chamber objects.

What happens if there is an objection?

An objection from any senator prevents a notice of motion being dealt with during the ‘fast-track’ formal business process. When an objection is raised to a general business notice of motion being dealt with as a formal motion, the senator can move to suspend standing orders to bring on either a vote or a debate on that item (see [Guide No. 5](#)—Suspension of standing orders). A motion to suspend standing orders moved during formal business must be determined immediately without amendment or debate.

Need assistance?

For assistance with any of the matters covered by this guide, government senators or their staff should contact the Clerk Assistant (Table), on extension 3020 or ca.table.sen@aph.gov.au; and non-government senators or their staff should contact the Clerk Assistant (Procedure), on extension 3380 or ca.procedure.sen@aph.gov.au.

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