



Procedural Information Bulletin

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For the sitting period 12 to 15 November 2018

National apology

The Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition led the debate on a national apology to victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse on 22 October 2018. The Senate offered its own apology on its first sitting day, with many senators speaking in support.

Legislation

Three government bills dominated proceedings during the week. A bill Making Sure Every State and Territory Gets (Its) [Fair Share of GST](#) passed with near-unanimous support, after a lengthy second reading debate. A bill to [strengthen privacy arrangements](#) connected to the My Health Records scheme was passed with amendments from around the Senate, including amendments to extend until 31 January 2019 the period for people to ‘opt-out’ of having a record created, which had been due to end before the bill could be finally dealt with. (A motion calling on the government to extend the period was agreed to on 12 November, with the support of all non-government parties.) The Senate also passed a bill [reforming electoral funding and disclosure laws](#), including by restricting foreign donations. The bill was the subject of numerous government amendments, chiefly recommended by the [Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters](#). A handful of other government bills were also passed, without amendment.

An ALP bill requiring the Productivity Commission to consider and report on [economic inequality](#) passed the Senate on 12 November; the eighth private senators’ bill to do so in the 45th Parliament.

A suspension motion proposing to give priority to the Australian Greens’ Discrimination Free Schools Bill lacked support. The broader topic of legislative exemptions that allow [faith-based educational institutions to discriminate](#) against students, teachers and staff, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, was referred to the Legal and Constitutional References Committee for report by 26 November 2018.

Committee activity

In addition to the above reference, two inquiries into bills were initiated. A new select committee was established on ‘fair dinkum power’, with a nominal reporting date of 30 June 2019. This brings to six the number of select committees currently in operation, and to 15 the total for the current parliament; the most ever. During the previous parliament, the department supported 12 select committees.

A proposed inquiry into the impact of seismic testing on fisheries and the marine environment was rejected by the Senate on Monday, subsequently modified, and then rejected again on the Wednesday.

A handful of committee reports on bills and other references were tabled during the week. The long-running Economics References Committee inquiry into banking, insurance and the financial services sector concluded. As well, the Education and Employment References Committee reported on its inquiry into the exploitation of cleaners working in retail chains.

Disallowance

Three motions proposing to disallow instruments made under the Social Security (Administration) Act were debated together and negatived on 12 November, meaning the instruments remain in force. Similarly, a proposal to disallow the ASIC Corporations ([Banking Code of Practice](#)) Instrument 2018/700 was defeated after debate on 14 November.

By contrast, the Senate voted on 13 November to disallow a migration instrument expanding the class of asylum seekers designated as [fast track applicants](#) under the 2014 [Legacy Caseload Act](#). The disallowance of the instrument means it ceases to have effect from that time.

Anti-corruption commission

The Senate passed a resolution on 13 November 2018 calling on the government to establish a national anti-corruption commission, and resolved to forward the resolution to the House of Representatives ‘for concurrence’. The question whether the House will give substantive consideration to such motions, and indeed whether they pass or fail, is usually determined by the government, which typically commands a majority. Such matters have become less predictable as the House has now entered a period of minority government.

Summary resources

A reminder that the [Dynamic Red](#) – the Senate’s online order of business – contains the most useful links to each day’s business, and that the information it contains is being progressively enhanced. It remains the most useful way to access the homepages for bills scheduled for debate on any given day.

Numerous other useful business lists can be found on the [Senate business page](#), including lists of [amendments circulated to current bills](#) and activity connected to [Senate orders for documents](#).

Finally, a weekly summary of the Senate’s business, with links to footage of debate, transcripts and procedural text can be accessed via the [daily summary homepage](#). Information is collated under topics such as senators, bills, committees, documents and statistics.

RELATED RESOURCES

[Dynamic Red](#) – updated continuously during the sitting day, the Dynamic Red displays the results of proceedings as they happen.

[Senate Daily Summary](#) – a convenient summary of each day’s proceedings in the Senate, with links to source documents.

Like this bulletin, these documents can be found on the Senate website: www.aph.gov.au/senate

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