

HOUSE REVIEW



Selected features of House of Representatives business

Sitting period 8 – 17 February 2022 (no. 46)

The first sitting fortnight for the year featured: an Address of Congratulation to Her Majesty the Queen, steps taken in response to the Jenkins review and an extended sitting. Members unable to attend for reasons of the pandemic were once again able to participate using the official video facility, in accordance with an agreement presented on 8 February.

Standards in parliamentary workplaces

During these sittings the House (and the Parliament) took several steps in response to Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins' *Set the standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*. On 8 February the Speaker made a statement acknowledging 'the unacceptable history of workplace bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault in Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces'. The statement of acknowledgement, which was made in both Houses on behalf of a parliamentary cross-party Leadership Taskforce, included an apology and expressed commitment to work across the Parliament to implement all of the recommendations of the Jenkins Review. The Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Leader of the Australian Greens and the Member for Warringah spoke in support of the statement.

On 10 February, the Parliamentary Workplace Reform (Set the Standard Measures No. 1) Bill 2022 was received from the Senate and introduced in the House. The bill, which implements recommendations 17 and 24 of the Jenkins Review, was debated and passed on 15 February.

On 14 February, the House concurred in a resolution of the Senate to establish a Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards. The committee is to develop a code or codes of conduct for Commonwealth parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and parliamentary workplaces to ensure safe and respectful behaviour. The resolution sets out several factors to be considered during the inquiry, and the committee is to recommend also options for enforcing, and reviewing the operation of, any proposed code. The committee must present its final report by 1 November 2022.

During Question Time on 9 February and during debate on the Parliamentary Workplace Reform (Set the Standard Measures No. 1) Bill 2022, the Speaker reminded the House of the sub judice convention, asking Members to take care with any comments relating to matters before the courts.

Address of Congratulation to Her Majesty The Queen

On 8 February, to mark the occasion of the platinum jubilee of her ascension to the throne, the Prime Minister moved that an Address of Congratulation be presented to Her Majesty The Queen. After the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the motion, it was referred to the Federation Chamber, where further speeches were made the following day. The motion was then returned to the House and agreed to, all Members rising in their places.

Anniversary of the national apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples

On 14 February, the Prime Minister made a statement to mark the 14th anniversary of the national apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples and the Stolen Generations. The Leader of the Opposition spoke in reply to the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Mr Wyatt, and the Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ms Burney, also made statements. The House then

agreed to permit further statements to be made in the Federation Chamber where, on 15 February, other Members reflected on the apology and the ongoing journey towards reconciliation.

Marking the deaths of former Members and former Senators

On 9 February, the Prime Minister moved a condolence motion on the death of the Honourable Dr Donald James (Don) Grimes AO, a Senator for Tasmania from 1974 to 1987 and a former Minister. The following day, the Prime Minister moved a condolence motion on the death of the Honourable Sir Ransley (Victor) Garland KBE, the Member for Curtin from 1969 to 1981 and a former Minister and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. On 14 February, the Prime Minister moved a condolence motion on the death of the Honourable Michael Eamon Beahan AM, a Senator for Western Australia from 1987 to 1996 and former President of the Senate. On each occasion, the motion was seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, with Members rising in their places as a mark of respect.

Valedictory remarks

During the fortnight, the Members for Bennelong, Boothby, Bowman, Flynn, Hunter, Lingiari, Nicholls and Parramatta, who will not be contesting the next election, made valedictory remarks on indulgence.

Legislation

Introductions

Thirty government bills were introduced during the sittings. This included four appropriation bills, as well as three bills relating to electoral matters which were received from the Senate on 14 February and debated and passed later that week.

Before each appropriation bill was introduced, the Chair announced a message from the Governor-General recommending the purpose of the appropriation, as required under SO 180. The electoral matters bills related to authorisations for electoral communications, extension of the existing secure telephone voting method to individuals affected by COVID-19 and the involvement of foreign persons or entities in certain election activities.

Six private Members' bills were introduced. These related to a curfew for Brisbane airport, home batteries, internet speeds in regional Australia, social media, political donations and a moratorium on new coal, gas and oil projects.

Passing the House

A total of 18 bills were passed by the House during the period. This included two appropriation bills seeking appropriation to cover the cash flow requirements for coronavirus response programs that need funding through February and March 2022.

Extended sitting to consider religious discrimination legislation

On the evening of 9 February, the House agreed to suspend standing orders to complete consideration of three bills relating to religious discrimination, and other unrelated bills, before it adjourned.

The cognate debate then resumed on the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 and two related bills, which continued until 1.12 am the following day. At the conclusion of this debate, a second reading amendment moved by the Member for Clark was defeated on division before the principal bill was read a second time and a lengthy consideration in detail stage followed. The House disagreed to detail amendments moved by the Member for Melbourne, on division, and an amendment moved by the Member for Hughes, on the voices, with that Member dissenting.

After four government amendments were agreed to on the voices, a minister moved a further 15 amendments, with a shadow minister moving an amendment to one of them. The question was put in the form 'that the amendment be disagreed to'. The House divided, and as the vote was tied

62 'ayes' and 62 'noes', the Speaker had a casting vote. He cast his vote with the 'ayes', in accordance with the principle that, where no further discussion is possible, decisions should not be taken except by a majority. This decision left the government amendment in its original form. The government amendments were then agreed on the voices, with two Members dissenting. Further amendments were then moved by the shadow minister and defeated on division, before the bill, as amended, was agreed to. By leave, the third reading was moved immediately and agreed to on division.

The Religious Discrimination (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2021 was then read a second and third time without division or debate. The Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 was then read a second time and considered in detail. The Member for Mayo unsuccessfully moved one amendment and then moved a second amendment. The question on this amendment was put in the form 'that the amendment be disagreed to', as it was not supported by the government. The House divided, with the motion defeated, 'ayes' 58; 'noes' 65. As a decision not to disagree to an amendment is not agreement to an amendment, a further question was proposed 'that the amendment be agreed to'. This motion was agreed to on division, the bill in its amended form was agreed to on division, and the bill was read a third time, having passed on the voices.

Two further, unrelated bills—the Treasury Laws Amendment (Enhancing Superannuation Outcomes for Australians and Helping Australian Businesses Invest) Bill 2021 and the Corporate Collective Responsibility Vehicle Framework and Other Measures Bill 2021—were then debated and agreed to before the House adjourned at 5.01 am on 10 February, several hours before a new sitting was scheduled.

Parliamentary committees

Twenty-two committee reports were presented, including 10 reports which had been presented to the Speaker out of session under SO 247(c) before the sittings period began. Reports presented to the Speaker in this way are then presented to the House as soon as possible.

On 9 February the Chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure presented the committee's report into [maintenance of the standing orders](#). It has become usual for the committee to inquire into the operation of the standing orders over the course of a Parliament. The report includes observations by the committee and recommends amendments to several standing orders.

Communication with the Senate

There were few messages from the Senate this fortnight, as the Senate sat in the first week only, to allow its committees to consider additional estimates in the second week. Five bills were returned without amendment or request, and four Senate bills were received. These are discussed above, as is the Senate resolution to establish a Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards. Other messages related to committees and committee membership.

The House and the Senate are scheduled to meet next on Budget day, 29 March.

Further information on the work of the House

[Bills and legislation](#)—access bills, explanatory memoranda, amendments, speeches, information about key stages of a bill's consideration, and a tracking option

[Live Minutes](#)—a real time summary of House decisions and proceedings. When used in conjunction with the [Daily Program](#), the Live Minutes are a simple way to track the House's work each day

[House of Representatives Practice](#) 7 ed., 2018—the most authoritative guide to House procedure

[House of Representatives Standing Orders](#), as at 19 September 2019, as amended—the House's rules of procedure