

# HOUSE REVIEW



## Selected features of House of Representatives business

Sitting period 9-12 November 2020 (no. 34)

This single sitting week featured the consideration in detail and passage of the Budget bills. The House suspended on Wednesday morning, enabling Members to attend Remembrance Day services. For the first time since March, members of the public were allowed access to Parliament House during a sitting week, including to the galleries of the Chamber.

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### Arrangements for the operation of the Chamber and Federation Chamber

Once more, special seating arrangements enabled distancing between Members, and the Whips organised pairs which reduced the numbers present in the Chamber for divisions. A total of 139 Members attended across the sitting week. Due to the high attendance, no contributions were made remotely to proceedings in the House.

In the Federation Chamber on 9 November, the Deputy Speaker informed Members that the Speaker, exercising his discretion under the Agreement for Members to Contribute Remotely to Parliamentary Proceedings presented to the House on 6 October, had decided to extend participation via video link for some aspects of Federation Chamber business from that day. He stated that the provisions of the Agreement applied to Members who participate in Federation Chamber meetings via video link, and that House standing orders and practices apply. No remote contributions were made to Federation Chamber proceedings during the week.

### Legislation

#### *Introductions*

Nine bills were presented during the week. Seven government bills were presented, with subjects that included: measures to implement recommendations of the Financial Services Royal Commission; extension of the Coronavirus Supplement for certain social security payments; and taxation exemptions for certain small business grants relating to the coronavirus recovery.

#### *Passing the House—Budget bills*

On 9 November a Minister moved, by leave, to suspend standing orders to vary the Federation Chamber's meeting times and/or routine of business for 10, 11 and 12 November to facilitate consideration of the three Budget bills: Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2020-2021; Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2020-2021; and the Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2020-2021.

Consideration in detail of Schedule 1 to Appropriation Bill (No. 1), 'Services for which money is appropriated', began in the Federation Chamber on 9 November and an order for consideration of portfolios was agreed to. As debate on each portfolio concluded, the question on the relevant proposed expenditure was put and passed.

On 12 November, expenditure on the final portfolio was agreed to and the Federation Chamber agreed to the question that the bill be reported to the House without amendment. The other Budget bills were called on in turn, the question on the second reading put and passed, and the question that the bill be reported to the House without amendment was agreed to in each case. Prior to Question Time, the Deputy Speaker reported that Appropriation Bill (No. 1) had been fully considered by the Federation Chamber and agreed to. A Minister moved immediately, by leave, that the bill be read a

third time and the question was carried. The other two bills were reported and agreed to in the same way, then the three bills were transmitted to the Senate with the usual formal messages.

#### *Passing the House—Other bills*

Over the course of the week, a further 19 bills were passed by the House.

Three bills, by agreement, were debated cognately with related bills at the second reading stage. The primary bills were the Education Legislation Amendment (Up-Front Payments Tuition Protection) Bill 2020, Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Bill 2020, and Radiocommunications Legislation Amendment (Reform and Modernisation) Bill 2020. Cognate debates are an informal practice not addressed in the standing orders, and are usually agreed to by the government and opposition. The Chair formally seeks the agreement of the House when the first of the related bills is called on and a cognate debate must be agreed to unanimously to proceed. At the conclusion of a cognate debate separate questions are put on each of the related bills.

For each of the cognate debates, the opposition moved an amendment to the second reading of the primary bill. The amendment was defeated in each case and the question on the second reading carried on the voices. One of the bills was subsequently considered in detail. A Minister presented a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the Australia's Foreign Relations Bill and, by leave, moved three amendments together. The question on the amendments was carried and the bill, as amended, was agreed to. For each of the primary bills, the question on the third reading was carried. Questions necessary to finalise the passage of the related bills in each group were carried on the voices.

In a rare occurrence, on 9 November a Minister spoke to the motion for the third reading of a bill (the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Coronavirus and Other Measures) Bill 2020) and the motion was further debated before the question on the third reading was put and passed.

#### **Private Members' business**

Debate took place on motions with topics that included the anniversary of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, nuclear weapons, South-west Sydney and the Tasmanian health system.

On 9 November two bills relating to climate change were introduced by the Member for Warringah. In each case, debate was adjourned after the second reading had been moved and seconded, in accordance with standing orders and the Selection Committee's determination. On 11 November, in accordance with a recommendation of the Selection Committee, the bills were referred to the Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy for inquiry and report.

#### **Statements by the Speaker**

On 9 November the Speaker responded to a question asked by the Manager of Opposition Business on 29 October concerning the impact on the potential interpretation of an act of a speech given by a Minister summing up a second reading debate. Also on 9 November, the Speaker made a statement concerning ministerial statements.

After Question Time on 10 November the Speaker informed the House that Dr Stein Helgeby had been appointed the Parliamentary Budget Officer from 18 November 2020.

#### **Suspension of the House—Remembrance Day**

On 11 November a Minister moved a suspension of standing orders for the House to suspend from 10 am to 12.15 pm to enable Members to attend Remembrance Day services. While the House was suspended, the Federation Chamber met from 11.45 am to continue its consideration of the appropriation bills. The Federation Chamber may meet while the House is suspended, although this occurs infrequently, and it may not meet when the House is adjourned.

### **Statements by indulgence**

Prior to Question Time on 9 November the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition made statements by indulgence relating to the US Presidential election and congratulated President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

During Question Time on 11 November, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs was asked a question relating to the importance of Remembrance Day. At the conclusion of the Minister's answer, the Shadow Minister made a statement by indulgence associating the opposition with the Minister's remarks.

Following Question Time on 12 November, the Manager of Opposition Business made a statement by indulgence concerning the 100th anniversary of the expulsion of a Member—Hugh Mahon—from the House. He noted that it is no longer possible for the House to expel a Member.

### **Motion to disallow a regulation**

On 10 November a Minister moved on notice to suspend standing orders to permit a private Member's notice relating to the disallowance of the Australian Postal Corporation (Performance Standards) Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Regulations 2020 to be called on immediately, in time allotted to government business. The question was carried and an opposition Member moved that the regulations be disallowed. Following debate, the motion was defeated on division. If a notice to disallow a regulation has not been disposed of by the House within 15 sitting days of the notice having been given, the regulation is taken to have been disallowed and it ceases to have effect. In this case, the notice to disallow the regulations was given on 2 September with the period of 15 sitting days ending on 11 November.

### **Ministerial statement and reply**

On 10 November the Minister for Veterans' Affairs made a fourth annual statement by leave on veterans and their families. As is the custom with ministerial statements, the Shadow Minister spoke in response, after which the Minister moved that the House take note of the document and that order was referred to the Federation Chamber for further debate.

### **Committee reports**

In the course of the week six committee reports were presented and leave was granted for statements to be made by chairs and deputy chairs. Reports of inquiries into road safety and education in remote and complex environments were referred to the Federation Chamber.

On 9 November the Chair of the Petitions Committee informed the House that a petition on the topic of a 'Royal Commission to ensure a strong, diverse Australian news media' had been received from 501,876 petitioners—the largest number of signatories to an e-petition. The principal petitioner was former Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd.

### **Matters of public importance discussions**

Topics for the one-hour discussions after Question Time on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday were: providing for Australia's most vulnerable; provision of economic and employment security to workers during the recession; and government delivery on announcements.

### **Interaction with the Senate**

On 11 November a message from the Senate was reported returning the Economic Recovery Package (JobMaker Hiring Credit) Amendment Bill 2020 with amendments. The House having agreed that the message be considered immediately, a Minister moved that the Senate's amendments be disagreed to. Following debate, the motion was carried on division. The Minister presented written reasons for the House disagreeing to the amendments and moved successfully that these be adopted. On

12 November, a message was reported informing the House that the Senate did not insist on its amendments.

Other message traffic with the Senate concerned the return of bills without amendments and changes to the time for presentation of certain committee reports.

The House and Senate are scheduled to meet next on 30 November 2020.

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***Further information on the work of the House***

[Bills and legislation](#), bills, explanatory memoranda, amendments, speeches, 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

[Votes and Proceedings](#), the official record of the proceedings of the House of Representatives

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

[House of Representatives Standing Orders](#), as at 19 September 2019, the rules of procedure for the House of Representatives