

Procedure Committee

Second report of 2019

The committee reports to the Senate on the following matters, referred by the President of the Senate on 13 March 2019, at the request of the then Manager of Opposition Business, Senator O'Neill. Senator O'Neill's letter is reproduced at Appendix 1. Each matter proposes procedural changes.

Closing the Gap statement

The first proposal asks that the Senate add to its practices surrounding consideration of the Prime Minister's annual 'Closing the Gap' statement. Senator O'Neill proposes a short suspension of Senate sittings to enable senators to attend the presentation of the statement in the House of Representatives.

The committee noted the proposal from Senator O'Neill that the Senate suspend each year to enable senators to attend the presentation of the Prime Minister's annual 'Closing the Gap' statement in the House of Representatives. The committee agreed to recommend that the Senate adopt the proposal, with an amendment that the suspension commence 10 minutes prior to the presentation of the statement, rather than 30 minutes as initially proposed.

Recommendation

1.1 That the Senate adopt a resolution, as follows:

That each year, on the day on which the Prime Minister presents the annual report on progress in meeting the 'Closing the Gap' targets, the sitting of the Senate be suspended 10 minutes prior to the time set for the presentation of the report in the House of Representatives, until the ringing of the bells, to enable senators to attend.

Indigenous Australian languages

The second proposal is that, where evidence is taken before a Senate committee in an Indigenous Australian language, the Senate requires that the evidence be transcribed in Hansard both in that language and in English.

The committee noted the proposal from Senator O'Neill to amend standing order 35 and adopt a standalone resolution relating to recording Indigenous Australian languages in committee *Hansards*. The committee agreed to recommend that the Senate adopt the proposal. The committee noted that, as a matter of practice, any committee recording evidence as proposed should ensure it is aware of the resources required. The committee agreed to keep a watching brief on resource implications.

Recommendation

1.2 That standing order 35 be amended and the Senate adopt a resolution, as follows:

At the end of standing order 35, add:

- (3) If evidence is heard by a committee in an Indigenous Australian language the transcript of that evidence shall record both:
 - (a) the evidence as submitted in the Indigenous Australian language; and
 - (b) an English translation of the evidence.

Resolution:

The Senate resolves that, where a committee has heard evidence in an Indigenous Australian language, the transcription by *Hansard* staff of the evidence as submitted, and its translation into English, should be assisted by the person who gave evidence or a person from their community.

Senator Sue Lines
Chair