

Subject: Remove Prayer from Senate Proceedings
To the Senate Standing Committee on Procedure,

I write in support of the proposal before the Committee to replace the parliamentary prayer with an invitation to silent reflection.

The current prayer is an anachronism and does not reflect the beliefs of all Australians. Its continued presence in Senate Standing Orders is a sectarian aggravation and an undue Christian privilege that symbolises parliamentary submission to Christian beliefs.

Compelling the Senate President to officiate over a Christian prayer appears to be a qualifying religious test for that office. This creates tension with s116 of the constitution which requires that no public office under the Commonwealth may be subject to a religious test.

In any case, compulsory religious worship is prima facie unethical and should cease.

There should be no obligation nor urging to prayer in the ordinary proceedings and rituals of our secular democratic parliament.

I commend the proposal to the committee.
Sincerely,
Nicholas Best