



PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

29 August 2017

Mr G Christensen MP
Chair
Joint Committee on Publications

Subject: Request for information on including documents in the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS)

Issue

1. On 18 August 2017 the Joint Publications Committee wrote to us seeking information in connection with its inquiry into the printing standards.
2. The committee is seeking guidance on a proposal to immediately include documents presented to the Parliament in the Parliamentary Papers Series (PPS); and whether such an approach could be adopted without the need to change the current standing orders of the Houses.

Background

3. In the Senate a document may be included in the PPS by an order that it be printed (SO 169); or by the Senate adopting the recommendation of the Publications Committee (SO 22).
4. In the House of Representatives a document may be included in the PPS upon presentation of a committee report (SO 39); on the motion of a minister without notice or a member on notice (SO 202); and on the recommendation of the committee (SO 219).
5. In practice, the committee meets regularly in sitting weeks to approve a report making recommendations on documents to be included in the PPS; and this occurs on the adoption of the report by the chambers.

Proposal

6. The submission of the Clerk of the Senate to the inquiry contained a proposal that the function of identifying documents for inclusion in the PPS be formally devolved to the administration of the Senate and House departments, with the committee approving appropriate administrative guidelines for this purpose (p.6).
7. The rationale for this is that the basis for including documents in the PPS has largely become a function of the categories to which they belong. The committee secretariat is guided by precedents in providing recommendations to the committees on which documents should be included in the PPS; and these recommendations are routinely adopted by the committee and, subsequently, the Senate and House of Representatives.

8. The intention of the proposal is to make the administration of the PPS more efficient. This would be achieved through reducing the need for the committee to meet solely for the routine purpose of making recommendations on documents to be included in the PPS; and removing the sometimes significant delay between a document being presented and its inclusion in the PPS, as well as the 'double handling' of documents.

Potential approach

9. The committee has requested advice on an approach to including documents in the PPS immediately on presentation. This may be achieved without the need to change the standing orders.
10. A practical and straightforward way to achieve this would be for the committee to recommend that the Senate and House of Representatives adopt resolutions to order that, for the remainder of this Parliament, those classes of documents that form the majority of the PPS be included in the PPS upon presentation, as follows:

That, unless otherwise ordered, the following documents shall be made Parliamentary Papers upon their presentation to the Senate/House of Representatives:

- substantive reports of parliamentary committees;
 - annual reports of Commonwealth entities;
 - a report of a royal commission;
 - a report of the Productivity Commission;
 - a report of the Auditor-General;
 - a report of the Australian Human Rights Commission;
 - a report of the Australia Law Reform Commission;
 - a report of the Australian Electoral Commission on the redistribution of electoral division boundaries;
 - Australian Government white papers;
 - a report in a series that has previously been included in the Parliamentary Paper Series on the recommendation of a Publications Committee; and
 - budget papers and ministerial statements presented following the presentation of the appropriation bills.
11. This approach would still require documents falling outside of the specified classes to be considered by the committee, albeit meeting less frequently. It would therefore require only minimal administrative guidelines beyond the terms of the resolution itself.
 12. We consider that a resolution in these terms could achieve to a significant extent the administrative efficiencies outlined above. It would also allow the committee and the Senate and House chambers to test the new arrangements. Consideration of how to permanently effect these or similar arrangements could be undertaken in the next Parliament if the arrangements prove successful.



DAVID ELDER
Clerk of the House

Date: 29 August 2017



RICHARD PYE
Clerk of the Senate

Date: 29 August 2017