

Media coverage of House proceedings

Including the Chamber, Main Committee and committees

[FINAL REPORT]

**House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Procedure**

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Foreword

The committee decided to inquire into enhancing public knowledge of parliamentary proceedings following debate in the House about the role of the media. The committee has had an interest in promoting access to information about proceedings since it commenced its inquiry into community involvement in the procedures and practices of the House in 1998. This report continues this work.

The interim report on this topic was tabled in August 2004, towards the end of the 40th Parliament. In May 2005 the Procedure Committee of the new (41st) Parliament decided to continue its predecessor's work on the issue of media coverage, to seek feedback on the interim report and make a final report.

The committee has benefited from further discussions with the new Speaker, the Hon. David Hawker, the newly elected Press Gallery Committee and the Broadcasting Section of the Department of Parliamentary Services. After reviewing the interim report the committee has not found it necessary to change most of it in any substantial way. However, we have expanded the section on television coverage, and made an additional recommendation in response to press gallery concerns in that area.

Margaret May MP
Chair



Membership of the Committee

Chair Mrs M A May MP

Deputy Chair Mr D Melham MP

Members Hon B K Bishop MP
Mrs P Draper MP
Mr L Hartsuyker MP (from 31.5.05)
Ms K Hoare MP
Mr P Neville MP (to 31.5.05)
Hon L R S Price MP

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Terms of reference

General terms of reference

To inquire into and report on the practices and procedures of the House and its committees.

Inquiry terms of reference

To inquire into and report on all aspects of media coverage of the House (including proceedings in the House, Main Committee and committees of the House).



List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the resolutions of 16 October 1991 and 1 May 1996 be replaced by an updated resolution which reflects current arrangements. In particular, the resolution should acknowledge the fact that the Speaker acts on behalf of the House in administering and implementing all guidelines relating to media access to proceedings, including television broadcasting.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the Speaker amend the guidelines for still photography in the chamber as follows: modernise the language of the guidelines wherever necessary to accommodate the change from film to digital technology; and move the provisions of guideline (l) to the preamble.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the Speaker revise guideline (c) of the rules for still photography in the chamber to extend automatic permission for still photographers to take photographs during ministerial statements, discussions of matters of public importance, divisions and adjournment debates for a trial period of 10 sitting weeks.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the Speaker write to the television bureaus represented in the press gallery to offer them the use of isolated feeds produced by DPS Broadcasting staff on request. The Speaker might consider that any additional resources required to provide this footage should be paid for by the bureau making the request.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the Press Gallery Committee consult with the Broadcasting Section of DPS in relation to improving the content of the existing feed for television excerpt purposes and to explore the possibility of additional feeds focusing on the speakers at the despatch boxes; and that the committee evaluate any such new arrangements after they have been in operation for six sitting weeks.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the Department of Parliamentary Services install inbuilt cameras in additional House of Representatives committee rooms to allow increased television coverage of committee proceedings.