

INTERIM REPORT

Media coverage of House proceedings

Including the Chamber, Main Committee and committees

**House of Representatives
Procedure Committee**

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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.

This interim report focusses on media access and media coverage of events which is one aspect of the wider reference.

Margaret May MP
Chair



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Terms of reference

General terms of reference

To inquire into and report on the practices and procedures of the House generally with a view to making recommendations for their improvement or change and for the development of new procedures

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 the guidelines relating to television broadcasting.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the Speaker amend the guidelines for still photography in the chamber as follows: delete the words “and motor driven cameras” from still photography guideline (j) and delete the whole of guideline (l).

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the Speaker revise guideline (c) of the rules for still photography in the chamber to extend automatic permission to discussions of Matters of Public Importance, divisions and adjournment debates for a trial period of three months.

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 Department of Parliamentary Services (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 DPS install inbuilt cameras in House of Representatives committee rooms to allow additional

television coverage of committee proceedings. Given cost constraints, it may be practical to stagger the installation of such cameras.

An overview of media coverage

Background to the inquiry

- 1.1 In February 2004 the media expressed dissatisfaction with the guidelines which cover media coverage of parliamentary proceedings following action taken by the Speaker in response to breaches of the guidelines.
- 1.2 On 12 February a protester had jumped from a public gallery of the House of Representatives onto the floor of the chamber. The guidelines covering still photography in the chamber prohibit photographing such events on the grounds that demonstrations would be encouraged by giving them publicity. The same prohibition applies to the camera operators employed by the Department of Parliamentary Services who provide the “feed” to the media for television coverage of proceedings.
- 1.3 In breach of the guidelines and in defiance of specific instructions, still photographs were taken and several newspapers printed these photographs of the event. The Speaker subsequently imposed penalties on those newspapers which meant their photographers were not permitted to take photographs from the galleries for the following seven sitting days.

- 1.4 On 16 February 2004 the Speaker made a statement to the House explaining his decision.¹ This resulted in questions to the Speaker in the House about the guidelines. In particular, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Latham, and the Manager of Opposition Business, Ms Gillard, indicated they supported a review of the guidelines covering still photography with a view to making them more liberal. Ms Gillard suggested that the Procedure Committee could consider the issue.²
- 1.5 The Speaker indicated that he was not inclined to review the current guidelines. He noted that they had been relaxed by Speaker Halverson and that they were more liberal than those which applied in comparable parliaments.³
- 1.6 The Procedure Committee decided to inquire into the issue of media access to parliamentary proceedings as part of a wider inquiry into enhancing public knowledge about the business of the chamber, Main Committee and parliamentary committees.
- 1.7 The committee considers that the issue of media coverage is an important issue. The committee has decided to present an interim report to ensure it has attended to this part of the wider inquiry before the end of this Parliament.

Responsibility for media guidelines

The role of the Speaker

- 1.8 The guidelines covering media access to proceedings are known as the Speaker's guidelines and they are, in fact, issued by the Speaker and monitored by the Serjeant-at-Arms' office on behalf of the Speaker. The Speaker has responsibility for administering the guidelines and imposing penalties under the guidelines. In administering the guidelines the Speaker acts on behalf of the House.

¹ H.R. Deb. (16.2.2004) 24758.

² H.R. Deb. (16.2.2004) 24758 and 24775.

³ H.R. Deb. (16.2.2004) 24776.

Origin of the guidelines

- 1.9 The current guidelines relating to television broadcasting are the result of the work of various committees which culminated in two resolutions of the House which are reproduced at the end of the bound standing orders.
- 1.10 The first resolution was adopted by the House on 16 October 1991. That resolution authorised live television broadcasting and rebroadcasting of proceedings. The conditions and guidelines for broadcasting were, until otherwise determined, to be those proposed by the House of Representatives Select Committee on Televising.⁴ The values reflected in the House resolutions and the Speaker's guidelines for television broadcasting and rebroadcasting proceedings, stem from this committee report. The prohibitions on the use of footage for political party advertising, ridicule and satire and commercial purposes stem from the committee's recommendations.⁵ The requirement that broadcasts use the feed from the then Sound and Vision Office (now the Broadcasting unit of the DPS) also stems from the committee report. Balanced and accurate reporting was also one of the conditions recommended in the report.⁶ The current version of the conditions is in the resolution of the House adopted on 1 May 1996.⁷
- 1.11 When still photographers were admitted to the chamber in 1992, the guidelines covering them derived from the resolutions and guidelines relating to television broadcasting.

Implementing the guidelines

- 1.12 The resolutions of 1991 and 1996 on televising proceedings and conditions for broadcasters, provided for the House members of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings to form a committee, acting independently of the joint committee, to consider conditions and guidelines and to determine whether

⁴ *The Eyes Have It*, report of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Televising, May 1991.

⁵ Ibid. chapter 2, commencing at page 15.

⁶ Ibid, pp. 19-20.

⁷ Reproduced in the Standing and Sessiional orders as at 16 September 2002, p. 102.

breaches had occurred and how they should be addressed. The 1996 resolution set out penalties for breaches of the guidelines by broadcasters. The resolution also envisaged amendments to the *Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946* to bring televising of procedures within the Act.

- 1.13 Neither of these things happened. The Act has not been changed so it addresses only radio broadcasting and the televising of joint sittings of both Houses held under section 57 of the Constitution.
- 1.14 There is no doubt that it would be very difficult for a committee to monitor and enforce the guidelines relating to television broadcasting of proceedings. In particular, if there were a breach of the guidelines it is doubtful if a committee would be able to address the problem as efficiently as the Speaker could do. The Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings was not established to monitor and implement television broadcasting. The resolutions giving this role to House members of the Joint Committee should be amended and updated to reflect the fact that the House has entrusted to the Speaker the task of implementing the guidelines. The Broadcasting Committee's actual role would not be changed by this amendment.

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 the guidelines relating to television broadcasting.

Role of the Procedure Committee

- 1.15 The Procedure Committee is empowered by standing order 330 to “inquire into and report on the practices and procedures of the House generally with a view to making recommendations for their improvement or change and for the development of new procedures”. The issue of regulating media coverage of proceedings is clearly within this broad responsibility.

- 1.16 It follows from the recommendation above that the Procedure Committee sees its role as one of advising the Speaker in relation to media coverage of the House, the Main Committee and House committees.

Evidence to the inquiry

- 1.17 The committee publicised the inquiry on its website and invited submissions from the public. All members of the House were invited to give their views of the adequacy of current arrangements for allowing the public to gain an understanding of the Parliaments proceedings. Submissions are reproduced at Appendix B.
- 1.18 The committee also conducted two round table conferences with a view to consulting as widely as possible with relevant persons within Parliament House. The first round table was a private conference with House office holders including the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, Leader of the House, Manager of Opposition Business, Whips and independent members. The second round table was with media representatives including the parliamentary press gallery, the Press Council of Australia, parliamentary broadcasting staff and AUSPIC. The transcript of evidence is at Appendix C. The committee found the round tables to be very helpful.

The media and Parliament – an overview

Expanding coverage

- 1.19 Chapter 2 of this report provides some details of the development of media coverage of the House's proceedings and the guidelines relating to the coverage. This brief overview of the main steps in extending the coverage of proceedings is provided as a necessary background to commenting on that coverage. The report will then consider the separate development of still photography and television coverage. It will also be necessary to consider briefly the different values held by those interested in media coverage.
- 1.20 The history of parliamentary media coverage in Australia is a story of generally increasing access with a few problems and some serious difficulties. Clem Lloyd's account of the history of the press gallery is

an excellent account of the early history of media coverage.⁸ His book covers the period from federation to the move from Old Parliament House in 1988 and traces the early dominance of the print media.

- 1.21 The reporting of parliamentary proceedings in newspapers was originally the main way the public could find out about the business of their Parliament (apart from attending in the public galleries). Speeches were recorded in depth. Photographs were an adjunct to print reporting at first, with print journalists using compact cameras as they thought appropriate. The early photographs tended to be formal and posed. The fact that movement spoilt early “still” photographs contributed to the sort of photographs that were taken. Until quite recently photographs did not feature very prominently in the print media.
- 1.22 Radio broadcasting played an important role in communicating proceedings to the public after the implementation of the *Parliamentary Broadcasting Act 1946*. The Act requires total coverage of proceedings when Parliament is sitting – alternating between the Senate and the House of Representatives according to guidelines established by a parliamentary committee. This was a relatively “safe” means of communicating proceedings to the public. There was little or no opportunity for adding commentary other than identifying the business being broadcast. The Broadcasting Act (and the Joint Committee on Broadcasting) relates only to radio broadcasting and rebroadcasting. Legislative recognition of television extends only to televising “joint sittings” under section 57 of the Constitution.
- 1.23 Advances in the technology of photography and printing meant that still photographs were increasingly used in the print media. For many years photographs tended to be of parliamentary or government subjects taken outside the chamber itself. They were, for example, taken on the steps of Old Parliament House or in a press conference in the Prime Minister’s office. Photographs of proceedings in the chamber had to be arranged on a case by case basis until 1992. Regular access by still photographers to the chamber followed the regular televising of proceedings. The rules for still photography have gradually been made more liberal and the use of chamber photographs in the print media has become correspondingly more frequent.

⁸ C.J. Lloyd, *Parliament and the Press: The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery 1901-88*, Melbourne University Press, 1988.

- 1.24 Television coverage of proceedings began in 1991 as a trial and, despite grave misgivings by some, has continued and expanded. Television broadcasting to the public is currently much more limited than radio broadcasting but this too is expanding. Sky News is now providing television coverage on pay-TV of chamber proceedings and some committees. The ABC televises question time, alternating between the House and Senate. Since 2003 televised proceedings have also been available on Transact in the ACT and on the parliamentary website.⁹

Competing values in media coverage of proceedings

Television versus still photography

- 1.25 It is only to be expected that among those involved in media coverage of proceedings there are differing interests and viewpoints. The evidence taken at the round table meeting with media representatives on 15 June 2004 revealed that still photographers and print media managers believe television broadcasters have better access than they do. They point to the fact that the television feed of the whole of proceedings is made available at no cost to the electronic media. Television channels can choose which items they report on and are not confined to question time.
- 1.26 Television representatives, on the other hand, claim that the direct access enjoyed by still photographers allows them to reflect their own slant on a story. This advantage is not available to television channels which are obliged to make what they can of the live “feed” provided by the broadcasting service of the DPS. The following comment by Mr Peter Meakin, Director of News and Current Affairs for Channel 7 is typical:

If newspaper photographers have a problem, we in television have a bigger problem because we can only record, as you know, people who have the call ... I think a lot of the problem is that we have a system which is basically discreet censorship where politicians ride shotgun on their own dignity. I would like more freedom, certainly as much freedom as the stills photographers enjoy in parliament.¹⁰

⁹ More details are provided in the DPS submission, reproduced in Appendix B.

¹⁰ *Transcript of evidence of Round Table Conference*, 15 June 2004, p. 5.

- 1.27 The television camera operators are not in fact limited to filming the member with the call. Under the guidelines for camera operators they are able to take footage of members reacting to what is said and to take wide angle pictures. On the other hand, they are parliamentary staff who are required to focus on fair and accurate reporting of proceedings rather than getting the most newsworthy images.

Radio broadcasting and rebroadcasting

- 1.28 Radio coverage is most commonly presented on the dedicated news and parliamentary service of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation from a DPS feed. Excerpts can be rebroadcast following similar guidelines to other parts of the media (i.e. fair and accurate reporting and a prohibition on political advertising, ridicule and satire and commercial uses). Radio does not seem to be part of the argument about comparative advantage. Extended radio coverage is the very essence of “fair and accurate reporting”. It is newsworthy only to those who are genuinely interested in the business before the Parliament. Radio listeners waiting for dramatic clashes must be patient (or listen mainly to question time).
- 1.29 Radio re-broadcasting allows a little more scope for “cherry-picking” the more “newsworthy” proceedings. However, in general, radio reporting of parliamentary proceedings tends to consist mostly of radio journalists summarising what members have said in the chamber or, more commonly, journalists commenting on proceedings. However, there have been examples of rebroadcasting audio excerpts which are misleading because the context is not fully described.

The Parliament and the media

- 1.30 It is a truism that the media’s focus is on getting newsworthy images, be they still photographs, video footage for television broadcasting, or audio coverage on radio programs. Members (including Ministers) may also be interested in using the media to keep their work and their names at the forefront of the electorate’s attention.
- 1.31 Other parts of the parliamentary institution promote other values. The Benthamite view of publicising proceedings as an integral part of the democratic process¹¹ is certainly one of the values promoted by

¹¹ J Bentham, *On the Liberty of the Press and Public Discussion*, 1821. Malcolm Farr provides a modern example of this view. *Transcript of evidence of Round Table Conference*, p. 3.

the custodians of institution of the Parliament. This is the origin of the focus on fair and accurate reporting of proceedings which is central to the Speaker's guidelines. This approach rests on a concept of the media as partners with the Parliament in the democratic and educative aspect of media coverage.

- 1.32 This value is not confined to elements within the Parliament. Professor McKinnon, the Chairman of the Australian Press Council, told the Round Table Conference with the media:

Our view is that parliament will only work if the press reports it. It is the right of the public to know what is going on in the parliament; ... it is important that the public's right to know about [the activities of parliament] be confirmed at every opportunity and in every way.¹²

- 1.33 The media as partner in informing the public has its drawbacks as well as advantages. The Clerk of the House described the tension between the role of the media and the value of informing the public about proceedings. He noted that the objective of the guidelines was:

To strike a reasonable balance between the goals of facilitating access to proceedings, on the one hand, and, on the other, the House's ... interest in ensuring that access is not misused.¹³

- 1.34 The Parliament as an institution also values the control of media coverage in order to uphold and promote a dignified image of the Parliament. This value too, is at the core of the Speaker's guidelines. The difficulty is reaching a balance between the public's right to know and upholding the dignity of the institution. From the perspective of the Parliament, the media's desire to have newsworthy material is only relevant when it supports the public's right to know.

Attitudes to media coverage

- 1.35 Chapter 3 of this report will address attitudes to current arrangements for media coverage and whether the Speaker's guidelines should be reviewed.

¹² *Transcript of evidence of Round Table Conference*, p. 6.

¹³ Mr Ian. Harris, Submission 1, p. 1.

- 1.36 In summary, some members of the House have supported calls by media outlets for much freer access by both still photographers and television camera operators and broadcasters. The committee is sympathetic to some proposals for change but notes that the House already provides more liberal access than comparable parliaments. Proposals for change would be strongest if based on changed conditions including technological change. Some technology has changed since the guidelines were developed.

Wider aspects of enhancing public knowledge of proceedings

- 1.37 When the committee decided to conduct an inquiry on media coverage, it was only partly in response to the events outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The committee has a broader interest in educating the public about proceedings in Parliament than that allowed by television programs and photographs in the print media. In October 1999 the committee presented a report entitled, *It's your House: Community involvement in the procedures and practices of the House of Representatives and its committees*. This report was followed in May 2001 by another report, *Promoting community involvement in the work of committees*. The committee has recently finalised a project to completely rewrite and restructure the standing orders so that they can be better understood by the public (as well as members).
- 1.38 The committee recognises that much has already been initiated to improve community understanding of proceedings. The work of the Parliamentary Education Office is particularly noteworthy. The House has also launched a very successful magazine *About the House*, and the parliamentary Internet site is being used increasingly to inform the public about proceedings. The media is being assisted by an e-mail alert system of informing them about upcoming public hearings of committees and the publication of committee reports.
- 1.39 In particular, the committee believes that much can be done to improve television coverage of proceedings and it strongly supports efforts made by Sky News in this regard. Circumstances permitting, the committee intends to encompass these broader issues when it presents its final report on this inquiry.

History of current arrangements for media coverage

- 2.1 The current consolidated guidelines (dated February 2002) replaced a number of separate guidelines covering different aspects of media access, publication and broadcasting. They bring together all the rules concerning members of the press gallery. The guidelines are reproduced in Appendix A.

Source of information

- 2.2 This account of the history of media access to proceedings, the guidelines covering this access and the subsequent broadcasting and reporting on proceedings, is largely taken from a presentation by the Serjeant-at-Arms, Mr David Elder, to House staff in June 2003. Extracts are published here with his permission.
- 2.3 The reference to current “conditions” in this chapter refers to the current guidelines for filming.

Television and the chamber

- 2.4 Regular access to live footage of all proceedings in the chamber for television channels preceded regular access by still photographers. It will therefore be considered first in this chapter.

Television coverage – a short history

- 2.5 Despite television commencing in Australia in the 1950s, it was a considerable time before there was any television coverage of parliamentary proceedings.
- 2.6 There may be a number of reasons for this. Although the power of television has been recognised for communicating with a wide audience, there has been a concern amongst politicians about whether they would be fairly represented by the television medium. The actual experience with televising has shown it is a double-edged sword.
- 2.7 The first televising of the proceedings of the Australian Parliament was of the Joint Sittings of both Houses in 1974. The telecasts took place under the same act that covers radio broadcasting of proceedings which was amended specifically to enable televising of the sittings. The Act only provides for the televising of joint sittings, not the television of the proceedings of the individual Houses.
- 2.8 It was not until the mid 1980s that the House authorised televising of the Budget speech and Leader of the Opposition's reply each year. There was also occasionally provision for the televising of other major speeches.
- 2.9 The real impetus for the televising of proceedings came with the move to the new Parliament House where cameras were installed in the fabric of the chamber (and some committee rooms) and there was provision for the television coverage to be conveyed to every office in the building
- 2.10 Televising of the House of Representatives commenced on a trial basis from 12 February 1991. A review of the trial period was conducted by a Select Committee on Televising during 1991. This committee recommended continuation of televising and the establishment of a Standing Committee on Televising to monitor arrangements and to review the arrangement again in 1993.
- 2.11 The features of the televising arrangement were:
- there were guidelines for DPRS (now DPS) staff in relation to camera coverage of proceedings; and
 - there were guidelines for television stations relating to the use of television footage, and particularly of the rebroadcast of material

- 2.12 The guidelines for camera operators have never created a problem and have remained unchanged from those introduced in 1991.

Liberalising of guidelines for television broadcasters

- 2.13 The conditions for broadcasters have been more controversial. The trend over time has been for a relaxation of the conditions. For example, coverage of the adjournment debate originally was not permitted but this was changed when the trial arrangement was confirmed.
- 2.14 More controversially, points of order and withdrawn comments were not able to be rebroadcast. The media claimed that points of order in particular were a vital part of proceedings during question time and that their inability to rebroadcast points of order did not allow them to cover question time in their news and current affairs programs in an accurate and balanced way.
- 2.15 When the arrangements for the televising of House of Representatives proceedings were reviewed again in 1993, the Standing Committee on Television recommended that the conditions no longer prevent the rebroadcast of points of order and that withdrawn comments be able to be rebroadcast if the withdrawal was also rebroadcast. As the committee at that time was able to determine the conditions, when it reported with its proposed changes, these came into effect immediately.
- 2.16 However, that evening the Leader of the House gave notice to revert the conditions to their original form so that the rebroadcast of points of order and withdrawals were not permitted.
- 2.17 These remained the conditions until 1996 when the Howard government came to power and the conditions were simplified in the way recommended by the Standing Committee on Televising in 1993. The conditions have remained unchanged since then.

Still photography in the chamber

- 2.18 While arrangements for the televising of the Parliament are not unlike those applying in many parliaments around the world, more unusual is the arrangement for still photographs from the major Australian newspapers to have access to the chamber to take photographs of proceedings. No other major comparable parliament, (such as the

United Kingdom or the Canadian House of Commons) permits access to chamber proceedings by still photographers.

- 2.19 In 1992 the then Speaker received a request from a photographer in the press gallery for photographers to have regular access to the chamber. The request was made on the basis that the print media was disadvantaged vis-a-vis the electronic media in reproducing images of the proceedings of the House to illustrate its stories. The Speaker agreed to the arrangement subject to conditions that had been framed around those applying to the televising of the House.
- 2.20 The arrangement permits five (originally four) photographers from the press gallery to take photographs during question time each day and during other “significant” debates in the House. The operation of the arrangement has been the subject of considerable tension over the years between the press gallery and the Speaker. Much of this tension has focussed on one aspect of the original conditions. The conditions provided that the member with the call should be the focal point of all photographs with the exception of general photographs of the chamber in which both sides of the floor of the chamber are shown.
- 2.21 The photographers were unhappy about this restriction from the start, arguing that the television coverage did not have the same restriction of focussing only on the member with the call. The photographers tried to push the boundaries on this restriction from the start.
- 2.22 In 1995 the conditions were reviewed by Speaker Martin. This followed a concern that photographs were seeking reaction shots rather than focussing on the member with the call. First, the Serjeant-at-Arms wrote to the press gallery advising that to meet the condition photographs would have to focus on the member with the call and be taken from the front.
- 2.23 The change in interpretation caused an outcry among the media and the Speaker promised to review it. Following the review the condition was changed to:
- The member with the call must feature as the central figure in all photographs and must be in focus, with the exception of general photographs of the chamber in which both sides of the floor of the chamber are shown.
- 2.24 The condition applied whether shots were taken from in front or behind.

- 2.25 This situation remained until the election of the Howard government which promised a liberalisation of the rules. In 1997, Speaker Halverson agreed to remove the restriction, allowing photographers to shoot anywhere in the chamber. Following yet a further review the following condition was adopted:

Photographs and associated captions and editorial comment published under these arrangements should relate directly to the circumstances in the chamber when the photographs were taken. Where photographs are not published in context (for example are used in non-specific reports), captions should identify the original general context in which the photographs were taken [1998].

- 2.26 In 2001 Speaker Andrew indicated he was proposing to bring the conditions for the House of Representatives in line with those of the Senate (back to original conditions of focussing on the member with the call) in the 40th Parliament. This led to an outcry from the media and Speaker Andrew decided not to proceed with the changes.

How the current arrangements work

Television coverage

- 2.27 The guidelines restrict video filming to parliamentary staff who work for the Broadcasting section of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS). The section was previously known as the Sound and Vision Office and the department was formerly the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff. These outdated terms are still used in the guidelines.
- 2.28 The rules for camera operators are similar to those applying to still photographers and are quite liberal. Subject matter can include the member with the call, panning shots of members listening to debate, members' reaction shots and wide angle shots. The "feed" is produced by an operator working in a Production Control Room (PCR) in the basement of the building. The operator can switch between any of the eight cameras mounted in specially built alcoves in the chamber wall. The cameras are operated by a remote camera control system and can pan, tilt and zoom in and out to provide the corrected framing. This ensures that everything happening in the chamber can be filmed and broadcast.

- 2.29 During some special events such as joint sittings, the number of cameras has been augmented. For example, in October 2003 at the time of the presidential visits, an additional video camera was used both as a back up for the installed cameras and to ensure good coverage, given the additional numbers in the chamber and the importance of the event. This camera was mounted on a tripod placed next to a seat in the front row of the southern public gallery at the western end. An “illegal” camera was smuggled into the chamber on the occasion of the address by President Bush. It was operated from a similar position in the northern gallery.
- 2.30 From the perspective of the Speaker and House officers, the Broadcasting staff do an excellent job of providing coverage of proceedings. The eight video pictures are mixed into a single feed which is broadcast on the House Monitoring System on channel 1. This program is also available to various government departments and to Transact subscribers. It is used by the ABC to televise question time, by Sky News for its extended parliamentary coverage and by other television bureaus who rebroadcast excerpts as part of various news and current affairs programs.
- 2.31 The housing for the eight “live” cameras is also used for eight fixed cameras. These cameras are known as “whips” cameras. They focus on a particular area of the chamber and can be used by the whips to locate members in most areas of the chamber. The whips cameras are not broadcast quality and are not operated by a camera operator. The eight fixed television images are available for members and staff via the in-house television coverage on channels 33 to 40.
- 2.32 The “feed” (the composite mix of images from the eight operating video cameras) is provided free of charge to the press gallery for live broadcast or rebroadcast. The feed can also be used to create still photographs. If the print media want to publish a photograph of an event in the chamber when there was no still photographer present, the Broadcasting unit of DPS can provide the footage on video or as an electronic still image of a single frame of footage.
- 2.33 It is interesting to note that all photographs of the United States Senate which are published in the print media originated from the video footage taken of proceedings. High resolution video filming allows good quality prints to be produced and no still photographers are allowed in the U.S. Senate chamber.
- 2.34 Broadcasting staff have the capacity to film additional footage as well as the normal “feed”. On request, the camera operators can produce

an isolated feed (known as an “iso feed”) for a special purpose. For resource reasons, this is difficult for camera operating staff and the director during busy times such as question time, when they are fully occupied in covering the usual activity.

- 2.35 The television bureaux are not satisfied with the feed because it lacks drama and “newsworthiness”. Proposals to improve television coverage from the perspective of the bureaux include getting a feed from each of the eight cameras so they can choose their own angles rather than relying on the mix put together by the Broadcast unit editor.¹ Mr Bongiorno’s preferred position is that the television news crews should be allowed to enter or exit the galleries at will.² Mr Meakin from Channel 7 supported this approach, telling the committee

I would like more freedom, certainly as much freedom as the stills photographers enjoy in parliament.³

- 2.36 Sky News expressed dissatisfaction with television coverage of committees.⁴ Because committee coverage is such a small part of current arrangements, it will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter which addresses proposals for change.
- 2.37 In summary, the guidelines for camera operators have not caused any difficulties from the perspective of implementing the guidelines and producing good coverage of proceedings. The camera operators are well trained in relation to the guidelines prohibiting coverage of protests in the galleries or unparliamentary behaviour in the chamber. From the perspective of the television bureaux, the television coverage is bland and too focussed on the member with the call. While parliamentary proceedings might be defined as the output by the member with the call, this does not necessarily make “good” television.
- 2.38 From the perspective of re-broadcasting excerpts, changes in technology mean that video footage no longer needs to be provided

¹ Suggestion by Mr Bongiorno from Network 10, *Transcript of evidence of Round Table Conference*, p. 3.

² Mr Bongiorno, submission 3.

³ *Transcript of evidence of Round Table Conference*, p. 5.

⁴ Mr Frangopoulos, op. cit. p. 4.

by the Broadcasting unit. This takes some control away from parliamentary staff and gives greater autonomy to television bureaus. However, because the footage itself represents fair and accurate coverage of proceedings, the potential for “damage” is limited to using footage out of context.

Radio broadcasts

- 2.39 The committee is not aware of dissatisfaction with the guidelines or implementation of the guidelines on radio broadcasting. There have been some issues of context largely caused by the use of audio extracts when a remark later withdrawn is broadcast but the withdrawal is not broadcast.

Still photography

- 2.40 From the perspective of the Speaker and House officers, the twelve year history of opening question time to still photographers has been fraught with difficulty. For the purposes of fair and accurate portrayal of proceedings, each day’s print media is a litany of “stretched” guidelines. The record of still photographers obeying the prohibition on photographing disturbances in the gallery has not been good. This has created a climate of distrust although the Speaker understands the position of photographers who are employed to take photos of “news” rather than to educate the public about the Parliament.
- 2.41 Mr Farr confirmed the approach of still photographers when he told the committee
- ... if someone jumps over that wall, all bets are off. We are going to report it.⁵
- 2.42 Mr Farr’s point was that extraordinary events are “news”. The gallery is more willing to respect the policy of not photographing protests in the chamber because this encourages other people to protest. Mr Bowers also acknowledge that the distinction between an extraordinary event and a protest would dictate the action of the still photographers present, agreeing that
- ... where someone jumps over. That to me crosses the line. There is a story element to that ... We understand the

⁵ *Transcript of evidence of Round Table Conference*, p. 13.

sensitivities of not creating copycats, because we are the last ones that would want to see that happening all the time.⁶

- 2.43 From the perspective of the print media and still photographers attached to the press gallery, there are many unsatisfactory aspects of the guidelines and their administration. First, even to gain access to question time the photographers need to give the correct names to the Serjeant-at-Arms' office before the security attendants will admit them. This is a problem when a photographer needs to be replaced by someone from the same company when a new job arises suddenly.
- 2.44 Outside of question time the permission of the Speaker must be obtained (by first contacting the Serjeant-at-Arms' office). By the time permission is obtained it may be too late. If the desired photograph is of a division, there are usually only five to ten minutes in which to get permission and get to the chamber.
- 2.45 There have been misunderstandings about what constitutes access during question time. Mr Grubel told the committee that security staff did not allow photographers to take shots of a censure motion against the Prime Minister which occurred during question time. The Serjeant-at-Arms has since confirmed that this photograph should have been allowed. Solutions for these problems will be considered in the next chapter.

⁶ Op. cit.

Looking to the future

Still photography

Technology and still photography guidelines

- 3.1 Michael Bowers, the photographic editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and an experienced still photographer in the chamber for eleven years, has pointed out that aspects of the still photography guidelines have been overtaken by technology. In particular guideline (j) which reads

The use of flash or other sources of additional light and motor driven cameras is not permitted.

- 3.2 The reference to “motor driven cameras” is outdated and should be removed from the guidelines. Similarly, guideline (l) which reads

Photographers shall observe the instructions of the Speaker or the Speaker’s delegate. The Speaker reserves the right to determine whether a photograph taken in accordance with these guidelines is in keeping with the dignity of the House. In regard to this condition, if a photographer is in doubt about a photograph taken in the chamber, the onus is on him / her to consult the Speaker’s office, through the Serjeant-at-Arms, before either publishing the photograph or giving a copy of the photograph (developed or undeveloped) to any person.

- 3.3 The first part of this guideline is unnecessary. The fact that the Speaker administers the relevant House resolutions and their expression in the consolidated guidelines is self-evident. The Speaker is always in control of the conduct of proceedings and events in the galleries. The latter part of the guideline relates to the days of film photography. The rule cannot be applied to digital photography. First, so many images are “shot” that the photographer in the gallery cannot make judgments about each one. Files are passed to the photographic editor for selection without being seen individually by the photographer. Rule (e) about the use of the resulting photographs already addresses “the dignity of the House”. The guidelines would lose nothing by the deletion of guideline (l).

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the Speaker amend the guidelines for still photography in the chamber as follows: delete the words “and motor driven cameras” from still photography guideline (j) and delete the whole of guideline (l).

Extended access for still photographers

- 3.4 The committee has some sympathy for proposals to facilitate access to still photographers. Although there have been problems with compliance with guidelines at question time, there is no reason to assume that these problems would increase if still photographers were able to get faster access to proceedings at other times.
- 3.5 The committee does not favour an “open slather” approach but some extension of the opportunities for still photographers to cover proceedings is consistent with trying to achieve a better balance between protecting the dignity of the House and opening up proceedings to the public.
- 3.6 In considering how access could be extended, the committee favours identifying particular times and encouraging still photographers to make better use of the opportunities to identify forthcoming “newsworthy” events.
- 3.7 In relation to identifying additional set times at which still photographers could access the galleries, the committee considers that discussions of Matters of Public Importance, divisions and adjournment debates would be appropriate additional opportunities.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the Speaker revise guideline (c) of the rules for still photography in the chamber to extend automatic permission to discussions of Matters of Public Importance, divisions and adjournment debates for a trial period of three months.

Television coverage

Providing more choice

- 3.8 The television representatives at the Round Table Conference were keen to get more “newsworthy” television footage for use in news and current affairs programs. Suggestions for achieving this included getting access to footage from each of the eight cameras in the chamber (instead of just the composite feed mixed from all the cameras).¹ Mr Bongiorno preferred the option of having cameras operated by the bureaus in the galleries. Mr Meakin supported this in principle but noted that the cost involved made getting more appropriate footage from the DPS camera operators a more attractive option.²

Access to more camera feeds

- 3.9 The technology currently available would, in theory, permit television bureaus to access the feeds from all eight cameras operated by the Broadcasting staff of DPS. However, it would involve providing new feed lines from the basement DPS studio to the press gallery. This would be expensive and would not provide television bureaus with any more control over the images they use in television broadcasts. Access to the images from all eight cameras would provide more choice of images but the additional images would not necessarily be what the bureaus could use.

The committee considers that providing television bureaus with access to more direct feeds produced by DPS camera operators is not a practical option at this stage.

¹ *Transcript of Evidence of Round Table Conference*, p. 3.

² *Transcript of Evidence of Round Table Conference*, p. 16.

Access to specially filmed excerpts – “iso feeds”

- 3.10 The Broadcast staff of DPS can provide specific footage of proceedings if requested in advance by television bureaus.³ If a television bureau is aware that a particular item of business is likely to be “news”, reporters can request Broadcast staff to take particular angles or members so long as it is permissible under the guidelines for camera operators. The specially filmed footage is known as an “iso” or “isolated” feed.
- 3.11 “Iso feeds” commonly result from an application to the Serjeant-at-Arms’ office for permission to take an extra television camera into the galleries. The Speaker would normally refuse permission but offer the “iso feed” option, arranged by the Serjeant’s office, to allow the television crew the footage they request. The usual way iso feeds are arranged has created the misconception that the Speaker’s permission is required for the footage. So long as the footage requested is consistent with the camera operator guidelines, members of the press gallery can make the request directly to the Broadcast unit of DPS.
- 3.12 As noted in 2.28 above, these guidelines are quite liberal, encompassing the member with the call, reaction shots of members mentioned in debate or the member who asked a question in question time. The guidelines also allow panning shots of members just listening to proceedings, whether or not they featured in those proceedings.
- 3.13 If the request is for additional footage at question time, there may be a resource issue for broadcasting staff. At question time there are five staff involved in creating the House Monitoring system feed – two camera operators (controlling eight cameras), a vision switch operator, a director and a technical director. Requiring these staff to produce a separate video imposes additional strains on them at a busy time. If the practice of supplying iso feeds became very common, DPS might need to consider whether the service should be on a user pays basis.⁴
- 3.14 In the committee’s view, this option is likely to prove the most practical way of providing bureaus with more of the footage they are

³ *Transcript of Evidence of Round Table Conference*, p. 15.

⁴ The DPS submission, p. 1, stated that “Any new service would have to be costed and additional funds obtained”.

seeking when they are not satisfied with the images on the House Monitoring System feed.

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.

Allowing television bureaus to take their own camera footage

- 3.15 The committee gave careful consideration to the suggestion by Mr Bongiorno, with some support from other television managers, that the bureaus “pool” resources to use two independently operated television cameras in the chamber galleries. All the television bureaus would then have access to the footage produced by the two camera operators.
- 3.16 The time this would be of most value to the bureaus would be question time so the practicality of introducing additional cameras at question time was investigated by the committee.
- 3.17 Two camera operators from the press gallery advised committee staff on what would be required. If the additional cameras were required to be in the area available to still photographers, the operators would require tripods to support the cameras. Also, the pictures would not be from the best angles. The tripods would be a safety hazard because the public use the corridors behind the galleries where the cameras would be placed. The committee does not consider this is a practical suggestion.
- 3.18 During the visit by President Bush, DPS Broadcast staff used an additional camera in the southern gallery. This might be a solution to the practical problem of using independent cameras at question time. However, there are still practical difficulties and more work needs to be completed to arrive at a satisfactory proposal.
- 3.19 It would seem that any camera operators would need to be seated in the front row end seats (towards the centre of the chamber) of the north and south galleries. The operators would need to be installed before question time commenced and stay until after the majority of

visitors left. There would also need to be guidelines to avoid disturbing visitors' access to the proceedings.

- 3.20 The committee intends to pursue these matters with the television bureaus and the DPS Broadcasting staff to determine whether better access for additional cameras is possible.

Other matters

Accessing documents.

- 3.21 During the round table conference with media representatives Mr Grubel drew attention to some difficulties with accessing chamber documents. Table Office staff have discussed these matters with Mr Grubel and a satisfactory solution has been found to these problems.
- 3.22 A second submission from the Clerk of the House summarises the arrangements for accessing documents. It is in Appendix B.

Obtaining special permission for access outside the guidelines

- 3.23 For matters which the specific permission of the Speaker is required, it is not practical for members of the press gallery to apply to the Serjeant-at-Arms in the first instance. When access outside the usual guidelines is permitted it is necessary that the Speaker be aware that photographers have permission to be in the galleries. For these occasions the photographer requiring special permission should be able to contact the Speaker's office directly.

Access to Main Committee proceedings

- 3.24 Committee members were somewhat surprised to learn that many members of the press gallery did not know where to find the Main Committee. Little wonder then that the media coverage of Main Committee proceedings is less than adequate. Many important debates now occur in the Main Committee and the committee would like to see greater press coverage including still photography.
- 3.25 The committee considers that still photography of Main Committee proceedings would be facilitated if photographers could directly

apply for permission to the Deputy Speaker. His office could then inform the duty Chair and clerks that permission has been given. The committee is keen to pursue with the press gallery ways to facilitate their coverage of activities in the Main Committee.

Access to parliamentary committee proceedings

Television coverage

- 3.26 One of the difficulties with television coverage of parliamentary committees is that there is only one committee room on the House of Representatives side with inbuilt cameras. The Main Committee room has cameras but this room is used almost exclusively by Senate estimates committees and rarely by House of Representatives committees.
- 3.27 The committee would like to see more committee rooms equipped with inbuilt cameras. The DPS submission notes that this would require substantial additional funding.⁵ However, the boost additional camera facilities would provide for increasing community access to committee proceedings, is an important value and worth funding. It would be helpful if one additional committee room could be equipped in the short term. This would double the number of House of Representatives committees which can be televised.
- 3.28 The House resolution on televising of proceedings (16 October 1991) provides for individual committees to approve the filming of public hearings. This is unlikely to be a problem since the committee would need to make arrangements to hold its public hearings in a room with televising facilities.
- 3.29 Sky News is interested in providing more coverage of parliamentary committees and the committee strongly supports this approach.⁶ Sky News has recommended an “opting out” rather than an “opting in” approach for committees in relation to televising their proceedings. Perhaps committees wanting to facilitate televising of their public

⁵ DPS submission, p. 2. DPS suggests that House committees make more use of the main committee room and Senate committee rooms to increase television coverage.

⁶ Mr Frangopoulos suggested that Sky News would be willing to make arrangements for cameras where these were not provided. *Transcript of Evidence of Round Table Conference*, p. 4.

hearings could resolve to permit televising – either through the House Monitoring System or by bureau television cameras for a set period.

- 3.30 In addition, most committees now use the e-mail alert system to advertise to the media and other interested persons of forthcoming public hearings. The media releases sent out on the e-mail alert system could be used to invite television coverage.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the Department of Parliamentary Services install inbuilt cameras in House of Representatives committee rooms to allow additional television coverage of committee proceedings. Given cost constraints, it may be practical to stagger the installation of such cameras.

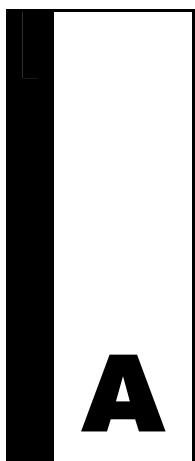
Still photography access to committee hearings

- 3.31 The above comment on televising committee hearings also applies to still photography of public hearings. Most committees welcome involving the community in their work and actively invite participation. The potential for the media to be a partner in this endeavour should be encouraged.
- 3.32 Again, committees wishing to facilitate still photography to their public hearings could pass resolutions covering a set period rather than just one hearing and alert the media to this availability through media releases and the e-mail alert system.

Conclusion

- 3.33 The central issue of media coverage of House proceedings is getting the balance right between protecting the dignity of the House on the one hand and providing images which will capture the interest of viewers on the other. A dignified House does not necessarily provide riveting viewing but dull images will not inform the public because they will be ignored.

Margaret May MP
Chair



Appendix A

FILMING AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN PARLIAMENT HOUSE

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1. Introduction

1.1 These guidelines are issued by the Presiding Officers. They apply to all filming and photography in Parliament House with the exception of the guidelines for still photography of proceedings in the chambers; separate guidelines apply to each chamber. **Where the terms “film” or “filming” appear in the guidelines, they encompass video recording, other filming technologies and still photography, and include the use of digital technology.** Where access is limited to members of the federal parliamentary Press Gallery, Auspic and / or parliamentary officers, it is noted in the guidelines.

1.2 This document also includes general guidelines relevant to members of the Press Gallery in Parliament House.

2. Filming for private purposes

2.1 Visitors to the building are welcome to film in public areas provided the film is for private purposes and is not to be published. No filming is permitted in the chambers during proceedings.

3. Filming intended for broadcasting or publication

3.1 *Press Gallery members*

Public areas of the building

3.1.1 Filming is permitted in public areas (except in the vicinity of the chamber galleries). This guideline is intended to facilitate the work of members of the Press Gallery covering public events in the public areas of the building. It is expected that every effort will be made by members of the Press Gallery to protect the privacy of individuals.

Private areas of the building

3.1.2 Filming is permitted in television studios, private rooms with the explicit permission of the occupants and rooms / areas in which press conferences are permitted. Apart from these circumstances, all filming in private areas of the building requires permission. Detailed guidelines are attached at Appendix 1.

3.2 *Filmmakers who are not members of the Press Gallery*

3.2.1 Commercial filmmakers, other than members of the Press Gallery, wishing to use public or private areas of Parliament House may do so only with the explicit authority of the Presiding Officers. They should apply in the first instance to the Visitors Services Section of the Joint House Department. The guidelines at Appendix 1 cover filming by non Press Gallery members in both private and public areas of the building.

4. Filming of parliamentary proceedings

4.1 *Television and radio recording of proceedings*

4.1.1 Television filming in the chambers is the responsibility exclusively of the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff (DPRS). Guidelines for DPRS camera operators in the chambers are at Appendix 2.

4.1.2 The live television "feed" of proceedings in both chambers is broadcast directly to offices in Parliament House, including Press Gallery offices, to various other agencies and institutions, and to the "Transact" cable network.

4.1.3 DPRS maintains video and audio records of proceedings. They will generally be made available for rebroadcasting when they are required for fair and factual reporting of proceedings.

4.1.4 Rules regarding rebroadcasting of proceedings are to be found in the volume of Standing Orders of each House. Copies are available from the Serjeant-at-Arms (for the House of Representatives) and the Usher of the Black Rod (for the Senate).

4.2 *Still photography in the chambers during proceedings*

4.2.1 Visitors and members of the public are not permitted to take cameras into the chamber galleries during proceedings. Generally, only accredited members of the Press Gallery and Auspic photographers are permitted to take still photographs of proceedings. If other journalists have a particular need to take still photographs of proceedings they will require the specific approval of the relevant Presiding Officer. The rules for still photography in the chambers are at Appendices 3 and 4.

5. General guidelines for Press Gallery members

5.1 *Areas "off limits" to the Press*

February 2002

5.1.1 Members of the Press Gallery may not linger in the corridors in the vicinity of the Cabinet Room or party rooms. In these areas, members of the Press Gallery may not seek to engage Senators or Members in conversation. As a general rule, members of the Press Gallery wishing to speak with a Senator or Member should make an appointment by telephone.

5.1.2 Members of the Press Gallery are not permitted to enter the Members' and Guests' Dining Room on sitting days (unless invited to do so by a Senator or Member, and not for filming / photography purposes).

5.1.3 Journalists, photographers and camera crews must not stand at the entrances to Parliament House so as to impede the access of Senators, Members or others to the building. They must comply with the directions of security staff at the entrances.

6. Visitors and dress standards

6.1 Members of the Press Gallery sponsoring admission of visitors into Parliament House are responsible for those visitors until they leave the building. If those visitors are representatives of media organisations, the sponsor is responsible for advising the visitors of these conditions.

6.2 Visiting media representatives may be given permission to sit in either of the chamber press galleries. The permission is given by the Serjeant-at-Arms or Usher of the Black Rod for the respective chamber, on the recommendation of the President of the Press Gallery. If permission is given, an entry card must be collected from the Serjeant's or Black Rod's office as relevant, and this card must be produced for inspection by security or messengerial attendants in the galleries if requested. The visitor must also wear the visitor's pass issued at the entrance to the building.

6.3 Members of the press when in the press gallery of the House of Representatives chamber should maintain the standards of dress adopted by the majority of Members when attending in the chamber. In the Senate press gallery, members of the Press Gallery are not required to wear coats.

Guidelines for filming in Parliament House (where the film or photograph is intended for broadcast or publication)

These guidelines apply to members of the Press Gallery when filming in private areas of the building and to other photographers/camera operators in all parts of the building. They must be read in conjunction with section 3 of these guidelines.

- In these guidelines “film” or “filming” includes video recording, filming and still photography.
- These guidelines apply to members of the federal parliamentary Press Gallery and to others wanting to film for the purpose of broadcasting or publishing their work.
- Members of the Press Gallery do not need specific permission to film public events in public areas of the building.
- Persons who are not members of the Press Gallery and who intend broadcasting or publishing their work need specific permission to film anywhere in the building.
- Filming of public hearings of parliamentary committees requires the consent of the committee.
- Filming is permitted at press conferences held in committee rooms and other areas used for press conferences including the courtyards.
- Filming in private offices requires the permission of the Member or Senator who occupies the office. Filming access to other areas is at the discretion of the responsible person (e.g. a proposal to film in the Cabinet Room should be arranged with the Prime Minister's office, and in party rooms, with the relevant Whip's office).
- Filming in all other private areas of the building under joint control requires the permission of both Presiding Officers. The Speaker's permission is required for filming on the House of Representatives side of the building and the President's permission for filming on the Senate side. Requests for permission to film should be made in the first instance to the Serjeant-at-Arms and / or the Usher of the Black Rod.
- The Presiding Officers will consider filming proposals on a case by case basis, taking into account the following:
 - the privacy of Members of Parliament, staff and visitors to the building should be protected and the specific permission of any person being filmed should be sought;

- filming should not interfere with the operations of the Parliament and /or the people who work in the building;
- filming of security facilities will not be permitted;
- filming will not be approved for political party advertising or election campaigns; satire or ridicule; or commercial sponsorship or commercial advertising;
- the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff is solely responsible for the television filming of proceedings in the two chambers.
- Decisions on whether to approve a filming proposal will take account of the public importance and value of the project. In assessing the value of a particular project, the following will be considered:
 - whether the project has a genuine educational purpose from the perspective of students and scholars;
 - whether the project serves a news and /or information purpose; and
 - whether the project serves a cultural purpose (including films or television series that may be produced for commercial purposes).
- Filming which would be likely to offend broadly accepted community norms will not be approved.
- Broad approval of a project is unlikely to be given. Specific approval should be sought for each individual segment of filming and a responsible parliamentary officer should be in attendance to ensure compliance with the terms of the approval.

Guidelines for DPRS camera operators in the chambers

1. As a general principle, the on-air camera should be directed toward the Member / Senator having the call.
3. Panning shots are permitted for the purpose of showing Members / Senators listening to debate.
4. Reaction shots of Senators / Members are permitted:
 - (a) when the Senator / Member has sought information which is being supplied by a Senator / Member having the call; or
 - (b) when the Member / Senator is referred to in debate.
5. If exchanges between Members / Senators are too rapid to permit normal camera switching, a wide shot of the Members / Senators involved is permitted.
6. Disturbances in the galleries are not to be covered.
7. Directions of the relevant Presiding Officer and his or her delegate in relation to the operations of the sound and vision equipment in the Senate or House of Representatives are to be observed.



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600
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Guidelines for still photography in the House of Representatives chamber by members of the Press Gallery

Access to the proceedings of the House of Representatives for still photography is subject to an undertaking to comply with the following arrangements and conditions:

- (a) Still photographic access to the proceedings of the House of Representatives is limited to photographers who are members of the federal parliamentary Press Gallery and AUSPIC and whose names are registered prior to a sitting fortnight with the Serjeant-at-Arms.
- (b) The maximum number of still photographers permitted in the public galleries at any time is five.
- (c) Still photography is permitted:
 - (i) during Question Time;
 - (ii) during significant speeches or debates; and
 - (iii) at other times when approved by the Speaker and notified by the Serjeant-at-Arms.
- (d) Photographs and associated captions and editorial comment published under these arrangements should relate directly to the circumstances in the chamber when the photographs were taken. Where photographs are not published in

context (for example are used in non-specific reports), captions should identify the original general context in which the photographs were taken).

- (e) Photographs taken under these arrangements should be used only for the purposes of fair, accurate and appropriate reports of proceedings. Photographs shall not be used for:
 - (i) political party advertising or election campaigns;
 - (ii) satire or ridicule; or
 - (iii) commercial sponsorship or commercial advertising.
- (f) Telephoto lens photography must not show any Member closer than at "head and shoulders" distance.
- (g) No close-up photograph of Members' papers is permitted.
- (h) Photographs of persons in the galleries are not permitted, the only exception being photographs of distinguished visitors at the time they are being welcomed on behalf of the House by the Chair.
- (i) Photographs of disturbances by visitors or any other persons or unparliamentary behaviour are not permitted.
- (j) The use of flash or other sources of additional light and motor driven cameras is not permitted.
- (k) As a general principle, photographers should be as unobtrusive as possible and not disturb the view of visitors in the galleries.
- (l) Photographers shall observe the instructions of the Speaker or the Speaker's delegate. The Speaker reserves the right to determine whether a photograph taken in accordance with these guidelines is in keeping with the dignity of the House. In regard to this condition, if a photographer is in doubt about a

photograph taken in the chamber, the onus is on him / her to consult the Speaker's office, through the Serjeant-at-Arms, before either publishing the photograph or giving a copy of the photograph (developed or undeveloped) to any person.

(m) Access to the gallery by the photographer and/or the newspaper concerned may be withdrawn for non-compliance with these arrangements.

- For the first breach—seven sitting days.
- For any further breach—at the discretion of the Speaker up to the life of the Parliament.

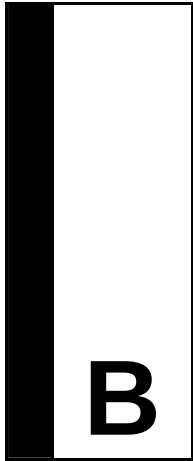
Note: Draft amended guidelines for still photography of proceedings in the House of Representatives chamber were circulated to the press gallery in April and September 2001. The amendments would have provided uniform guidelines for the House of Representatives and the Senate. In February 2002, the Speaker announced that the revised guidelines would not be implemented pending further consultation and consideration. For the foreseeable future, therefore, the guidelines outlined on pp. 9—10 of this document will apply in the House of Representatives chamber.

APPENDIX 4

Guidelines for still photography in the Senate chamber

Access to the proceedings of the Senate by still photographers is subject to an undertaking to comply with the following conditions.

1. Photographers must be current members of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery or employees of Auspic whose names and the organisations they represent are registered with the Usher of the Black Rod. Access by other members of the media may be arranged on a case by case basis.
2. Not more than five photographers may be in the galleries at one time.
3. Photography is permitted:
 - 3.1 during Question Time; and
 - 3.2 at other times when explicitly approved by the President.
4. Photographs may be used only for the purposes of fair and accurate reports of proceedings and shall not be used for:
 - 4.1 political party advertising or election campaigns;
 - 4.2 satire or ridicule;
 - 4.3 commercial sponsorship or advertising.
5. The Senator with the call must be the focus of photographs, with the exception of general photographs of the whole chamber.
6. Photographs taken with telephoto lenses must only show the Senator with the call, and must be no closer than "head and shoulders".
7. Telephoto lenses must not be used to inspect Senators' documents or computer screens. Close up photographs may not be taken of a Senator's documents or computer screen.
8. Photographs may not be taken of persons in the galleries, with the exception of distinguished visitors at the time that they are welcomed to the Senate by the Chair.
9. Photographs of unparliamentary behaviour or disturbances in the galleries are not permitted.
10. Additional lighting may not be used.
11. Directions of the President and his or her delegate in relation to these conditions shall be observed.



Appendix B

SUBMISSIONS 1 – 5

Submission 1:

Mr Ian Harris, Clerk, House of Representatives

Media coverage of the House

Media access issues

In recent years the House has taken steps to increase the access of media representatives to its proceedings. Conditions and guidelines have been developed to cover the following matters:

- filming for private purposes
- filming intended for broadcast or publication
- filming of parliamentary proceedings
- still photography in the chambers during proceedings.

At [Attachment A](#) is a document containing the relevant guidelines. In each case the guidelines have been issued by the Speaker, or by the Speaker and the President where the matter concerns both Houses. The terms of the House's 1991 and 1996 resolutions concerning the televising of proceedings and the principles concerning radio broadcasting are set out towards the end of the standing orders booklet.

The objective of the conditions/guidelines in each case is assumed to be to strike a reasonable balance between the goal of facilitating access to proceedings, on the one hand, and, on the other, the House's (or the House and the Senate's) interest in ensuring that access is not misused.

In these matters responsibilities are set out quite clearly:

- in relation to filming, whether for private purposes or publication, the Presiding Officers are responsible;
- in relation to the DPRS camera operators (who provide the feed for networks), the directions of the relevant Presiding Officer must be obeyed;
- in relation to still photography in the House the Speaker is responsible.

A variation exists in relation to the use of the television feed. The [Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings](#) is established under the *Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946*. Its primary role is to regulate the radio broadcast and re-broadcast of proceedings. In addition, however, under the resolution of 16 October 1991 which authorised

the live television broadcast and re-broadcast of proceedings, the House members of the joint committee are able to consider breaches of the guidelines and any penalties that would apply.

Another objective in the Parliament's approach to media access may be to achieve a reasonable balance between the various media (electronic and print) so that they can cover proceedings on a relatively equal basis.

Some publicity has been given recently to the issue of access by still photographers. The guidelines on this matter in respect of the House are at [Appendix 3 of Attachment A](#). It is notable that these guidelines include detailed penalty provisions – this may reflect a desire to give the Speaker a helpful and reasonably precise framework within which to consider problems in the area, rather than leave the Speaker with greater discretion, and responsibility, to determine any penalty. I understand that while many parliaments (and probably virtually all comparable parliaments) permit televising of their proceedings, many (including the UK House of Commons and the Canadian House of Commons) do not permit still photography. I also understand that the House's rules in this matter are more liberal than those applying in the Senate.

In fact, still photographers in the House enjoy access not only greater than that applying in the Senate; they also enjoy greater access than the television broadcasters quoted by the hard-copy media in their attempt to gain direct access. The original request came from the print media who indicated that they were compelled to take their photographs from the video feed. They were admitted on the grounds of equality. There have been marked instances where they have abused the privilege.

I opposed the widening of the guidelines in 1996 to enable photographs to be taken of Members who did not have the call of the Chair. There was some justification in the then Speaker's belief that the photographers would only be capturing what a visitor to the galleries could see. However, I thought then, and I continue to think today, that a visitor to the gallery does not have the ability to “freeze frame” a situation, and reproduce it possibly totally out of context. Over the years since the relaxing of the guidelines, I have seen many instances where a sub-editor has placed an interpretation on a photograph that is not borne out by the events as I observed them unfolding. The photograph has been used to actually make the news rather than report it.

This also happens with demonstrations in the public gallery. There was one occasion when a group of indigenous protestors entered the public gallery, made a protest, and despite warnings to the contrary, were photographed and published. The protestors on that occasion told the Serjeant, who requested them not to carry out the action that they were reported in the media as

proposing to do, that they had told the press of their intentions, and they felt that they would lose face if they did not do so. The press photographers at the time indicated that they realised that they were jeopardising their access rights if they did pass on the photographs, but they believed that they were placing their jobs in jeopardy if they did not do so. In this situation, I believe that the press had crossed the line, and were creating the news rather than reporting it.

I firmly believe that protestors should not be facilitated to reach a wider audience by using the Chamber as a forum. There is no doubt that there would be a copy-cat effect. I do not think that the fact that it might have happened to be sufficient cause for permitting the photographic and televised coverage of a disturbance of this kind. There have been instances where a man has committed suicide with a revolver on television, and the fact that it happened was not sufficient cause for it to be delivered into Australian lounge rooms.

Of course, it would be open for a media outlet to retain a sketch artist, drawing from memory, and there could be no objection to this. My experience has been that Members of the House remain to be very suspicious of the presence of cameras or sketch artists in the gallery.

I understand that this week Foxtel is scheduled to launch a Sky News Active service and that this will include coverage of the Houses, and some committee proceedings.

Committee proceedings have become a very important feature of the work of the House, and provision has also been made to facilitate and regularise access by the electronic media to such proceedings. Conditions were set by the House in a resolution of 16 October 1991 . Important features of the conditions are that it is always a matter for the particular committee whether to allow filming, that only public hearings may be filmed, that fairness and accuracy and general overall balance must be observed, that excerpts must be placed in context and that excerpts may not be used for political party advertising etc or for satire or ridicule.

Dissemination of information by the House

Another side of this subject is the issue of dissemination of objective and impartial information about the Parliament, a matter on which the Procedure Committee has commented at least twice already. A short paper outlining initiatives the Department has taken in recent years to disseminate information about, and engender interest in, the work of the House and its committees is at [Attachment B](#). It outlines the role of the professional media adviser engaged by the department, our special publications, especially [About](#)

the House , the seminar program, the changing approach to advertising, the introduction of the House News website and the university lecture program. The Department also supports the Parliamentary Education Office, providing half of the administrative funding for the office and helping with advice and input into its activities.

Submission 2:

Angelos Frangopoulos, Managing Editor, Australian News Channel Pty Ltd



Submission by

Australian News Channel Pty Ltd

House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Procedure

Media Coverage of Parliamentary Proceedings

June 2004

Background:

Australian News Channel Pty Ltd operates Sky News Australia, the nation's only locally produced 24 hour news channel.

ANC is a joint venture company of Publishing and Broadcasting Ltd, Seven Network Australia and British Sky Broadcasting.

Sky News Australia began services on February 19th 1996, initially on the Foxtel and Optus Cable television networks.

Since that first broadcast, Sky News has grown to become a key part of the Australian media landscape.

Sky News is the number one news channel in Australia and has attracted a greater share of viewing than all the 24-hour news international channels combined.

Sky News is one of the biggest producers of Australian news programming, creating 118 hours a week of television.

Sky News Australia features news on the hour, every hour and headlines every fifteen minutes, changing the way Australians get their television news.

Apart from the flagship news on the hour service, Sky News also produces 14 half hour programs per week, including, Willesee Across Australia, Australian Agenda, Viewpoint, In the First Person and Health News Australia.

Sky News is now available in more than 1.8 million homes across Australia on the Foxtel analogue and digital platforms, Optus, Austar, Transact and Neighbourhood Cable subscription television networks and across New Zealand on the Sky Television satellite and Telstra clear cable networks.

The ABC also screens Sky News programs in the Asia Pacific region.

ANC also operates Sky News Australia – New Zealand and produces the daily Prime News First At Five Thirty for the open television broadcaster, Prime Television New Zealand.

Sky News also features an Online service www.skynews.com.au and a 3G telephony service, currently available on Hutchison's 3 network.

Every week across Australia and New Zealand, more than 2 million people access news services from Australian News Channel Pty Ltd

In March 2004, Sky News launched Sky News Active giving viewers access to news on demand 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Sky News Active is available on Foxtel Digital. It is due to be launched later this year to regional, rural and remote areas on the new Austar Digital platform.

Sky News Active offers 8 channels of video content and 5 menus of text ranging from news headlines to business and finance plus sport, weather and showbiz.



Sky News Coverage of Parliamentary Proceedings since 1996

Sky News Australia has been committed to the coverage of National Affairs since its inception.

Federal Politics has become the cornerstone of the channel's news coverage.

Main Points:

1. HOR Question time has been covered live for every sitting since 1996.
2. Live coverage of the Senate during major events.
3. Official openings and all formal ceremonial events have been shown live on Sky News.
4. Full live coverage of Elections and Federal Budgets.
5. More than 250 news conferences have been shown live.

6. More than 400 live interviews with political leaders.
7. Dedicated bureau in Canberra since 2000.
8. Average of 6 live reports every day from Federal Parliament.
9. Live coverage of major committees.
10. Sky News aired the HOR produced series "House for the Nation" in late 2003 and early 2004.
11. Sky News coverage of Parliamentary proceedings and news coverage are available to Australian schools via Foxtel Education and Austar for Schools industry initiatives.
12. Sky News offers schools online support via dedicated website:
www.skynews.com.au/education

Sky News launches dedicated Parliamentary Channel.

On the 24th of March 2004, the Prime Minister officially launched Sky News Active and a revolutionary addition to Australian television – the Sky News Parliamentary Channel.

The Sky News Parliamentary Channel is produced by Australian News Channel Pty Ltd at no cost to the Parliament.

Sky News Parliamentary Channel is available to all FOXTEL Digital Subscribers as part of their basic package.

It is due to be launched later this year to Regional, Rural and Remote Australia on the new Austar Digital platform.

Sky News Parliamentary Channel is a local development of the American C-SPAN and British Parliament service.

Since March, Sky News has shown live coverage of the HOR, Senate and its committees.

On Budget night, Sky News Active, in addition to the Parliamentary Channel, aired a total of 4 channels dedicated to the Budget.

Sky News Active has also featured live coverage of the Senate Estimates Committees.

When Australians go to the polls, Sky News will also offer a 24/7 Election Channel which will operate from the day the election date is announced.

Sky News has full editorial control of what feeds from Parliament it chooses to take. In any given day for example, the Parliamentary Channel may switch to any one of the proceedings underway in the Parliament.

The Sky News Parliamentary Channel utilises the television feeds supplied to media organisations by the Broadcasting section of the Department of Parliamentary Services.

Australian News Channel is grateful for the assistance of this department in the successful launch and operation of this service.

Improving Access to Parliamentary Proceedings

Press Gallery Facilities:

As a relatively new player in the media, Sky News is severely handicapped by the grandfathering of office space in the Press Gallery.

Sky News provides all its political coverage and dedicated Parliamentary Channel from two very small suites. The space is smaller than the space given to other media organisations for storage.

We are physically restricted from expanding our staff and coverage of National Affairs.

This is an impediment to all new players wanting to enter Federal Political reporting.

It is this company's view that the Parliament should address this issue and that the amount of space provided by the Commonwealth be apportioned on a more equitable basis.

This is an issue that is growing as new digital technologies such as Sky News Active change the shape of media reporting and thus how Australians are informed of Parliamentary services.

Access of Television Crews:

Sky News believes the widening of the Filming and Photography guidelines in 1996 has been to the advantage of the Print media and the detriment of Television.

The guidelines provided to DPRS are restrictive and do not allow a full open coverage of Federal Parliament, and in particular major events.

Incidents such as those involving President Bush in the Chamber were of national interest and the Australian people were only able to access that event via the use of footage obtained by a foreign camera crew.

Parliamentary Education Office

Sky News believes that the launch of the Parliamentary Channel offers the Commonwealth a unique opportunity to "open up" the political process to more Australian schools.

We would welcome working closer with the Parliamentary Education Office, in particular with our own school based activities.

Coverage of Committees

Committees are an important part of the political process and a key feature of the Sky News Parliamentary Channel.

It is Sky News' understanding that committees must decide whether to allow filming of committees as an "opt in".

We would support an "opt out" provision, in that committees would automatically be able to be covered by DPRS cameras, unless they specifically requested otherwise on worthy grounds.

Angelos Frangopoulos

Managing Editor

Australian News Channel Pty Ltd

Submission 3:

Paul Bongiorno, Vice President, Press Gallery

"FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS THE SAFEGUARD OF OUR LIBERTY AND CANNOT BE DIMINISHED WITHOUT BEING LOST"

Thomas Jefferson.

TELEVISION

"..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).."

The House of Representatives should within the rules of decorum have no restrictions on television coverage of what happens within its confines while the parliament is in session.

Television news crews should be allowed to enter or exit the galleries at will.

Decorum means that television coverage of the debates should not be distracting or intrusive. This can be achieved by restricting crews to the galleries.

The rules covering what the Sound and Vision Office is permitted to send the TV bureaus should be broadened. Besides the current S AVO feed showing only the member with the call or the Speaker, bureaus should also be able to access other in-house camera angles. This is available to MPs and should be allowed to the accredited media.

Rules

This access should be allowed to all news crews with parliamentary press passes. Visiting crews would have to seek specific permission of the Speaker.

Submission 4:

Mr Ian Harris, Clerk, House of Representatives (second submission)

21 June 2004

Mrs M May

Chair

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs May

I refer to the recent roundtable with representatives from the media as part of the Committee's inquiry into enhancing public knowledge of parliamentary proceedings. I have previously provided a submission to the inquiry addressing the terms of reference.

At the roundtable, Mr Grubel, AAP Bureau Chief and Press Gallery Secretary, referred to some difficulties experienced by AAP in getting access to tabled reports and other documents.

Ms Robyn McClelland, Clerk Assistant (Table) and Ms Joanne Towner, Director, Legislation and Records, met with Mr Grubel on Friday 18 June to discuss press access to documents. Attached for the Committee's information is a paper setting out the provision of documents to the press by the House of Representatives Table Office. Mr Grubel undertook to distribute copies of the document to members of the press gallery.

Yours sincerely

I C HARRIS

Clerk of the House

HOUSE OR REPRESENTATIVES TABLE OFFICE PROVISION OF DOCUMENTS TO THE PRESS

DOCUMENT TYPE	PROVISION?	COMMENT
Bills, EM, second reading speeches	Yes .	As soon as presented. One or two copies only. Also available on http://www.aph.gov.au/bills/index.htm
Government documents (on day of tabling and during tabling sitting week) (ie documents available in press gallery)	No	PM& C arrange for delivery of stock to the press gallery (at the boxes) once tabled. Alternatively the Agency website.
Government documents (from previous sitting week and beyond) (ie documents that are no longer available in the press gallery)	Yes (<i>if we have stock</i>)	Historic documents are stored in Archive basement so there may be a delay in retrieving, depending on other requests. Note: if we don't have stock e.g. only a master copy – if it is a PP, these can be accessed through the Parliamentary Library. If it is not a PPS, and we need to photocopy, build in some time for this.
Parliamentary committee reports	Yes (<i>if we have stock</i>)	Available either through the Committee secretariat or the Table Office. Single copy only.

Delegation reports	Yes	
Deemed papers	Yes	
Miscellaneous papers tabled during QT, Adjournment debate etc	Yes	
Acts	Yes	For the printed copies of individual acts
Consolidations of Acts	No	We do not hold stock – available electronically (http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/quicksrch.htm)

House of Representatives Table Office, RG 89

June 2004

Submission 5:

Neil Pickering, Director, Department of Parliamentary Services:

Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure

Enhancing public knowledge of parliamentary proceedings

The following services are provided by DPS to Members, Senators, the press gallery, parliamentary staff and the public. DPS could provide additional services but not within its current budget. Any new service would have to be costed and additional funds obtained.

- Live television, audio and internet coverage of chambers, committees, parliamentary functions and events.
- Copies of any of this coverage can be provided on DVD, windows media format, VHS tape, various broadcast quality formats, CD or audio cassette. Still images can also be provided from the video coverage. The first copy of any parliamentary event is free for Members and Senators. A charge is levied for multiple copies of the same event to cover our operator's time and the cost of the recording media.
- Replays of material over the House Monitoring Service to Members and Senators and over tie lines to the media bureaux are free.
- A fully equipped television and radio studio is available to Members, Senators and parliamentary staff. Material recorded in the studio can be provided in a variety of formats for a variety of purposes including incorporation into presentation material.

Additional TV news cameras in the chamber

I do not think it necessary to have additional news cameras in the chamber. The chamber is already fitted out with eight built-in broadcast quality video cameras operated by DPS staff covering all angles of the floor.

There are certainly some disadvantages of having additional video cameras in the chamber including anticipated problems with egress from the public galleries, less than ideal camera angles of the Members from above and the

major disadvantage of independent television crews not necessarily following the Parliamentary Camera Guidelines. DPS Broadcasting is wholly accountable to the Parliament, while it might be said that the media bureaux could be swayed by the need to maintain commercial TV ratings.

Camera angles

DPS cameras are located in recesses in the walls of the chamber and the camera operator is located in a DPS control room in the basement. This placement allows more relevant and complimentary 'front on' shots of Members while remaining unobtrusive to the proceedings in general. Video taken from the galleries would be looking down on Members and as such would appear quite different to the normal coverage. Additional news cameras should not be positioned anywhere in the house in a way that could interfere with the DPS coverage.

Camera guidelines

If the committee considers changing the parameters of the current camera guidelines, consideration should be given to such examples as the disruption caused during President Bush's address to the House and the incident when a member of the public jumped into the chamber.

It should be noted that the current guidelines for DPS camera operators do not specifically state what is allowed in the event of unparliamentary behaviour by a Member or Senator. However, the House of Representatives Practices manual is more specific and instructs the camera operator to focus on the chair.

Any changes to the camera guidelines should not require DPS camera operators to make judgments about what is likely to be newsworthy.

Additional camera angles other than the broadcast feed.

It is technically possible for DPS to record additional camera angles other than the program feed and distribute these to the media or a particular member with the agreement of the Speaker. This has been done in the past on several occasions for a variety of reasons. However, the priority of the camera operator in the control room is always the current proceedings and thus it is only possible to record additional material if time permits.

It may be possible to put in place a streamlined approval process for any additional material requests to ensure availability of operators and timeliness.

Television coverage of committee

There are five committee rooms in Parliament House equipped with broadcast quality cameras - 2R1, 2R3, 1R0 (the main committee room), 2S1 and 2S3. Outside of Senate Estimates committee hearings, the main committee room is rarely used for committee hearings.

Committees should consider using the main committee room or the Senate committee rooms to increase the number of televised committee hearings without incurring additional infrastructure costs.

Equipping additional committee rooms or televising away committee hearings would require substantial additional funding for DPS.

Increasing the distribution of DPS' television and radio coverage.

The number of distribution channels has increased over the last few years. Extensive coverage of the parliament is already distributed over the Internet (www.aph.gov.au), ABC Radio, Sky News Active - Parliament Channel, TransAct and Broadcast Australia. Sky News and ABC TV also cover Question Time. Major TV networks provide coverage of special events such as the budget speech and news worthy stories sourced from the Parliament.

What's possible with digital television?

SBS and ABC are allowed to multi-channel under digital TV legislation. For example SBS is providing two additional channels on their digital service, the World News Channel and SBS essential. ABC TV was providing the additional services of Fly and Kids TV until June 30, 2003. This could be an opportunity to encourage the ABC to dedicate more 'air time' to television coverage of the Parliament.

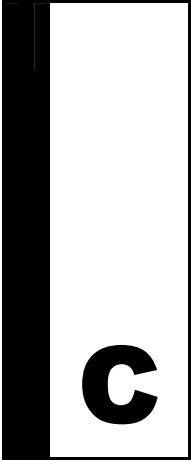
Digital TV legislation also allows the Parliament to be broadcast through data casting channels. Broadcast Australia is already doing this as part of their trial in Sydney, but this is an audio only service at this stage. The main reason the service does not include video is the expense of purchasing sufficient bandwidth to send the signals to Sydney.

I hope this information is useful to the committee.

Neil Pickering

Director Broadcasting

Department of Parliamentary Services



Appendix C

TRANSCRIPT OF ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION; 15 JUNE 2004



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Proof Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE

Reference: Enhancing public knowledge of parliamentary proceedings

TUESDAY, 15 JUNE 2004

CANBERRA

CONDITIONS OF DISTRIBUTION

This is an uncorrected proof of evidence taken before the committee. It is made available under the condition that it is recognised as such.

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

[PROOF COPY]

INTERNET

The Proof and Official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings, some House of Representatives committee hearings and some joint committee hearings are available on the Internet. Some House of Representatives committees and some joint committees make available only Official Hansard transcripts.

The Internet address is: **<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard>**

To search the parliamentary database, go to:
<http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au>

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE

Members: Mrs May (*Chair*), Mr Price (*Deputy Chair*), Mrs Bronwyn Bishop, Mr Martin Ferguson, Mr Haase, Mr Peter King and Ms Vamvakinou

Members in attendance: Mrs Bronwyn Bishop, Mr Martin Ferguson, Mrs May, Mr Price and Ms Vamvakinou

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on all aspects of media coverage of the House (including proceedings in the House, the Main Committee and committees of the House) (adopted 4 March 2004).

WITNESSES

BARRETT, Ms Val, Assistant Secretary, Client Services Group, Department of Parliamentary Services.....	1
BONGIORNO, Mr Paul Damian, Vice President, Press Gallery Committee	1
BOWERS, Mr Michael Peter, Managing Editor (Photographic), Herald Publications, Sydney Morning Herald	1
FARR, Mr Malcolm, President, Press Gallery Committee	1
FOOTE, Mr David Edward, Photographer, AUSPIC.....	1
FRANGOPOULOS, Mr Angelos Marcelo, Managing Editor, Australian News Channel Pty Ltd (Sky News)	1
GRUBEL, Mr James, AAP Bureau Chief, AAP; and Secretary, Press Gallery Committee	1
JONES, Mr Michael, Photographer, AUSPIC.....	1
McKINNON, Professor Kenneth, Chairman, Australian Press Council	1
MEAKIN, Mr Peter, Director of News and Current Affairs, Channel Seven.....	1
PICKERING, Mr Neil, Director, Broadcasting, Department of Parliamentary Services .	1
RILEY, Mr Mark, Political Correspondent, Seven Network	1
SKIBA, Mr Vlodek, Assistant Director, Broadcasting, Department of Parliamentary Services	1
TAYLOR, Mr Andrew, Chief Photographer Canberra Bureau, John Fairfax Publications	1

WEST, Mr Peter, Director, AUSPIC.....	1
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Committee met at 7.02 p.m.

BARRETT, Ms Val, Assistant Secretary, Client Services Group, Department of Parliamentary Services

BONGIORNO, Mr Paul Damian, Vice President, Press Gallery Committee

BOWERS, Mr Michael Peter, Managing Editor (Photographic), Herald Publications, Sydney Morning Herald

FARR, Mr Malcolm, President, Press Gallery Committee

FOOTE, Mr David Edward, Photographer, AUSPIC

FRANGOPOULOS, Mr Angelos Marcelo, Managing Editor, Australian News Channel Pty Ltd (Sky News)

GRUBEL, Mr James, AAP Bureau Chief, AAP; and Secretary, Press Gallery Committee

JONES, Mr Michael, Photographer, AUSPIC

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PICKERING, Mr Neil, Director, Broadcasting, Department of Parliamentary Services

RILEY, Mr Mark, Political Correspondent, Seven Network

SKIBA, Mr Vlodek, Assistant Director, Broadcasting, Department of Parliamentary Services

TAYLOR, Mr Andrew, Chief Photographer Canberra Bureau, John Fairfax Publications

WEST, Mr Peter, Director, AUSPIC

CHAIR—I welcome all of you. Thank you for your time tonight. This is a roundtable discussion between the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure and representatives of the media. Tonight's discussion is to allow media representatives an opportunity to have their say on the committee's inquiry into enhancing public knowledge of parliamentary proceedings. The terms of reference of this inquiry are:

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

There are 14 or so participants in this discussion, not counting the committee members. The committee would like all of you to have a chance to give your views, so after I have finished speaking I will ask anyone who wants to do so to make a short statement outlining your views

on the adequacy of current media access. The discussion will then be open to all participants, including committee members, to elaborate on any of the issues that have been raised tonight.

Before we get to that, however, I would like to take a minute or two to make some observations on the current state of media coverage of the House. First, in relation to video coverage of chamber proceedings, parliamentary broadcasting staff operate eight cameras in the chamber. The resulting footage is edited to create a composite feed of the proceedings. The feed is provided free of charge to the media. There is no limit on how much of the footage is used by television channels, but extracts must be broadcast or rebroadcast in a manner which factually reports the proceedings. Extracts cannot be taken out of context or used for satirical or commercial purposes. Footage of proceedings in the Main Committee is provided on the same basis.

I believe there may be a view that the media would like to take their own footage of proceedings. If this is the case, I am sure that the committee would be interested in hearing why and how this would be accomplished. For example, would there be a camera team operating from the gallery? More importantly, how would this footage differ from that currently provided by the broadcasting staff of the Department of Parliamentary Services? Would it provide better access to the public to learn about what is happening in their parliament?

Second, video coverage of committee proceedings is currently by invitation of the committee. The main constraint is that there is only one committee room on the House of Representatives side equipped with video cameras which can relay footage to viewers in Parliament House or via TransACT or the Internet. The submission from Sky News suggests that committees adopt an opt-out approach—that is, that there should be a presumption that video footage of hearings be recorded unless the committee had good reason to request otherwise. The committee would be interested in hearing how this would contribute to better public access to committee hearings.

Finally, in relation to still photography, access is limited to question time or other significant occasions. Although being limited in time, still photographers have wider access to proceedings when they are in the chamber because they are not limited to photographing the member with the call. They are simply required to provide a caption which accurately records the context of the photograph, and they may not photograph protests or demonstrations. I understand that no comparable national parliament provides such free access to still photographers as the House of Representatives.

The UK House of Commons, the Canadian House of Commons and the US Congress all have much more limited access for still photography. I invite any still photographers here to tell the committee how more liberal guidelines or greater access to time in the chamber would provide better information to the public about proceedings. Would we see different photographs in the print media?

I would like to open it up now for each of you to make any comments that you deem necessary or you would like us to hear tonight. Can I ask that you address your comments through the chair and that you indicate to me that you want to make a comment. The committee members then may like to question you, depending on the time. Could I ask that you also keep your comments short, sharp and to the point.

Mr Farr—Chair, I might start off with the basic premise that the Press Gallery Committee has been operating on for the last five years for sure that I know of—and I do not think we have wavered from this—and that is the view that parliament is a public meeting, it is a meeting funded by taxpayers, it is the most important public meeting in Australia and taxpayers, through their newspapers, radio, TV services and the Internet increasingly, have a right to know what goes on at this public meeting in words and in images. There are issues, of course, to be attended to such as the dignity of proceedings, because it is a very important institution. Nobody wants it cheapened, because that dilutes its effectiveness for people who vote for the representatives to go there. But, in large part, the dignity of parliament is in the hands of the members and you should not be blaming photographers or journalists if the lack of dignity is exposed.

Essentially, our ambit claim is no rules or we set the rules. However, realistically, we know that there have to be compromises made and we will continue in this debate to make progress in getting our readers—that is, the voters—a more accurate and broader picture, both in images and in words, of what happens in their parliament.

Mr Bongiorno—I am from Network Ten. I have been present at negotiations since 1989. I am trying to get more access for television, especially into the chamber. I believe the House of Representatives should, within the rules of decorum, have no restrictions on television coverage of what happens within its confines while the parliament is in session. Television news crews should be allowed to enter or exit the galleries at will. Decorum means that television coverage of the debate should not be distracting or intrusive. This can be achieved by restricting crews to the galleries.

The rules covering what the Sound and Vision Office is permitted to send to TV bureaus should be broadened. Besides the current SAVO feed showing only the member with the call or the Speaker, bureaus should also be allowed to access other in-house camera angles. This is available to MPs and should be allowed to the accredited media. What rules do I suggest? This access should be allowed to all news crews with parliamentary press passes. Visiting crews would have to seek specific permission of the Speaker.

Mr Grubel—I have a couple of very minor things, from AAP's point of view, on the broader issue of better coverage of the House of Representatives. We try to make a commitment to cover debate and we try to have somebody sitting in the gallery to watch debate and to cover legislation as it goes through. We have a commitment to that. Some of the difficulties we face are minor things: for example, sometimes getting reports that are tabled and getting access to them from the Table Office or having disputes with them about when things can and cannot be made available. On behalf of AAP, I would like to suggest that, if something is tabled, we have a system where we can be guaranteed that we get a copy of that from the Table Office. There is a growing push to say that we can get stuff off the Internet now, but when you get a report off the Internet that is 100 or 200 pages long it is impossible to read and skim through and to find the relevant points. That has held us up sometimes in the day to day coverage.

Broadly, on the photos issue, in support of Malcolm and Paul's comments, the problem I see is that when there is a major debate or something happens quickly in parliament and we are trying to cover it the photographers need to make a phone call to get permission to take a photo of it from the gallery. We find that a restriction. Sometimes by the time we get permission it is too late. It may be a division and we might want a broad photo of a division on a controversial

bill, and that does not happen. At the moment we have access to question time and everything else is by permission.

We also had a problem a few weeks ago. There was a censure motion. Question time was interrupted with a censure motion against the Prime Minister. We could not photograph it because, technically, question time had finished and the security guards were saying no. It is against the guidelines to take a photo of the motion and to take a photo of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition having the most important debate of the day in the chamber. Question time may then resume an hour or so later, but it is a bit late by then. Sometimes the main event of the day in parliament can be a censure motion or a major debate on a matter of public importance and, by the time you organise permission to photograph it, you may have missed a speaker or two. I will leave it at that.

Mr Frangopoulos—Sky News supports the opening up of access to parliamentary proceedings. Particularly the committees are of great interest to us. We have made a major commitment to the coverage of parliament by the establishment of our parliamentary channel, which is part of our digital product available already in 250,000 homes and to be extended to regional, rural and remote parts of Australia later this year by the Austar television network. Our commitment to the coverage of parliament goes back to our inception in 1996. We have covered every question time in the House of Representatives since 1996.

We believe that the opening up of access is vital to the growth of an outlet such as the parliamentary channel. Because of the limitations which have already been discussed, with only one committee room being available in the House of Reps side, we would welcome the opportunity to be able to put in our own cameras and record, perhaps even broadcast live, into the parliamentary channel proceedings not normally covered by the DPS unit.

There are a number of other issues that are specific to Sky News. We come from a broader perspective, because we do not have camera crews operating in the House at the moment but that is something that may well change in the future. We currently rely on the resources of our two shareholders—Seven Network and Nine Network—and also DPS for coverage of footage from the House.

The primary issue is the lack of suitable press gallery facilities to new players in the media. Since we opened our bureau in the year 2000, we have been operating out of a glorified broom cupboard—I am sure many members have visited our broom cupboard studio—and we have expanded to a studio the size of two broom cupboards. It is an impediment to new players, such as ourselves, willing to invest in the coverage of federal parliamentary proceedings, in expanding and being able to offer a more comprehensive service. The grandfathering provisions that exist at the moment with the press gallery do work against us and players that will come down the track, particularly with the opening up of digital technology. There will be new opportunities certainly in the future.

The coverage of committees, as I said, is really important. I do feel very strongly that an opt-out provision should exist. Rather than the ability to cover a committee being at the invitation of a committee, it should be an automatic right. In fact, further to the comments already made by members of the media, it underscores the importance of being able to have open access to the national debate that occurs here in Canberra.

Another issue that is important, certainly in the development of our parliamentary channel, is a closer association and involvement with the Parliamentary Education Office. We believe there is a unique opportunity to encourage schools across Australia. We already provide our service to schools via Foxtel and Austar with specific programs—in one case free of charge to schools, to regional, rural and remote areas—and we believe that working more closely with the Parliamentary Education Office would be a resource, at no cost to the Commonwealth, in helping to broaden the understanding of the parliamentary process.

Mr Bowers—I spent 13 years as a photographer up here. My colleagues have pretty much covered my thoughts about opening up greater freedoms for still photographers, but I would like to address a couple of issues that I see. A difficult issue to deal with for photographers here on the ground seems to be a lack of briefing for some of the security people or an understanding of the rules. We run into this quite often. There is not a great depth of understanding about the rules, especially when there are big visits, state visits, when perhaps these people are doing jobs that are not necessarily their normal jobs. I do not know whether we can look at some form of education system when they are inducted whereby they are better briefed on the rules. I think it would stop a lot of grief.

There is also a lot of outdated language in the stills guidelines that has not kept abreast of the technology. It refers to things that have no relevance anymore—motor driven cameras have not been used in the gallery since 1996—and it is showing real age. If you want to take ownership of this and get with the technology, the guidelines need to embrace it and use the correct language that describes what can and cannot be used. We are on a crest of technology, and stills and moving pictures are going to gradually concertina, and we need to be at the front of that.

Mr Meakin—I have a bit of history in this, in that I wrote to Mr Neil Andrew in April asking for the guidelines to be broadened. If newspaper photographers have a problem, we in television have a bigger problem because we can only record, as you know, people who have the call. Exhibit A: two politicians here, Trish Draper and Mr Tollner, who did not have the call, ended up in print. I imagine we would have been thrown out of the House if we had taken that shot. I think a lot of the problem is that we have a system which is basically discreet censorship where politicians ride shotgun on their own dignity. I would like more freedom, certainly as much freedom as the stills photographers enjoy in parliament.

There have been a couple of occasions where we did have good shots, good coverage, thanks to a rogue American crew when George Bush was here and, on another occasion, because the DPS crews were not rostered on at night-time and the cameras were locked on wide shot, we got some quite engaging footage of Senator Bartlett. Apart from that, we miss out on a lot of the action when people do not have the call. Newsworthy events are not just contingent on who has the call. That is my brief statement.

Prof. McKinnon—Unlike the others, I have no history in the parliament of reporting, images or TV. But we were struck by two incidents in the last year, one where we crossed swords with the Senate and the Privileges Committee, who were threatening to jail journalists for publishing deliberately leaked material. We felt what was going on was out of date. The second was the incident on the floor of the House when there was an intruder. The rights of photographers were withdrawn and yet we still had the AAP photographs. So it appeared that there was some censorship of some photographers. This seemed to us to be dated ways of operating, so we sent letters to the Speaker and various other people.

Our view is that parliament will only work if the press reports it. It is the right of the public to know what is going on in the parliament; in fact, most parliamentarians in their career depend on good reporting of parliament and their activities as parliamentarians. Therefore, it is important that the public's right to know about this be confirmed at every opportunity and in every way.

From the point of view of images, I was struck, when reading them, by how negative they were, trying to put the onus on photographers all the time. In my view, this is the wrong onus or attitude that the parliament adopts. We acknowledge that there should be dignity and that reasonable limitations should be put, but generally the onus should be on getting the material out and photographs of significant events and significant figures in the debates. So the rules should be rewritten around an attitude of getting the news out and limitations should be as minor as possible. I will stop at that.

Mr Jones—I am presently with AUSPIC, the government agency photography service here in Parliament House and prior to that I was 14 years in the press gallery. I would like to back up several issues that Michael Bowers has raised. As a still photographer, the big impediment is the attendants. Their lack of knowledge verges on boofheadedness when they approach you. They do not know the rules or the guidelines. In a situation where we are trying to do our work, such as during the Mark Latham budget reply speech—a simple thing; here is the crowd getting up for a standing ovation—we were not allowed to move because attendants were in the way blocking our shots. It does not make any sense.

The guidelines seem to be—and I think this is where TV has a problem as well—that you don't want reaction shots. If you do not want reaction shots, then it is not a debate. Part of the thing in a debate is that someone says something and someone will react, whether that is a facial expression or in a speech itself. That is the nature of debate, I would have thought. I think that is what we all think on this side of the table. Those two issues are really the ones: the attendants, day to day, seem very ignorant of the rules, and there is no interplay as far as reaction shots. The reaction shots can very well tell the story far better than the person making the lead charge in the debate.

Mr West—I would like to endorse something that was mentioned before about having to ring the Serjeant-at-Arms' office to get approval every day or weekend to do question time. In the Senate at question time, you can just go in and out as you like. We still have to seek approval—we do as the official photographers—to go in outside of question time, but it is verbally given over the phone and quickly told to the attendants.

CHAIR—You still seek permission, though?

Mr West—Yes, outside of question time. In question time, we do not have to seek approval. That is for the press, too: they can go in. But each time we have to ring the Serjeant-at-Arms' office and put our names down for the week or the fortnight. For instance, if I just put down 'Peter West', and one of my colleagues wants to go in, that person will not be let in because it is actually AUSPIC. They will not let you in. Most of the guards would know who the press gallery photographers are and us; we should just be able to go in.

CHAIR—I think they should.

Ms Barrett—Madam Chair, I think you have summed up very well the services we do provide. In all of our TV coverage of the chambers, we do operate within the guidelines set for us by the House. We would very much need to continue to do that. It is essential that our coverage remains impartial rather than newsworthy. In relation to perhaps greater access to TV coverage of committees, we are certainly able to provide greater coverage. At the moment it is provided on request. It would then become a resourcing issue for us, as to how much we could cover within our funding. There may well be some practical implications of a proposal that might put TV crews, camera crews, on the floor of the House or in the galleries. There may be some technical impacts on the way we provide our coverage, but I would like to hand over to Neil Pickering, the Director of Broadcasting, to elaborate on those.

Mr Pickering—Broadcasting was formerly known as the Sound and Vision Office and, of course, our department changed names recently. It used to be DPRS. Most things have been covered, but I want to say that I think we still have one of the most advanced broadcasting systems in a legislative environment in this building. We have the advantage that the building was built specifically for television coverage, with camera alcoves in all the walls. We have eight cameras in each chamber. We can cover just about any angle from a technical sense. We can cover anything that happens on the chamber floor. What of course stops us are the rules that we work to, which are the broadcast guidelines.

To dispel a myth: all our cameras are controlled by a person. We do have a lot of automation built into our systems, but we are completely flexible about the shots we can get. But, again, we work to the guidelines. I believe we can provide better pictures, especially of the chamber, than other media can because of our camera location. The cameras are at the right height so that you can get the head-on shots rather than shots coming down from the galleries. We certainly would have trouble if there were other camera people on the floor of the chamber because they could get in the way of our shots.

That is mainly what I wanted to say. However I would like to comment on reaction shots which Michael Jones mentioned. In our guidelines, we can take reaction shots, and we do. As you probably know, we do an enhanced coverage for question time where we bring in a full crew and we do a lot of reaction shots and pans around the chamber and all that sort of stuff. We do reaction shots especially when someone is mentioned in a speech. If the camera guidelines were to change, obviously we would change the way we do things.

In conclusion, we can probably provide anything out of the chamber that the press gallery would want, if the rules permitted that. Certainly we have enough cameras in there to cover almost all angles. DPS Broadcasting has contributed a lot to opening up access to the chambers and there have been a lot of people that have recently started broadcasting, including Sky News with its parliament channel. Also, Broadcast Australia are doing trials of audio only broadcasts in Sydney off the digital datacasting service. They are broadcasting the two chambers and all of the televised committees, but audio only.

Other people that you would know about take our footage and rebroadcast it, such as ABC NewsRadio. We get a lot of viewers and listeners on the Internet; Sky News Active that I have mentioned; TransACT, who are the local broadband carrier in Canberra, take the two chambers plus a committee channel that they have started recently. More internal, I guess, is Inter – Government Communication Network (ICON), which is the government fibre network that goes around Canberra. They receive all our televised coverage of committees, plus chambers,

and that goes to all the Public Service departments around Canberra. ABC TV and Sky News obviously take question time on their main channel, and the other media outlets take news and current affairs.

Mr Meakin—I am interested, Madam Chair, in how impartiality and newsworthiness is somehow in conflict.

Ms Barrett—We operate within guidelines that dictate what we are allowed to shoot. We need to continue to operate within guidelines, rather than being requested to make decisions about what we think the public might be interested in as opposed to what the House has requested of us to do.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—My understanding has always been that committees meet in one of two capacities: it is either a private hearing or a public hearing. If it is a public hearing, the press are welcome.

Mr Bowers—You have to seek the permission of the chair when you come into these meetings. I have been refused a public meeting access because there have been people on the committee who have not wanted coverage for the media. It is not a fait accompli that you are given access to it.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Let me tell you that we changed the standing order. I had a distinct problem with a particular member who did not want any media because it was an embarrassment for them.

Mr PRICE—Is that the incident you are referring to?

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—We changed the standing order. We put in a sessional order. The only way that press—or, indeed, anybody else—can be excluded is on a resolution of the committee. Under the old standing order, the interpretation was that if one member of the committee requested that there be no press or, indeed, anybody else, then the chair was obliged to rule that way. That was an absolute nonsense, and it was used in a particular way to try and prevent the hearing taking place. So we changed the standing order and it is now a sessional order. It operates that way. If a public meeting is a public meeting, you can come in.

Mr PRICE—Was it definitely a House committee?

Mr Bowers—My colleague tells me that the rules have changed. This was about three years ago, but it was definitely a House committee.

CHAIR—You were refused permission to sit in?

Mr Bowers—To take still photographs in there.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—In a public hearing?

Mr Bowers—Yes.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—There are three sorts of hearings. When you are conducting an inquiry, you have public hearings and in camera hearings. Obviously with in camera hearings you cannot come out, but you can have a public hearing where a committee may resolve, for a particular purpose, that it be cleared. That would be for the purposes of taking a particular piece of evidence that you wanted to take without it being in camera technically. Basically, if it is a public hearing, you are all invited and there are no restrictions. This is a very fine distinction. In accordance with the distinction between the parliament being in session and the old distinction we used to make where it resolved itself into committee. We now call it debate in detail or whatever it is. What do we call it?

CHAIR—Consideration in detail.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—So the chamber continues to be acting in its formal capacity and it does not any longer resolve into a committee when a rule is changed under the standing orders. There is another point I would like to make at this stage, and then we can hear what other people are going to say. Angelo, I think what Sky is doing is fantastic. One of the problems we have with just broadcasting question time is that people get a totally distorted view about parliament. Question time is aggressive; it is adversary; it is, ‘Let it rip.’ But if people think that is all we do, then they are getting a totally wrong impression of what it is.

Personally, I think the second chamber—which we have to call the federation chamber—is more interesting than the main chamber because we have changed the standing orders and that allows for more interactivity. There is debate and you can interrupt somebody in a speech and say, ‘Will you take this question?’ We do not have that in the other place yet, but it is quite interesting.

I had 167 schoolkids in here today. They have been into question time, and you try and explain to them about what the rest of the work involves. They thought it was exciting. They thought it was exciting that I had got up to speak and all that sort of stuff. I think it is good that they know something else.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—As Bronwyn has explained, the standing orders of the House are there to be used. The truth is that I do not think you have used them to your advantage, because you have not properly understood some of the history and the changes that have been made. They are there for you to open up and use to your best advantage.

In terms of television, the main committees of both houses that are perhaps the most important for you at the moment are Senate estimates, because that is where you have a real engagement in terms of accountability and things like that. Looking at TV footage of Senate estimates, it seems to be pretty reactive. Last week or the week before, Faulkner was grilling Hill on accountability of the Army—when they had knowledge of the prisoner problem in Iraq, et cetera. From what I could see on TV that night, that seemed to be a pretty good approach in the way you do your job. Do you see a difference in the way estimates potentially operate as against what would apply in the House? Regarding still photography, do you have a capacity to go into a Senate estimates and take appropriate photos or do you feel yourself being hindered by their proceedings?

Mr Bowers—You have to get permission from the committee to do it.

Mr Taylor—In Senate estimates, we can generally go in without any problem.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—You seem to have some pretty good photos of Senate estimates, including expressions on people's faces when they have someone coming at them and they have them on toast. I look at the TV footage of some of those Senate estimates, including the live footage in the House, because I tend to watch a fair bit of it. That seems to be a pretty good opportunity for you people to pick up what you need. Are there problems on that front, Paul, which could be adapted to your use for TV?

Mr Bongiorno—No, I do not think there are problems in the committees. The chairpeople do allow the television networks to bring their own cameras in for cutaways. We use the Sound and Vision—or the DPS as it is now called—head-on cameras. We supplement what DPS does. The real point of issue is the main chamber of the parliament and major events that happen in there: question time, visits of presidents and maybe major censure debates.

Mr PRICE—You suggested two rules, I think, Paul. One was decorum. What do you mean by 'decorum'?

Mr Bongiorno—Dignity, decorum. The television news crews are all accredited and identifiable and they work for identifiable employers. People from my network and I am sure from the other networks would be there to represent their employer well; in other words, they are there to do a job professionally and not to be disruptive. That is basically what I mean. The main event is not the television crew but what the television crew is there to report or to capture. That is what I mean.

Mr PRICE—For example, Malcolm's phone went off. If we were doing a TV thing of this and zeroed in on that, it would be pretty unrepresentative. I do not know that he meant to have his mobile on.

Mr Farr—No. But if it was established that Malcolm Farr was rude and ignorant, that might or might not be significant.

Mr PRICE—Is this a personal explanation, Malcolm?

Mr Farr—It is an apology.

Mr PRICE—Someone scratching their nose and all that sort of stuff, where does that—

Mr Bongiorno—The general guidelines on 'not for satire', et cetera, probably apply—although we could debate that all night. Even Peter Meakin's exhibit down there: the point is that got into a newspaper because the people in it were newsworthy at the time and the picture said something about the issue. That is the problem we have in the TV networks. We do not have that freedom to take that news judgment to the chamber basically.

CHAIR—What was the example?

Mr Meakin—David Tollner walking past.

Mr Bowers—That shot was within the guidelines. That does not breach any guidelines.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—I remember the photograph.

Mr Bongiorno—There are other examples. There was another example in the same week—the press shot of Chris Pyne showing support for Trish Draper. Television could not and did not get that shot.

Mr Bowers—A lot of parliamentarians have said to me over the years, ‘You just got more access so you can show us scratching our nose so it looks like we’re picking it.’ Can any of you tell me the last time you saw a photograph in a major metropolitan newspaper in Australia of a member of parliament scratching or picking their nose? I have not seen one in 18 years.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—I think that ‘scratching the nose’ is a euphemism. That stands for a lot of other things.

Mr Bowers—Sure.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—You would not want to be too literal in this business, would you? I would like to make another point about the standing orders. The standing orders are based on the Constitution, and the standing orders that bind us in the way we can behave are very dramatic. I am thinking this through. I am thinking about the degree of difficulty we would have where you could have strangers in the chamber behaving in a manner where they are not bound by the same rules and standing orders as we are. I do not think that would be acceptable.

Mr Farr—Chair, adding to the general view that the committee has had, we do essentially believe if you want to be on the floor of parliament, get elected.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—That is it.

Mr Farr—We do not seriously start thinking about having guys with video cameras on their shoulders walking around, or still photographers shooting up the nostrils of members. We do not seriously consider that.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—If the guidelines were made more flexible in a technical sense—which comes to the issue that Mike raised—you would see the still cameras and the TV cameras floating around the top floor of the gallery. That is where it would start and finish.

Mr Bongiorno—Yes.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—You were prevented from doing that on budget night. Are you required to just take photos virtually opposite the—

Mr Jones—In the last guidelines I received a couple of weeks ago there is no mention of where we are supposed to stand. In that sense, it is a bit of a moveable feast which we would like to keep. We do not want to get into the habit of calling out to a member of the public who has come up there, if they are seven feet tall, ‘Well, you’re going to have to move.’ If a better angle is there, then we are allowing that. But it came as a bit of a shock. The Mark Latham

budget address was not the only occasion. Certainly the President Bush visit was an absolute classic, compared to what happened with President Hu the following day.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—The answer to that question puts beyond any suggestion that you are going to be running around the chamber. It is flexibility on the top floor of the gallery when you require access for your own purposes—start and finish at the gallery.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—That or a fixed position. I take your point about a seven-foot person sitting in front of you. Can I ask you this question. We all know that Joe Public likes to see his face on television. Somebody mentioned the Mark Latham thing and how they all stood up and clapped. That was so staged, it was pathetic. That is not what I would call a genuine spontaneous reaction. They broke every standing order in the book, so why should he be rewarded?

Mr Jones—No. It was not as if we were photographing the people applauding. We were trying to photograph Mr Latham. We were shooting through the gallery with the people in front of us. When they stood up, our view was obstructed.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—They should have been thrown out, but they were not.

Mr Jones—Yes. We were not shooting the public gallery.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Peter, I think it was you who made the point, wasn't it, about the people who stood up in the gallery and clapped?

Mr Jones—No, that was me.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—It was you?

Mr Jones—Yes.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—They broke every standing order and the chair—

Mr Jones—Perhaps the attendants should have attended to the people who were standing up.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—If you have cameras there, you are going to get banners—the lot.

Mr Grubel—The guidelines still say that we are not to photograph them.

Mr Bongiorno—They cannot bring banners in.

Mr Grubel—No.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—That does not stop them.

Mr Bongiorno—The attendants are there.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Okay. So you have 100 people in the gallery who all have a banner. What are you going to do about it?

Mr Bongiorno—If it is happening in the gallery and we are there, we will film it.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—They are going to do it because you are there.

Mr Bongiorno—If that argument is taken to its extreme, you really would ban news coverage in Australia because you could blame virtually every event on the fact that the TV camera is there.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Paul, you and I know that there is an unwritten rule in certain areas that you do not put certain things to air, exactly on the argument that I have just used. You know it and I know it.

Mr Farr—There is a problem with copycat stuff. One thing we do say, and we have said forever, is, ‘If someone jumps over the thing, all bets are off.’

CHAIR—You want the flexibility then.

Mr Farr—You can have a debate about shooting people in the gallery because that might encourage other people to hold up ‘Free the Scoresby Freeway’ or something like that. But if someone jumps over that wall, all bets are off. We are going to report it.

Mr Bongiorno—The problem for us is that as a TV network, we will not see it. We will not get it.

Mr Bowers—I think there is a genuine difference between a disturbance in the gallery—and I have personally witnessed 50 or 60 people in what I would call a disturbance; someone shouting out, someone holding up a flag of Tibet—and what Mal is saying where someone jumps over. That to me crosses the line. There is a story element to that, where the guy, if he had been armed, could have done some real damage. There is a distinct difference. We understand the sensitivities of not creating copycats, because we are the last ones that would want to see that happening all the time.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—If he got in there armed, there would be big trouble, wouldn’t there?

Mr Bowers—Yes.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Because he would have had to go through the scanners to get there.

Mr Bowers—Sure.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Somebody could sit in the gallery and chuck a hand grenade if they could get it through.

Mr Bowers—Sure. In the 13 years I covered it, there have been two occasions—that being one of them, and the time when some Indigenous people stood up. I noticed in the submission that I was sent, this explained that we perhaps had a part in encouraging that because the Aboriginal people said that they had indicated to us that they were going to do this and we were going to lose face. I would like the same stringent guidelines in this sort of reporting applied to this, because the lead has been well and truly buried here. In my opinion, those people did that because they were cajoled by a certain New South Wales senator who spent the entire question time out of his chamber in the public gallery trying to talk them out of it. To me, if a senator from New South Wales thinks it is important enough to take himself out of question time and try to talk these people out of it, again that was a newsworthy event and not just a small disturbance in the House.

CHAIR—Would any of you say that there were safety issues? You have talked about the big visits and having those guidelines or having the briefings. You are saying attendants are not briefed enough, particularly in view of those bigger visits. Would you see that there are safety issues involved there?

Mr Jones—There are certainly safety issues. In President Bush's visit, for instance, we were given a guideline as to where we could stand, how many people could be in certain positions, and freedom of movement. Therefore, we could go from the House of Reps and, in my case, down to the cabinet room. No matter what you are saying to the attendant on days like that, they just do not hear you. They go back to the lowest common denominator—'No, you can't come in.' All right, you can understand when there is a bit of a hubbub. But then these are the same attendants that let in the video camera. If you are talking about security, if a video camera got into the House of Representatives, why couldn't anything else get in?

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Did you get the feeling that perhaps a video camera would not get in again?

Mr Jones—No. I reckon it would.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Do you? I always thought all that was a bit suss.

Mr PRICE—If we were to change the rules for DPS to say that they can take any shots, providing they are not distractive or intrusive, would you still be wanting to have cameras in the gallery? How does that affect you?

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—It is partly what Paul picks up on. He says in his submission, 'We need to be able to access other in-house camera angles.'

Mr Bongiorno—No. We would argue that we would like to be able to have our own cameras in there. We probably would not have them in there all the time, frankly.

Mr PRICE—If you have the still photographers there, as well as your TV crews, might you not have a problem of how many you can fit, because there are limited places that you can shoot from?

Mr Bongiorno—Sure. As it is now, the TV networks tend to run two pools. There is an ABC-Ten pool and a Seven-Nine pool. Maybe they would on occasions, from the point of view of

resources, want to do pooling. Maybe there could be arrangements which the Prime Minister's office sometimes sets up—that is, super pooling. It could be that the networks may agree that they will send in only three cameras. That could be worked out with the networks. We could go to those sorts of details.

Could I underscore something here: I have been, from the word go, involved in negotiations for television into the parliament. I have noticed that we do get greater liberalisation of the rules when we have a change of government. The last liberalisation was when the Manager of Opposition Business Peter Reith became the manager of government business. We were allowed to use on our TV news bulletins withdrawn statements and points of order, which were banned by the previous government. I must say that the committee—and we have had this discussion—are greatly heartened by the Leader of the Opposition, who believes that the House of Representatives as the people's chamber should have no restrictions in its coverage.

Mr PRICE—That is very kind to you, Paul!

Mr Bongiorno—We are hoping that this view may infect, in fact, all sides of politics and we might not have to wait for a change of government to see some greater liberalisation.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—Will you take that on note, please.

Mr Pickering—We have in the past provided what we call iso shots—isolated camera shots—to the media of different things that are happening in the chamber, when you have permission through the Speaker's office. I thought I would throw that in. We have done that in the past, and we can. It is more a matter of getting permission to do it.

Mr Bongiorno—I think we are really only talking about key events. As it is now, none of the networks have enough cameras to cover all the committees, for example, and oftentimes we are alerted to something that is newsworthy at 10.55 and we ring up DPS and say, 'Can we have the vision from 10.55 till 11.15?' or whatever, and it is sent to us. The key events would be question time, major visits, maybe censure motions—things like that.

Mr Farr—Major legislation.

Mr Grubel—I think last time it was somebody over there with the voluntary euthanasia legislation. You provided a cutaway shot of the division because it was a free vote, and we informed the gallery that, if the TV wanted the second shot, you would replay that after the vote because that was a newsworthy shot that they would normally get.

Mr Bongiorno—Today there was a question to Minister Abbott about health records. Dr Mal Washer's name was mentioned, but the director did not get to him in time, I do not think. We did not have a shot of Dr Washer today, when he was relevant to what was being said. I would say that if one of our news crews was in there, they would have been making sure they got a shot of Dr Washer today, because it was newsworthy.

Mr Pickering—Yes, that is right. It is a timing issue, isn't it?

Mr Farr—The minister turned to him and it was all aflow, as it were.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—How come you didn't get it?

Mr Pickering—I am not sure. We normally would have, if someone is mentioned.

CHAIR—If you watch it, you will see the camera will even zoom back in on the person asking the question, after the minister has started the response.

Mr Bongiorno—That often happens, yes. That is an example.

Mr Pickering—Generally we do, yes.

Mr Meakin—For the sake of financial expenditure, among other things, we do not as networks want to send camera crews trampling all round the House anyway. I am reassured by DPS's statement that, subject to the guidelines, they are prepared to provide what service is required. That is fine. I am not seeking to undermine their role, but if their role can be broadened, if their responsibility can be enlarged, we would all be grateful.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—That would give you additional footage that you could use.

Mr Bongiorno—That is true.

CHAIR—At no cost, I might add.

Mr Meakin—Exactly. That is the way I think—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—There is another thought. Is that reasonable?

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—James, your problem in getting access to documents from the table, is that during question time or outside of question time? When do the difficulties really arise?

Mr PRICE—They want embargoed copies, I think.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—You want embargoed copies?

Mr Grubel—No.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—I did not think it was embargoed copies.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Once it is tabled.

Mr Grubel—No. We certainly do not expect stuff that is embargoed, because we know there is a problem with that. Sometimes that can happen.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—Is it in question time or outside question time?

Mr Grubel—We usually wait until after question time anyway. If somebody tables something during question time, we will go down there and try and get a copy. Sometimes that

can take a little while. I am thinking of major reports, major committee reports. I know it is an issue that comes up but I have not brought any specifics with me. It may even be a Senate issue as well. Sometimes there are big reports that are very difficult to access.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—I thought the point you were making was that they have been cutting back on the numbers that they print.

Mr Grubel—That is the sense we get. We are told one copy per organisation, which is fine because we only want one, but sometimes we are told, ‘No, we’ve run out. You’ll have to wait until tomorrow before we get more.’ Then you think, ‘Well, it’s been tabled today.’ It is this big, the federal election report or something from the committee, and you think, ‘Well, we need it now.’ It is very difficult to read those things on the Internet. There is a media liaison person for the House of Reps and I think that is a fantastic thing because they let us know what committees are coming up. I think that has been fantastic. I have talked to people in the Senate. I would love the Senate to do the same thing, or the one person to do it for both chambers, but I realise that is an issue.

Mr PRICE—Could I ask about the Main Committee?

Mr Grubel—The Main Committee is my only other point. I am not even sure exactly where in the building it is yet.

CHAIR—Isn’t that amazing? It has been here for years.

Mr Grubel—I get it on my TV. I sit and watch it sometimes.

Mr PRICE—You reckon it is a secret chamber.

Mr Grubel—It is. The best debates may well be happening there, but I do not think anyone has the resources—we do not. We put three journalists on the Senate and three on the Reps and they rotate to try and track legislation. It is impossible then to have another three people watching the Main Committee.

Mr PRICE—How can we help you with the Main Committee?

Mr Grubel—I have no idea what goes on in the Main Committee. Every now and then you will see somebody on there, but I do not know what the photographic rules are—if they are the same as the chamber.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—It is a committee.

Mr PRICE—It is just the same.

CHAIR—No, it is a chamber.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—It is not actually. Technically, it is a sitting of a committee, hence its name.

Mr Bowers—I did it once, and you had to approach and ask permission.

CHAIR—You can go in.

Mr Grubel—Does anybody ever watch it?

Mr Bongiorno—It is always televised.

Mr Grubel—Does anybody watch it or pay attention to it, or do you just get the *Hansard* and say, ‘There was something interesting there yesterday and we missed it.’

Mr PRICE—How many people know where it is? Three.

Mr Bongiorno—I know where it is. Members will alert you to something and maybe you will look, you will tune in.

CHAIR—It basically is for those non-controversial bills. That is what it is used for at the moment.

Mr Grubel—I suppose we only want to pay attention when it gets controversial.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Every now and again it has a break-out.

Mr Grubel—When it gets controversial, they stop, and they go back—

Mr Bongiorno—When there is a break-out, we are told about it.

CHAIR—You are told about it?

Mr Bowers—Chair, I would like to say something quickly. There are three people here from the press gallery who have been banned from working in the House of Reps for breaching guidelines. All three of them are photographers. There is a little bit of a sense in the gallery that we bear the brunt of these guidelines and rules. I think the other guys would agree with me, and I would like to thank you for this opportunity to state our case. We could argue the merits of the bannings until the cows come home, but we appreciate very much this opportunity.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—You raise the question of training on this side. Can I say back to you that there is also an onus on your side to look after new people in the gallery, in terms of the rules.

Mr Bowers—Yes, sure.

Prof. McKinnon—Are members of parliament, and particularly this committee, satisfied with the way parliament is reported to the public?

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Never!

Prof. McKinnon—I am sorry if your photo was not in every day.

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON—That is the principal reason why she is not satisfied.

CHAIR—We think it can be enhanced. A lot of the work that we have done in the committee we feel is ignored by people such as yourselves. We have changed the hours that the House sits. We are trying to involve the education of our youth. Someone has touched on that tonight. We have rewritten the standing orders. That has been an enormous job for this committee. It has not been done for a long time. It is the modernisation of the standing orders. I am particularly interested in the comments that were made tonight about revisiting the guidelines that you are talking about when you talk about technology.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—We had a private little conversation there.

CHAIR—Yes. For us, that is huge input. But there are also some of the things we have undertaken, the reports we have brought down. We are particularly interested in Angelo talking about educating the youth of the country. All they ever get to see is snippets of question time. You go and talk to schoolkids and they think we are all a bunch of brawlers. That is all that they see every day.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—It is the wrong image.

CHAIR—It is the wrong image of us. We would love to open up our committee.

Prof. McKinnon—That is really what I am trying to get at. The rules make it the wrong image.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Angelo is trying to do something about it. When I was talking to the kids today up in hospitality, I literally explained to them that the width of the table between the government and the opposition is the width of two sabres. It is confrontation, it is replacing battle in that sense, and it is combat in that sense. But the rest of it is not. There is a lot of complementary work, where opposition and government work together to get a good outcome. Nobody ever sees that. I suppose we find that frustrating.

Prof. McKinnon—Is it forbidden?

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—What?

Prof. McKinnon—That people can see that and report it and photograph it and so on?

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—It goes in the good news story category and nobody wants to know.

Mr PRICE—It is not an unfair point. Every picture tells a story. It was always going to be an interesting committee deliberation. We had a TV crew that went through the private parts, the public parts—the whole lot. We did a doco on it, warts and all, to show how people actually do react in committees.

Prof. McKinnon—The issue I am trying to raise is, you can do a doco and, no matter how good it is, it is still dull if you report the actuality of this happening. I wish I was on parliament

30 years ago when Lionel Bowen and Doug Anthony got together on a schools bill that changed the course of government—whether it was going to be pulled down or not. I was in the Canadian parliament when they threw red paint over the debate on whether they would change the flag. None of these things got out in a way which made any sense to the public. I think there is an onus on parliamentarians to address this issue.

Mr Bowers—It is so difficult to get access to the chamber that you only tend to go down that path when it is something that is really big and important. I am not saying that we would cover absolutely everything that happens in there, but if you were allowed to get in there without the hoops you have to go through, the chances of it happening would be higher, I think.

Mr PRICE—In a number of reports, the committee—particularly in relation to parliamentary committees—has really sought to facilitate the operation of the press. Hitherto, all these rules were either the joint broadcasting committee or the Speaker's preserve. The fact that we have jumped into it is something that I do not recall that we have done previously.

CHAIR—On the Main Committee, our second chamber, we celebrated our 10th birthday last week. It has been going for 10 years.

Mr PRICE—And you still do not know where it is!

CHAIR—We are going to have a new chamber.

Mr Jones—On the point of showing a nice working harmonious relationship that generally exists between both sides of political parties, for the most part we are prevented from doing strong images. We could come in and do a committee and we would get two people—a government and an opposition person—but by far the most dramatic pictures are generally those around Parliament House: two people having coffee at Aussie's; two people outside the chamber. If you want to start showing that, no.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—Who is talking to who?

Mr Jones—When Michael Bowers, myself and Peter Morris's predecessor started pushing for doing question time—you are always going to get whoever is in the news being photographed—one of the things we put to the presiding officers at the time was, 'If we can't photograph them here in Parliament House, then it becomes a trawl around Manuka, Kingston, while people are having dinners, and everything else like that.' In the Australian parliament, that was one of the issues as far as collecting news pictures. You guys have been very well served—without being too glib—in that you do not have to go and do grubby pictures of people arriving from work and all of that business.

That is one thing that has been safeguarded from you, in that if a person is on the news, it may not be a photograph of them doing their business in question time but it would be today's picture of Member X. If that was not granted—such as in an incident that happened to a former Labor Party Queensland senator when we could not get that access in the Senate—it becomes a chase around town. The media, by the nature of its beast, go hunting and that is something that really has to be considered. You have not been that badly served by the media access within Parliament House as opposed to what could happen outside Parliament House.

Mr Meakin—That is stills access, not television access.

Mr Jones—That is right, and that is an issue where you can see where TV are coming from. If they can get a photo of Dr Mal Washer, then they do not have to go and get another photo of Dr Mal Washer.

CHAIR—Any further comments? Thank you all for your time tonight. We will send you transcript.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP—I would like to say that it was helpful from my point of view to listen to the problems that you have. Thinking a little bit off to the side, there could be some solutions that might come from a different direction than we might have normally felt. We are not unsympathetic to what you have had to say to us. I just think we have to strike that balance.

Mr Farr—We are fighting history here. There are a couple of hundred years of Westminster tradition. It does not dissolve easily.

Committee adjourned at 8.09 p.m.