



**Parliament of Australia**  
**Department of Parliamentary Services**

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**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.apf.gov.au](http://www.apf.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.

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