
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Balancing tradition and progress

Procedures for the opening of Parliament

**House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Procedure**

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Terms of reference of the committee

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

Terms of reference of the inquiry

To inquire into the procedures of the House on the opening of a new Parliament, including but not restricted to:

- formal declaration of the opening of Parliament;
- swearing in of Members;
- election of Speaker and other office holders;
- presentation of Speaker to Governor-General;
- venue for the Governor-General's opening speech;
- other business to be conducted at the first sitting—

with particular attention to:

- the requirements of the Constitution;
- the preservation of an appropriate level of ceremony and tradition; and
- the need for Parliament to engage with the community it exists to serve.

The inquiry will include a review of the proposals put forward in the committee's 1995 report on procedures for the opening of Parliament.

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Preface

A committee of the House of Representatives, like the Standing Committee on Procedure, is a creature of the House. The House gives the committee certain powers to undertake inquiries on the House's behalf. At the end of an inquiry, the committee's main responsibility is to report to the House its conclusions and recommendations.

The Procedure Committee works within the specialised area of parliamentary practice and procedure. Until recently, it has presented its reports in the expectation that the prospective readers were well versed in these matters and that it was unnecessary to include more than essential background and contextual information.

The Parliament has long acknowledged an obligation to engage with the community it serves. Indeed this is one of the functions that parliamentary committees fulfil. However, the physical remoteness of Canberra from many Australians and the difficulties in distributing the documents which Parliament and its committees publish have left many citizens without an understanding of the vital part that the Parliament plays in their everyday lives.

New communications technologies can help to overcome this. Not every Australian has access to the Internet and the Parliament's site on the World Wide Web. But increasingly, the Parliament's publications are reaching more readers. The Procedure Committee is mindful of this and in recent reports—like *It's your House* and *The Second Chamber*—has attempted to engage a wider audience.

This report goes a little further. It has been deliberately prepared for a readership beyond the House of Representatives whose Members will ultimately determine the fate of its recommendations. The introductory chapters explain some of the historical and traditional aspects of the Parliament's opening ceremonies; these would be well known to any Member of Parliament. Nevertheless its main objective is to submit proposals for the House's consideration, not to educate.

Those who wish to know more about the opening of a new Parliament, or of parliamentary procedure and practice in general, are invited to consult *House of Representatives Practice*, the *Guide to Procedures* or the *Factsheet* series. Each is available at the House of Representatives website: www.aph.gov.au/house

Parliamentary history and tradition

Introduction

- 1.1 A first step when discovering why a modern parliament does things in a certain way is to consider its evolution. The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, much as a living being, is an adaptation of an earlier form surviving in a new environment. Much of its current behaviour can be traced to mechanisms developed to cope with earlier threats and opportunities. These mechanisms are retained: most because they continue to be useful and efficient, others in spite of the diminution or disappearance of the old challenges they were meant to counter.
- 1.2 The evolution of parliament can be seen as a series of skirmishes through which the power to control the individual and his possessions, or a community and its common wealth, was wrested from one person, a monarch, and entrusted among many, the elected representatives of the community. It is a struggle that has lasted centuries and, so long as there is contention within the community, cannot be finally resolved. But a true appreciation of parliament rests in acknowledging what has been won and the significant victories along the way.
- 1.3 Modern social organisation requires a complex web of institutions and an elaborate set of rules by which they should operate. However even in simpler times the acceptance of government by the governed could not be won on reasoned argument alone. Force may have been enough to start a regime but enduring systems were built and maintained by consent of the people on an appeal to the emotions. The organs of government were represented symbolically so that neither ignorance of their finely wrought structure nor disagreement over their details would detract from their

general acceptance. The social cohesion of a community was cemented by its symbols.

- 1.4 The most obvious symbols in a modern nation state like Australia are its flags, anthem and coat of arms. However while these serve principally to promote unity they are also the focus for the proponents of change and thus sometimes take on a contradictory role. Less explicit symbols, like the major public ceremonies of Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, serve better to foster a feeling of national identity. The opening of a new Parliament, if the institution and its history were more fully understood by Australians, might also play a modest part.
- 1.5 With the centenary of federation, issues of symbolism and history have been much in people's minds. The committee felt that the Parliament of the Commonwealth, having celebrated its hundredth anniversary and with a new Parliament in sight, should look at one of its contributions to public ceremony and symbolism.
- 1.6 It is against this background that the committee undertook to review the procedures for the opening of Parliament.

The evolution of Parliament

- 1.7 Visitors to the public display area of Parliament House in Canberra may inspect one of the surviving copies of the 1297 *inspeximus* issue of Magna Carta. Magna Carta was an agreement made in 1215 between the monarch, King John, and rebellious English barons. Its immediate effect was to assert certain feudal laws and customs which in themselves were not particularly radical for the times. However its symbolic significance rests in the implicit principle that a monarch's powers were not absolute but were subject to law. Moreover the 1297 issue of the charter—in effect its confirmation by Edward I, a successor of King John—can be seen as signifying that the law should not subsequently be repudiated by the Crown.
- 1.8 Magna Carta does not mark the birth of the institution we know as parliament. Indeed it has little direct part to play at all, its significance being mainly symbolic. What came to be called parliament began at some indeterminably earlier time as a kind of council with a law-making role like the Anglo-Saxon Witan which consisted of 'an assembly of the wise men of the realm'.¹ The term 'parliament', derived from the language of

1 Wilding & Laundy, 521

the Norman conquerors, had been used to describe conversations between monks in their cloisters—as well as certain high level conferences—and was first applied in relation to a national assembly in the thirteenth century.

- 1.9 The evolution of parliament has been represented as spanning four stages: medieval; the age of the Tudors and Stuarts; the period between the Revolution of 1688 and the Reform Act of 1832; and finally the period thereafter, which may be termed the modern era.²
- 1.10 The Normans brought feudalism to England and the form of government which emerged after the Conquest contained elements of the earlier Anglo-Saxon system as well as the feudal system. Initially the judicial, legislative, executive and financial functions of government were combined in the Curia Regis which ‘consisted of the greatest men of the realm and included the great officers of state’.³ By the thirteenth century land tenure, the basis of feudalism, was no longer the main criterion for participation in government. The more obvious features of a modern parliament which date from the Middle Ages are the principle of representation and the related ability to control supply of funds to the Crown.
- 1.11 By the late fifteenth century—the end of the Middle Ages—the English Parliament had in essence assumed its modern form: the sovereign, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The advent of the Tudors saw an increase of what in modern terms would be called executive dominance. The power of the Crown over Parliament reached its peak during the reign of Henry VIII. It was the insistence of the Stuarts upon the divine right of kings which precipitated a backlash from the Parliament leading to the Civil War, Cromwell’s Protectorate and after the failure of the Stuart Restoration, the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Parliamentary privilege had won over royal prerogative.
- 1.12 The enactment of the Bill of Rights in December 1689 marked the beginning of the third stage of the evolution of the Parliament. The reign of William III saw the beginning of the cabinet system and the strengthening of party influences which grew and developed through the eighteenth century. The former entailed the exercise of executive power in the hands of leading members of the two houses of Parliament. The latter formalised the concept of responsibility, of the executive arm of government being responsible to the Parliament and dependent upon the continuing confidence of a majority in the lower house. The gradualism in

2 Sir Courtney Ilbert in Redlich I, ix

3 Wilding & Laundy, 522

the development of cabinet and parties was reflected in a lack of innovation in parliamentary procedure.

- 1.13 The Reform Act of 1832 ushered in what may be called the modern era. The Act was the first in a series of statutory steps to extend the right to vote. With broader enfranchisement came greater demands on government and increasing complexity in public administration. A balance had to be struck between the right of representatives to be heard and the need for decisions to be made. Obstruction of the routine operation of Parliament, particularly on the part of special interest groups like the Irish Nationalists, led to procedural reforms through the late nineteenth century.
- 1.14 In some senses the changes to the British Constitution from 1066 onwards were more than evolutionary: they were revolutionary. However there is a discernible genealogy—albeit tangled in parts—linking the Anglo-Saxon Witan with the Parliament of today. Nevertheless, it can be said that Parliament has indeed evolved, if not in a strictly Darwinian sense. The Australian adaptation branched from the British line at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the last hundred years each has continued to evolve in its own way.

Commemoration in parliamentary procedure and practice

- 1.15 Some elements of parliamentary procedure are so ritualised that the original necessity that gave birth to them has been almost forgotten.
- 1.16 One example is the three readings of a bill. When a bill is presented it is read a first time. When it has been agreed to in principle it is read a second time. Finally, when it has been agreed to in the form in which it will leave the House, it is read a third time. Today each reading consists in the Clerk at the Table standing and reading the title of the bill to the House, an act of seconds. But in the days before printing or general literacy the entire contents of a bill were read aloud at each stage so that Members knew what they were agreeing to. Readings are retained not out of sentiment but because they represent in brief symbolic form the transition of a bill from one stage of its life to the next.
- 1.17 Another example is the ‘naming’ of a Member who has disregarded the authority of the Chair. It is an ancient practice that Members are referred to on the floor of the House by their electoral division rather than by their personal name. In the House of Representatives the practice is codified in standing order 80 which requires that ‘no Member may refer to any other

Member by name, but only by the name of the electoral division he or she represents'. This requirement, not always met it must be said, is intended to reduce the temptation to make personal aspersions. In any event, the occupant of the Chair conforms to ancient practice and 'names' a Member by declaring 'I name the honourable Member for ...'. The precedent was set by Speaker Lenthall in 1641 when he found that he needed to go beyond an impersonal call for 'Order'.

- 1.18 The procedures for the opening of a new Parliament contain many symbolic elements which commemorate the evolution of Parliament. They deserve to be acknowledged in any review which seeks to modernise procedures or make them more meaningful or efficient.

The current inquiry

- 1.19 The committee examined procedures for the opening of Parliament in 1991⁴ and 1995.⁵ The report of the second inquiry endorsed, with refinements, the committee's recommendations to simplify procedures in its first report. The Government responded in June 1997 that it did not propose to change the traditional procedures.⁶
- 1.20 In its second report, the committee:
- noted that the procedures for the opening of Parliament had remained relatively unchanged since the opening of the first federal Parliament in 1901;
 - observed that the ceremony and traditional practices derived from those of the United Kingdom Parliament;
 - acknowledged that a certain amount of ceremony and tradition was important for the institution and for individual Members; and
 - argued that the existing procedures are complex and can be confusing for both observers and participants.
- 1.21 The committee believes that it is appropriate in this, the year of the centenary of federation, to revisit its earlier inquiries. In those inquiries, the committee focussed on making the process more efficient while meeting constitutional requirements but without sacrificing an appropriate sense of occasion for observers and participants. In this
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4 *Opening of Parliament* (1991)

5 *Opening of Parliament* (1995)

6 House of Representatives Debates, 24 June 1997, 6130

inquiry, the committee decided to pay greater attention to the symbolic aspects of the opening procedures.

- 1.22 Details on the conduct of the inquiry are set out in Appendix A. Chapter 2 of this report describes the existing procedures and notes some of the historical principles on which they are based. Chapter 3 identifies anomalies and deficiencies in the existing procedures. Chapter 4 proposes remedies with detailed recommendations set out in chapter 5. Appendix B contains diagrammatic representations of the current and proposed ceremonies.

The existing opening procedures

Introduction

- 2.1 In one sense Parliament is an enduring institution. Its operating procedures change over time and periodically the body of representatives who serve in it is refreshed through general elections, the filling of casual vacancies in the Senate and by-elections in the House of Representatives. However the term 'Parliament' is also applied to the discrete formation of the institution during a certain period. This period, the life of a Parliament, is determined by section 28 of the Constitution. In effect, a Parliament ends when the House of Representatives is dissolved, that is, at the end of three years of its first meeting or sooner by action of the Governor-General.
- 2.2 To put it somewhat metaphysically, the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia dies when the House of Representatives is dissolved—the opening procedures contain the essential steps to reincarnate the Parliament. There is an echo, here, of the transfer of monarchy: 'The King is dead! Long live the King!'
- 2.3 In early 2001, the centenary year of the Commonwealth when this inquiry began, the 39th Parliament was about to be succeeded by the 40th.
- 2.4 The constitutionally essential elements of the opening procedures for a new Parliament are set out in sections 5, 6, 35 and 42 of the Constitution. The House of Representatives specifies its procedures for the meeting of a new Parliament in standing orders 2 and 4 to 8. The requirements of the Constitution and the standing orders are augmented by a number of procedures which are often adaptations of practice in the British Parliament.

Historical note

Redlich, in tracing the development of parliamentary procedure in Britain, has identified the constitutional forms which must be followed before the UK House of Commons can resume work as comprising 'the summons by the Crown; constituting the House, after a general election, by the swearing in of members and the choice of Speaker; and lastly the solemn opening of Parliament on the part of the sovereign or his representatives by the speech from the throne'.¹

Similar constitutional forms are at work in the opening of the Australian Parliament.

Summoning the new Parliament

- 2.5 When Australians have chosen their parliamentary representatives at a general election, the Governor-General is obliged by the Constitution to summon the new Parliament to meet no later than 30 days after the day set for the return of the election writs. The Governor-General does this by issuing a proclamation specifying the time and date for Senators and Members of the House of Representatives to assemble at Parliament House in Canberra. The proclamation is published in the *Commonwealth Gazette* and the Clerks of the two Houses notify Senators and Members.

Historical note

The Governor-General's role is another example of how power has been taken from the absolute grasp of the monarch. In the beginning, the monarch exercised an exclusive right to summon an assembly of lords and commoners for certain causes which he specified. Today the power to summon is restricted by the *Constitution* and the time, date and causes are established, in practice, by the newly formed Government.

Assembly of Senators and Members

- 2.6 In recent years it has become usual for the Governor-General to fix 10.30 a.m. on a Tuesday as the time for Senators and Members to assemble at Parliament House in Canberra for the opening of a new Parliament. The

1 Redlich II, 51

bells are rung in both Houses for five minutes before the appointed time and Senators and Members gather in their respective Chambers.

- 2.7 In each House, the Clerk of that House reads the Governor-General's proclamation summoning Parliament to assemble. In the Senate, a Deputy appointed by the Governor-General—usually the Chief Justice of the High Court—enters the Chamber and takes a seat on the dais.

Historical note

The sovereign is not usually present at the very opening of a new Parliament at Westminster and commissions five lords, led by the Lord Chancellor, to 'do all things in Her Majesty's name which are to be done on her Majesty's part'. The sovereign usually appears on a subsequent day when the causes of summoning Parliament are then declared. This cannot happen until the House of Commons has been constituted—that is, a Speaker elected by the House and approved, by Her Majesty often through the Commissioners acting on their commission, and Members sworn. It is open to the sovereign to commission the delivery of the opening speech, as well as the performance of earlier formalities, but usually the sovereign declares the causes of summoning Parliament in person.²

The Governor-General, too, does not appear until the House of Representatives is constituted and appoints a Deputy 'to declare open the Parliament' and separately authorises the same person 'to administer the oath or affirmation of allegiance'. In certain circumstances the Governor-General may appoint two Deputies, the senior of whom performs most of the delegated functions.

Declaration of the opening of Parliament

- 2.8 From a seat in the Senate Chamber, the Governor-General's Deputy directs the Usher of the Black Rod to let Members of the House of Representatives know that he or she desires their attendance in the Senate. Black Rod proceeds from the Senate Chamber across the Members' Hall to the House of Representatives Chamber and delivers the message orally from the Bar of the House.
- 2.9 Members form a procession and, led by the Serjeant-at-Arms and House Clerks, make their way across the Members' Hall and assemble in the

2 Redlich, II, 55-6; Anson, I, 61-2; May, 236; Lords Debates, 7 May 1997, 1

Senate Chamber. The Governor-General's Deputy addresses the assembled Senators and Members, informing them that the Governor-General, not thinking fit to be present in person, has appointed him or her as the Governor-General's Deputy to declare open the Parliament. This address is, in effect, the declaration of the opening of the new Parliament.

- 2.10 The Clerk of the Senate reads the instrument by which the Governor-General has authorised the Deputy to declare open the Parliament. The Deputy again addresses the assembled Senators and Members, advising them that following the swearing-in of certain Senators (those present whose six-year period of service has not continued from the previous Parliament) and all Members present, the Governor-General will declare the causes for calling Parliament together—that is, deliver the opening speech. The Deputy also directs Members of the House to choose some person as their Speaker and to present that person to the Governor-General. The Deputy concludes by indicating that he or she—or in certain instances a second Deputy—will attend the House of Representatives Chamber to administer the oath or affirmation of allegiance to Members.
- 2.11 Members then return in procession to the House of Representatives Chamber.

Historical note

In the UK Parliament, Members of the Commons are summoned to the bar of the House of Lords where the Lord Chancellor, on behalf of himself and four other lords commissioned by the sovereign to open Parliament, reads the commission and instructs Members to choose a Speaker. The fact that the Commons must attend the Lords reflects the exclusion of the sovereign from the Commons on the ancient principle that 'the Crown should have no current knowledge of the proceedings in the House of Commons'. That is to say there should be no interference in the House going about its business. The only violation of this principle occurred on 4 January 1642 when Charles I and an escort entered the House in an attempt to arrest five Members.³

The Australian Parliament has retained a convention that neither the sovereign nor the Governor-General enters the House of Representatives. However the Deputy of the Governor-General does routinely enter the House of Representatives Chamber to witness the swearing in of Members.

Swearing in of Members

- 2.12 When Members have returned from the Senate Chamber, the Governor-General's Deputy is ushered into the Chamber by the Serjeant-at-Arms and conducted to the Chair. The Deputy hands the Clerk an authority from the Governor-General to administer the oath or affirmation of allegiance which the Clerk reads to the House. The Clerk then lays on the Table the returns to writs for the general election showing the Members who have been duly elected.
- 2.13 Members are called by the Clerk in groups of approximately ten to twelve, each taking a position around the Table. Each makes their oath or affirmation and signs an appropriate form. Ministers are usually sworn in first, then the Opposition executive and other Members according to where they are seated. Members taking the oath may do so while holding a holy book.
- 2.14 When all Members present have been sworn in, the Deputy signs attestation forms showing the numbers of Members who have made oaths or affirmations. The Deputy then retires from the Chamber. The entire process of swearing in Members takes approximately 25 minutes.

Historical note

Religion and politics have played a large part in determining the obligation of members of the British Parliament to make an oath before taking their seats. The taking of an oath of allegiance has been traced from 1534. Other oaths were imposed at different times. Following the restoration of the Stuarts, members took three separate oaths: of supremacy, of allegiance and of abjuration. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that a single, simple oath of allegiance replaced the three. The option of making an affirmation dates from the same period, first for the benefit of specific religious groups like Quakers and subsequently to encompass anyone who had a conscientious objection to swearing an oath.⁴

In the House of Representatives, unlike the British House of Commons, Members are sworn in before proceeding to elect a Speaker. This flows from the Constitutional requirement (s.42) that, before taking their seats, Members must be sworn in.

4 Walker & Wood; Wilding & Laundry; Redlich, 51; Anson, 63-4; Quick & Garran, 488; Perceval & Hayter, 85-90

Election of Speaker

- 2.15 After the Deputy has retired from the Chamber following the swearing in of Members, the election of Speaker proceeds. During the election, the Clerk presides. The proposal of candidates comprises one or more motions that a particular Member ‘do take the Chair of this House as Speaker’, each motion being seconded. The Clerk asks each Member so proposed whether he or she accepts nomination. If there is only one accepted proposal the Clerk declares the nominated Member to have been elected as Speaker.
- 2.16 If there is more than one proposal debate may ensue with no Member speaking for more than five minutes and debate being relevant to the election. A Minister may move at any time ‘that the question be now put’. When debate has concluded the bells are rung for five minutes and a secret ballot—an exhaustive secret ballot if necessary—is held until one nominee has a majority of votes of the Members present.
- 2.17 The mover and seconder conduct the Member elected to the Chair. It is traditional for the Member to offer token resistance in symbolic recognition of the onerous, and once dangerous, nature of the position.⁵ From the Chair, the newly elected Speaker acknowledges the honour conferred by the House. The Mace, a symbol of a fully constituted House, is taken from under the Table where it has rested since the start of the day’s proceedings and placed in the brackets on the Table. The Speaker is congratulated by the leaders and several other Members.
- 2.18 A Minister, usually the Prime Minister, informs the House of the time, later in the day, at which the Speaker should be presented to the Governor-General. The sitting is then suspended.

Historical note

At least from the sixteenth century the Speaker was in practice a royal nominee. This reflected the Speaker’s role as the conduit between the Commons and the sovereign and the importance of his being acceptable to the latter. However, over centuries the roles of the Speaker as presiding officer of the Commons during its deliberations and the defender of its powers and privileges took on increasing significance. The loyalty of the office to the House rather than the Crown became more important. Nevertheless, in the British Parliament, the choice of the Speaker cannot take place until the Crown has given its leave or consent. On the other hand,

it has been the practice in the Commons at least since the early eighteenth century that proposals for Speakership are not made from the front benches.⁶

There is no convention in the House of Representatives that proposals should not be made from the front bench.

Presentation of Speaker to the Governor-General

2.19 The sitting usually resumes at 2.30 p.m. Members reassemble in the Chamber and the Speaker takes the Chair. When the Speaker is made aware that the Governor-General is prepared, the Speaker rises from the Chair and invites Members to accompany him or her. The Speaker, preceded by the Serjeant-at-Arms bearing the Mace for the first time since the Speaker's election, accompanied by House Clerks, party leaders and other Members, leaves the Chamber to meet the Governor-General in the Members' Hall.

2.20 The Mace is left outside the Chamber, covered in green cloth, while the procession is moving into the Members' Hall.

Historical note

Although it is a symbol of the Speaker's and the House's authority, the Mace also historically symbolised royal authority and thus is not taken into the presence of that actual authority be it the sovereign or the sovereign's representative.⁷

2.21 While presenting him or herself to the Governor-General, the Speaker receives an authority to administer the oath or affirmation of allegiance to Members not already sworn. After the Speaker and Members have been presented to the Governor-General they return in procession to the Chamber. The Speaker resumes the Chair and reports to the House that he or she has presented him or herself to the Governor-General as the choice of the House as its Speaker and that the Governor-General congratulated him or her. The Speaker announces that he or she has received the Governor-General's authority to administer the oath or affirmation. (The authority is exercised when Members not sworn in on opening day, including Members returned at by-elections, first take their seats.)

2.22 The House awaits the arrival of the Usher of the Black Rod.

6 Laundry (1964), 13-6

7 Browning, 12

Historical note

An aspect of British practice is that the sovereign approves the House's choice of Speaker. The Speaker elect appears before the bar of the House of Lords to submit him or herself 'with all humility' for the sovereign's 'gracious approbation' and the Lord Chancellor, as the sovereign's Commissioner, assures the Speaker elect of the sovereign's approval and confirmation. At this point the House of Commons has a Speaker who then proceeds to 'lay claim, by humble petition' to the sovereign to all the House of Commons' 'ancient and undoubted rights and privileges' which are then confirmed by the Commissioner. However, it has been noted that Speakers have served without the approval of the sovereign and that the claim for privilege 'might probably be omitted without affecting the recognition of parliamentary privilege' by courts of law.⁸

The powers, privileges and immunities of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia are enshrined in the *Constitution* and the *Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987*. Any symbolic gesture to reconfirm them would be superfluous. Similarly the *Constitution* requires that a Speaker be elected and no further authorisation or approval from the Crown is necessary.

Governor-General's opening speech

- 2.23 Usually at 3 p.m., after the Governor-General has received the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives, the Governor-General enters the Senate Chamber, takes the Vice-Regal Chair and directs the Usher of the Black Rod to let Members of the House of Representatives know that he desires their attendance in the Senate Chamber. Black Rod proceeds from the Senate Chamber across the Members' Hall to the House of Representatives Chamber.
- 2.24 When Black Rod arrives at the door of the House of Representatives Chamber, he or she knocks on the door three times with the rod. This House of Commons custom—apparently revived for ceremonial purposes in the House of Representatives in 1960 when the opening of a session of Parliament was first televised⁹—is said to symbolise 'that no stranger, low or high, dare enter their Chamber on the floor without permission,

⁸ Redlich, II, 57; Anson, I, 67-8, 76-7; May, 239; Laundry (1964), 17; Lords Debates, 8 May 1997, 1

⁹ Odgers, 43

humbly asked for and expressly granted'.¹⁰ The Serjeant-at-Arms informs the Speaker of Black Rod's presence and the Speaker directs that he or she be admitted.

Historical note

The fact that Black Rod does not knock on the door of the House of Representatives Chamber when he or she appears earlier to summon Members to hear the declaration of the opening by the Deputy probably reflects the principle that, at that stage, the House is not properly constituted.

- 2.25 Having been admitted, Black Rod tells the House that the Governor-General desires the attendance of Members in the Senate Chamber. A procession similar to that formed to meet the Governor-General for the presentation of the Speaker leaves the Chamber, crosses Members' Hall and approaches the Senate Chamber. The Mace is left covered outside the Senate Chamber. The Governor-General invites the Speaker to be seated at the Senate Table and Members take seats within the Senate Chamber.
- 2.26 The Governor-General delivers the opening speech, which briefly reviews the affairs of the nation and outlines the Government's legislative intentions, in essence declaring the causes for the calling of Parliament together. The speech normally occupies about 30 minutes. When the Governor-General concludes his speech a 19-gun artillery salute is fired outside Parliament House. The Governor-General's Official Secretary hands a copy of the speech each to the President of the Senate and the Speaker. The Governor-General retires from the Senate Chamber. The Speaker and Members return to the House of Representatives Chamber in procession, the Mace being taken up on the way.

Historical note

The declaration of the causes of summoning Parliament forms the legal basis for the ensuing deliberations of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. Both Houses debate the general substance of the speech and agree to a response, the address in reply. However neither House is limited in its deliberations by the declared causes.¹¹

¹⁰ MacDonagh, II, 52

¹¹ Redlich, 61; Anson, 77

Formal business: presentation of the privilege bill

- 2.27 When Members have again reassembled in the House of Representatives and the Speaker has taken the Chair, it is usual for the Prime Minister to inform the House about the ministry, ministerial arrangements and the government whips. Other party leaders inform the House of their leadership and whips.
- 2.28 A Minister, usually the Prime Minister, presents the ‘formal’ or ‘privilege’ bill. The presentation of this bill is an assertion of the House’s independence from the executive arm of government and of its rights with respect to the order and conduct of its business and proceedings. The bill is non-contentious: in recent Parliaments it has sought to replace gender specific language in the *Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946*.
- 2.29 On presentation, the privilege bill is read a first time and the second reading made an order of the day for the next sitting. During the first few decades of the Australian Parliament, the privilege bill passed into law on 12 occasions. Since 1945, however, debate has not been resumed and the order has usually been listed toward the end of government business for the duration of the session. The bill lapses at prorogation or dissolution.

Historical note

The practice of presenting a bill in the House of Commons without immediately addressing the sovereign’s causes for the calling of Parliament has been traced as far back as 1558 and became established by resolution of the House in 1604. Hatsell notes that the reading of the bill is ‘for form sake’ and that, unlike the House of Lords where it was written into the standing orders, there was no compulsion on the House of Commons to present such a bill.¹²

The position is reversed in the Australian Parliament: the transaction of formal business is required by the standing orders of the House of Representatives but there is no similar requirement in the Senate.

Report of the Governor-General's speech: Appointment of Address in Reply Committee

- 2.30 When the formal business has been transacted the Speaker reports that the House had attended the Governor-General in the Senate Chamber and that the Governor-General had made a speech to both Houses.
- 2.31 On motion usually moved by the Prime Minister, the House appoints a committee comprising the mover and two other Members—usually new or relatively new Members of the government party or parties—to prepare an Address in Reply to the Governor-General's speech. This is purely a formal procedure as the form of the address, an expression of loyalty to the Sovereign and thanks to the Governor-General for his or her speech, has been standardised for many years. The proposed address is presented to the House later in proceedings by one of the committee and debate ensues over a number of days on the question 'that the address be agreed to'. The address is subsequently presented by the Speaker to the Governor-General in a formal ceremony at Government House.
- 2.32 After the committee has been appointed the sitting may be suspended for a brief period.

Historical note

Redlich notes that in earlier times in the British Parliament the address in reply closely followed the points raised in the sovereign's speech but in time came to be a brief expression of the House's gratitude. However while the address itself became shorter the debate upon it grew lengthier, an outcome of the diminished opportunities for general political debate which resulted from the procedural reforms in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹³

With the adoption of a short resolution instead of a paragraph by paragraph answer to the sovereign's speech, the committee appointed in the House of Commons became redundant and its appointment was discontinued in 1888.¹⁴

From the early years, the address in reply provided an opportunity for wide ranging debate in the House of Representatives, new Members frequently making their first speeches during the debate.¹⁵

13 Redlich II, 60

14 May, 246, footnote 1

15 HR Practice (2001), 229

Election of Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker

- 2.33 About 5 p.m. the sitting is resumed and the House proceeds to elect a Deputy Speaker and a Second Deputy Speaker. This follows a similar course to the election of Speaker except in this case the Speaker presides. A ballot is conducted if there are two or more nominations. The nominee who attracts more votes than any other nominee is elected Deputy Speaker and the remaining nominee with more votes than any other is elected Second Deputy Speaker. If there is only one nomination then that Member is declared to have been elected Deputy Speaker and the position of Second Deputy Speaker remains unfilled.

Historical note

The positions of Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker were established in the House of Representatives in 1994 as part of a range of reforms which, among other things, abolished the committee of the whole House. The latter was presided over by the Chairman of Committees who was selected by ballot at some stage of the opening proceedings after the election of Speaker. Before the 1994 reforms, the term 'Deputy Speaker' referred to any officer, either the Chairman of Committees or a member of a panel of Members appointed by warrant of the Speaker to do so, who deputised for the Speaker in the Chair. The Chairman of Committees, who in addition to presiding over committee of the whole would relieve the Speaker in the Chair, came to be known in general terms as 'Chairman of Committees and Deputy Speaker'. Following the 1994 reforms, the term 'Deputy Speaker' may refer to either the Member specifically appointed to the position of that name or any Member on the Speaker's Panel when deputising in the Chair.¹⁶

In the British House of Commons the Chairman of Ways and Means presides in committee of the whole and also deputises for the Speaker. The incumbent is appointed by motion, not elected by ballot.¹⁷

16 HR Practice (1981), 230-1; HR Practice (2001), 196

17 May, 194-5

Other matters

The committee appointed to prepare an address in reply may present its proposed resolution—in its standard form—to the House in which case its adoption is moved and seconded. The House usually then adjourns but on occasions condolence motions may be moved or other business transacted.

Omissions, defects and anomalies in the existing procedures

Introduction

- 3.1 The findings of the committee's previous inquiries into opening procedures were outlined in chapter 1. In general, the committee concluded that the existing procedures are complex and can be confusing for both observers and participants. In this chapter, the existing procedures will be examined according to three general criteria, compatibility with:
- requirements of the Constitution;
 - requirements of the institution; and
 - requirements of the community.
- 3.2 The following discussion will refer to ceremony and ritual. These terms have specific meanings in the literature of anthropology or theology, however in this discussion 'ritual' implies a standard set of actions for a narrow, discrete purpose while ceremony implies a more encompassing and adaptable set of actions for broader, less coherent, purposes.

Requirements of the Constitution

- 3.3 The Constitution imposes minimal requirements on the opening of a new Parliament or of a new session of Parliament:

- section 5 requires that ‘After any general election the Parliament shall be summoned to meet not later than thirty days after the day appointed for the return of the writs’;
- section 6 requires that ‘There shall be a session of the Parliament once at least in every year’;
- section 35 (and similarly section 17 for the Senate) requires that the House ‘before proceeding to the despatch of any other business, choose a member to be the Speaker of the House’; and
- section 42 requires that ‘Every senator and member of the House of Representatives shall before taking his seat make and subscribe before the Governor-General, or some person authorised by him, an oath or affirmation of allegiance in the form set forth in the schedule’.

3.4 Each of these requirements is met by the existing procedures. There is a minor technicality in the manner in which section 6 is observed: on a literal reading it may appear that there should be at least one session, in the parliamentary sense of that term, each year. However the practice over the last quarter of a century has been to allow the first session to extend for the life of the Parliament. The intention of section 6 is met by ensuring that Parliament meets each year.

3.5 In his submission to the inquiry,¹ the Clerk of the Senate observed that the opening procedures were based on British custom, which itself no longer reflected the reality of constitutional arrangements there, and were thus ‘even more at odds with the Constitution of Australia than the British custom is with British practice’. He claimed there were four principal constitutional anomalies in the opening procedures:

- the appointment of justices of the High Court as Deputies of the Governor-General is contrary to the separation of legislative, executive and judicial functions entrenched in the Constitution and a violation of the principle that judicial officers exercise only judicial functions;
- the Governor-General’s opening speech, which sets out the government’s program, involves the Governor-General, who is otherwise supposed to be a politically neutral head of state, in speaking as if he or she were the actual head of government and in making contentious and partisan political statements;
- the Governor-General purports to direct the two Houses as to where they are to meet, which is not authorised by the Constitution; and

1 Evans submission

- the Governor-General attends in the Senate chamber and summons the House of Representatives to attend there, as if the Governor-General had some particular relationship with the Senate as distinct from the House of Representatives, analogous to the relationship between the monarch and the House of Lords, there being no such relationship under the Australian Constitution, which provides for two elected Houses as coequal participants in the legislative process.

Involvement of the judiciary

- 3.6 The active role of members of the judiciary in the opening of Parliament is inherited from British practice. The Lord Chancellor heads the Commissioners who act in the sovereign's stead in declaring the Parliament open. The Lord Chancellor—as a minister of the crown, a member of Parliament and a judicial officer—exercises executive, legislative and judicial powers. This blurred separation of powers would also have been present in the colonial administrations preceding federation and thus it would probably not have been considered untoward for a judicial officer to play a ceremonial role in the opening of the early Australian Parliaments. To this day a tension exists in the Australian political system between 'separation' and 'fusion' of all three powers.²
- 3.7 Moreover, the Chief Justice of the High Court ranks highly in the Commonwealth Table of Precedence. It is difficult to specify a consistently available individual, or pair of individuals when two Deputies are required, with sufficient prestige and distance from practical politics to conduct the ceremony. Certainly there is no legal difficulty in appointing justices of the High Court as Deputies of the Governor-General: Dr Greg Taylor alluded in his submission³ to the rule of *persona designata* which holds that 'although it is impermissible to supplement the judicial functions of a federal judge by adding non-judicial functions, a person who happens to be a federal judge may validly be appointed or assigned to perform non-judicial functions provided that the appointment or assignment is addressed to the individual person'.⁴
- 3.8 Opinion among those lodging submissions with the committee is divided on this issue—some claiming involvement of High Court justices is inappropriate or even a conflict of interest;⁵ others suggesting it is valuable

2 HR Practice (2001), 42; Lucy, 321-4

3 Taylor submission

4 Blackshield & Williams, 542

5 Evans, Morris and Sheil submissions

to recognise all branches of government, the opening of Parliament being one of the few occasions when all three have a role.⁶ Despite the cloudy theoretical aspects of this issue there would be symbolic value in asserting the separation of powers by discontinuing the active role of judicial officers in the opening of the legislature.

Neutrality of the Governor-General

- 3.9 The delivery of the opening speech by the Governor-General also reflects an inheritance from British practice. While it is true that for the Governor-General ‘to take part in political argument would both be overstepping the boundaries of office and lessening his own influence’,⁷ the formal announcement of the newly commissioned Government’s program by the Governor-General demonstrates an essential characteristic of the Australian political system:

Combining the ideas of a constitutional monarchy and of a parliamentary democracy, we have as head of state a Queen who is herself above party and outside politics. The actions of the government done in her name are done by Ministers or on the advice of Ministers who have the support of a majority in Parliament. We have people who express their will at elections and, as a result of those elections, they decided who shall be the Ministers who advise the Queen or who act in the name of the Queen.⁸

- 3.10 The fact that the Governor-General may announce a program fundamentally at odds with one he announced three years previously clearly demonstrates not only his impartiality but that he acts not according to self-will but only on the advice of the Government of the day. This view is supported Dr Greg Taylor and Dr Glenister Shiel in their submissions.

The Governor-General’s power to direct

- 3.11 The fine detail of some of the rituals during the opening of Parliament is at odds with the tenor of the Constitution. For example, as the Clerk of the Senate indicates in his submission, the Constitution does not empower the Governor-General to direct the two Houses as to where they are to meet as may appear in the Proclamation summoning Parliament. Section 5

6 Gourlay and Taylor submissions

7 Hasluck, 20

8 Hasluck, 9

provides that the Governor-General ‘may appoint such times for holding the sessions of the Parliament as he thinks fit’; section 125 leaves it to the Parliament itself to determine where it will meet (as it has done in the *Seat of Government Act 1908*).⁹

- 3.12 Similarly it is questionable whether the Governor-General’s Deputy should apparently direct the ‘Members of the House of Representatives to retire to the place where you are to sit and there proceed to the choice of some person to be your Speaker’.¹⁰ Section 35 of the Constitution requires that the House ‘shall, before proceeding to the despatch of any other business, choose a Member to be the Speaker’. Standing order 2 provides that as soon as Members have been sworn the House shall proceed to elect a Speaker. There is little need for the House to be directed to choose a Speaker.
- 3.13 Similar constitutional provisions apply in Canada. At the opening of the Canadian Parliament Members of the House of Commons are summoned to the Senate Chamber. However there they are informed by the presiding officer of the Senate, on behalf of the Governor General’s Deputy, that the causes for summoning the Parliament will not be declared ‘until the Speaker of the House shall have been chosen according to Law’. The hour at which the Governor General will declare the causes for calling Parliament is then given.

The place of the Senate

- 3.14 The Senate and the House of Representatives are essentially coequal.¹¹ There is no special affinity in the Australian political system between the ‘Upper’ House and the Crown, as there may have been historically in Britain. Neither is the Senate shackled in the exercise of its powers as is the House of Lords. While Members of the House may complain that existing arrangements imply latent inferiority for their Chamber, Senators might rejoin that their Chamber was being imposed upon. There is a strong case for seeking the middle ground.
- 3.15 The existing opening ceremony involves three separate processions of Members of the House of Representatives, two of those to the Senate Chamber. Senators, on the other hand, appear to be relatively uninvolved. A more symmetrical opening ceremony—in the use of the space in Parliament House and in the respective involvement of members of the

9 HR Practice (2001), 105

10 Votes and Proceedings, 10 November 1998, 5

11 eg Quick & Garran, 673

two Houses—would demonstrate more clearly the equality of the two Houses.

Requirements of the institution

To serve by example

- 3.16 In an age when all sectors of society and the economy are being subjected to rapid change the Parliament needs to avoid fostering an impression that it is inefficient, profligate and remote. Above all, in a democratic society Members should not be seen to be insulated from the travails of their fellow citizens. Adapting the opening procedures entails striking a delicate balance between tradition, efficiency and inclusion.

Importance of ritual

- 3.17 Ritual pervades parliamentary practice. For a parliamentarian, the quality that matters most is whether a procedure delivers the desired outcome. However an external observer, not appreciating the usefulness of a time-honoured procedure, may scoff at its obvious archaism. But parliamentary procedures can be like successful biological species and remain unchanged for countless generations.
- 3.18 The passage of a bill through Parliament is a complicated process. It is essential that those participating in the process know exactly the stage that has been reached. For that reason the boundaries between stages are clearly marked so there is no cause for doubt. Sometimes the marker is a simple declaration from the Chair; at the more important boundaries, a ritual, like the reading of the bill, takes place. Just as clear markers are needed to separate one stage in the passage of a bill from the next, so the institution of Parliament needs memorable events to mark the various stages of transition.
- 3.19 There are two general aspects to institutional requirements for symbolic ritual, the collective and the individual, which can be summarised in the following quotes:

An organization maintains its identity and its continuity through its symbolic representations. Since over time the people making up

an organization, including its leaders, change, it is only through symbols that we think of the organization as being the same.¹²

One of the most common uses of ritual within an organization is to socialize new members to the values and expectations that make up its culture.¹³

- 3.20 Identifying institutional requirements is a more subjective process than identifying constitutional requirements. Thus the committee sought the views of Senators, Members and others intimately acquainted with the institution of Parliament.

The opinions of Senators and Members

- 3.21 In its 1995 report on opening procedures the committee proposed:
- the elimination of the procession of Members from the Chamber to hear the Deputy of the Governor-General open the Parliament (two Deputies would simultaneously make the declaration in each House);
 - retention of the current procedures for the swearing-in of Members;
 - the Chair to be taken by a senior Member for the election of Speaker;
 - election of the Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker to take place immediately following the election of Speaker;
 - elimination of a separate ceremony and procession for the presentation of the Speaker to the Governor-General; and
 - consultation be held with the Senate and the Governor-General with a view to the Governor-General's opening speech being delivered in the Great Hall of the Parliament.
- 3.22 The committee later modified its position on the elimination of the presentation of the Speaker to the Governor-General, believing it could be combined with the procession to hear the Governor-General's speech.
- 3.23 For this inquiry the committee sent questionnaires to all Senators and Members. The former were invited to comment on the proposals to eliminate the first procession of Members to the Senate and to conduct the delivery of the Governor-General's speech in the Great Hall. Members were invited to indicate whether they supported each of the earlier recommendations and whether they had any other comments. About 28%

12 Kertzer, 18

13 Kertzer, 29

of Senators responded and 40% of Members. The results are summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1—Senators

	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Against	Strongly against
Discard first procession	1	2	0	2	16
G-G's speech in Great Hall	0	1	0	3	17

3.24 The response from Senators is overwhelmingly negative. In part, this may be attributed to the way in which the survey was conducted. It was not considered practical to include with each questionnaire a copy of the report containing the justification for the proposals. In the absence of supporting argument, many respondents may have opted for safety. The apparent rejection is not grounds for abandoning proposals for change, more a demonstration of the need to ensure that the new proposals are adequately sold and that proper consultation between the two Houses takes place.

3.25 The committee has also responded to the conservative attitude of Senators by taking a wider perspective than it did in 1995. It has put forward proposals which encompass a stronger role for Senators in ceremonial aspects of the opening.

Table 2—Members

	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Against	Strongly against
Discard first procession	26	12	6	5	11
Retain same swearing-in	39	14	6	0	1
Senior Member presides	17	8	15	10	10
Contiguous elections	26	21	12	1	0
Discard Speaker's intro to G-G	17	2	13	15	13
G-G's speech in Great Hall	27	5	5	9	14

- 3.26 The response from Members indicates three levels of acceptance toward the six proposals—

Definite support

- retain the same swearing in procedures (53 for — 1 against)
- elect the Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker immediately after electing the Speaker (47 for — 1 against)

Qualified support

- discard the procession to the Senate to hear a Deputy declare Parliament open (38 for — 16 against)
- the Governor-General's speech be delivered in the Great Hall rather than the Senate (32 for — 23 against)
- a senior Member preside over the election of Speaker rather than the Clerk (25 for — 20 against)

Opposition

- discard the introduction of the Speaker and Members to the Governor-General (19 for — 28 against)

- 3.27 The committee had detected significant opposition to the last listed proposal within a year of presenting its 1995 report. It qualified its recommendation by proposing in its 1996 review of reports which had not received a response that the introduction to the Governor-General take place while the Speaker and Members were proceeding to the Great Hall to hear the Governor-General's speech.¹⁴

The opinions of former participants

- 3.28 Former Governors-General, Senators and Members were invited to comment generally on the existing opening procedures and the committee's earlier proposals for change. Submissions were received from two former Governors-General, a former Member and a former Senator. Some consistent threads can be drawn from their views as well as some points of disagreement.
- 3.29 Sir Ninian Stephen, Dr Sheil, and Mr Lamb all drew attention to the requirements of the Constitution and suggested that certain features of the

14 *Review of reports*, 2

ceremony should be brought into line with those requirements. These included:

- changing terminology used in some rituals to reflect the reality of constitutional powers, for example by using the words ‘invite’ or ‘request’ rather than ‘direct’ or ‘require’ where appropriate;¹⁵
- avoiding the appointment of High Court Judges as Deputies of the Governor-General. Dr Shiel suggested the senior State Governor as a suitable person to be appointed a Deputy of the Governor-General;¹⁶
- recognising the equality of the Houses by holding those parts of the ceremony in which the two Houses meet together in a neutral location.¹⁷

3.30 The Hon Bill Hayden, a former Governor-General and Member of the House of Representatives, argued strongly for the importance of ceremony and ritual in the opening of Parliament. He suggested that:

If the procedures related to the Opening of a new Parliament were founded on efficiency and simplicity of understanding alone, it could be reduced to a series of simple steps which would take, at most, a few hours. But there would be neither inspiration nor any sense of awe in, and certainly no reason for respecting, such a diluted ceremony.

...I am rather grateful for much of the heritage from which we benefit in the community’s public political life as a result of the long evolution, often marked by struggle, but achieved mostly through civilised measures, within British political processes. I find no reason not to honour that history as a way of reminding us that what we may otherwise take for granted within our political processes is not something that came easily or made some sudden casual appearance at some point somewhere in the past.¹⁸

3.31 At a more specific level Mr Lamb and the present Clerk of the House, Mr Ian Harris, referred to the emotional importance to Members, especially new Members, of the presentation of Members to the Governor-General and the swearing in ceremony.

15 Lamb submission

16 Sheil submission

17 Harris, Lamb and Stephen submissions

18 Hayden submission

- 3.32 The ‘inspiration and a sense of awe’ referred to by Mr Hayden can be articulated into a set of emotional objectives for the ceremonial opening of a new Parliament. These being to give Members a sense of:
- a new beginning;
 - belonging to a group with a unified purpose;
 - commitment to the people they represent;
 - the significance of the role they have committed themselves to; and
 - connection with the institution of Parliament, its long history and the struggle to achieve democracy.

Conclusions

- 3.33 In the light of the committee’s earlier inquiries and the responses received from Senators, Members, as well as former Governors-General and members of Parliament, the following aspects of the existing opening procedures also bear closer examination:
- election of presiding officers;
 - formal business; and
 - appointment of an ‘address in reply committee’.

Election of presiding officers

- 3.34 In its earlier reports the committee recommended changes to the election of the presiding officers: first, that a Member and not the Clerk should preside at the election of Speaker; and second, that the election for the Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker should be held immediately after the election of Speaker.
- 3.35 There is strong support for the second proposal, a benefit of which would be to allow the Deputy Speaker and the Second Deputy Speaker to be introduced to the Governor-General in those capacities.
- 3.36 Members seem equivocal on the question of who should preside at the election of Speaker. Nevertheless for the same reasons it produced in its earlier reports the committee maintains the view that the Clerk is not well placed to deal with some of the more contentious problems which could conceivably arise in the course of electing a Speaker. It would be appropriate to recognise the service of one of the longest serving Members in this way and the Clerk would be freed to concentrate on the conduct of any ballots required and other administrative matters.

Formal business

- 3.37 There is a fundamental flaw in the manner in which the House has traditionally asserted its ‘right of deliberating without reference to the immediate cause of summons’.¹⁹ The ‘privilege bill’ is presented by a Minister and remains listed on the Notice Paper as an item of Government Business. It is therefore indistinguishable from other business ostensibly covered by the program announced in the opening speech—in the United Kingdom the Queen’s speech usually describes specific legislative proposals making it easier to identify a bill not so described as not being part of the government’s program. It would be preferable to undertake some business which is more clearly an expression of the House’s rather than the Government’s will.
- 3.38 The committee also believes that there would be some virtue in developing a consistent form for the formal business which would acquire its own sense of ritual with usage.

Address in Reply committee

- 3.39 Under the existing procedures a committee is formed to prepare an address in reply. The address takes a standard form which except in special circumstances—like the speech being given by the sovereign in person or there being a change in Governor-General between delivery of the speech and adoption of the address—has varied minimally in one hundred years. The ‘address in reply committee’ is therefore redundant. The United Kingdom House of Commons abandoned this procedure in 1888. The House of Representatives abandoned a similar redundant mechanism when it eliminated the ‘committee of reasons’ in 1998. It should be possible to retain in a revised mechanism the special recognition conferred on the two new Members traditionally appointed to the ‘address in reply committee’.
- 3.40 The elimination of the Prime Minister’s overt role in the address in reply proceedings would help make clear that it was a response from the House. This would overcome the present somewhat anomalous situation of the Government appearing to play a leading role in the response to a declaration of its own intentions.

Requirements of the community

Importance of ceremony

- 3.41 As the then Governor-General of New Zealand, Sir Michael Hardie Boys said at the opening of the Youth Parliament in Wellington on 26 May 1997:

I began by talking about the ceremony that goes with the opening of Parliament. Ceremony is sometimes, I suspect, dismissed as being of little consequence. Yet I suggest this is a mistaken view, for ceremony is a useful way of demonstrating, in visual metaphors, the relationships that exist within the constitution. A further example here: from time to time, as Commander-in-Chief, I accept Royal Salutes from military Guards of Honour. The colours of the unit giving the Salute are always dipped while it is taking place. There's a meaning to that gesture; one that in days gone by, must have been of great assurance to democrats. Because dipping the flag is a military acknowledgment of the legitimacy of state authority, of the rule of law. Here, military might is not right.²⁰

- 3.42 As a public ceremony, the opening of Parliament as now practised runs the risk of misrepresenting the ideal power relationships within the Australian political system. If the ceremony seems purely for the benefit of a privileged elite and is understood only by the players within then it can only contribute to a sense of alienation from the institutions of government, lending weight to the views of the cynics.
- 3.43 The ceremony should be a clear reflection, symbolically, of the basis for the authority vested in the Parliament, of the democratic basis of our parliamentary system of government.
- 3.44 Ceremonies need to be inspiring and dignified but also honest and meaningful, not only to those physically taking part, but for those contributing to the institution at a broader level.

People first

- 3.45 The Commonwealth of Australia came into being because of a collective expression of the will of the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia.²¹

20 available online at http://www.gov-gen.govt.nz/speeches/hardie_boys/1997-05-26.html [accessed 13 July 2001]

21 *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900*, preamble and section 3

- 3.46 Each new House of Representatives is the result of views of the people of Australia about who should form the Government. Each individual Member is chosen directly by the people in his or her constituency. Those people have expectations about how their representatives should work—‘... ultimately the people the Parliament serves are paramount.’²²
- 3.47 The Senate, whilst not completely renewed with each election like the House, also owes its existence to the people of the community with all Senators directly elected.
- 3.48 The current form of the opening ceremony for Parliament recognises only in an implicit way, through the tabling of the election writs, the role of the people in its formation and not at all the continuing obligation of Members to serve the people’s interests.
- 3.49 The committee received several submissions from people outside the Parliament which urged that the opening ceremony should be made more relevant to the community, more Australian and more modern—several putting forward suggestions for achieving this.²³ Dr Taylor cautions that all parts of Australian society should be represented, not just a specific group.²⁴ These sentiments are echoed in the words of the then Governor-General, Sir William Deane, at the commemorative centenary sitting of the Parliament in Melbourne on 9 May 2001:
- All of us who are privileged to hold public office, be it elected or appointed, owe a duty of trust to the present and future generations of Australians to put the pursuit of the common good above personal gain or ambition. As we celebrate the centenary of the first meeting of our national parliament, let us be conscious of that duty and of the basic fact of our democracy; namely, that the ultimate source of all government power and authority in this land is the people—all the people—of our Commonwealth.²⁵
- 3.50 The committee believes it is possible to devise a ceremonial procedure which will represent the voice of all Australians and remind Members and Senators of the pre-eminent place of the people in our democratic system.
- 3.51 As well, the obligations Members owe to the people should be recognised in the formal commitment they make on becoming a Member (oath or affirmation of allegiance) and the address in reply to the Governor-General’s speech.

22 Lamb submission

23 eg Gourlay, Isnard, Lamb, MacKinnon, unknown author submissions

24 Taylor submission

25 House of Representatives Debates, 9 May 2001, 26648

- 3.52 There is a lack of consistency in the forms of oaths, affirmations, declarations and pledges used in official and civic ceremonies within the Commonwealth.²⁶ For example, the ministerial oath of office and the citizenship pledge have been reviewed and modernised in recent years. Some thought should be given to the form of the oath and affirmation used by members of Parliament, particularly to include an acknowledgment of responsibility to the people of Australia.
- 3.53 The committee does not put forward any particular form of words but asks that steps be taken to review the oath and affirmation in the context of considering its proposals for the opening of Parliament. Such a change would require an amendment of the Constitution and might take some time to achieve. Any review might initially consider the versions passed by both Houses (but not approved at referendum) in the Constitution Alteration (Establishment of Republic) Bill 1999 resulting from the 1998 Constitutional Convention.
- 3.54 The form of the address in reply has varied a little over the years but is still in essentially the same form as it was in 1901. As with the oath and affirmation, the committee believes that it is timely to consider modernising the form of words used in the address and including an expression of commitment to Australia and its people.
- 3.55 The committee notes that at least two other Australian Parliaments have taken steps to recognise their obligations to the communities they serve. The ACT Legislative Assembly has a daily reminder in the form of the opening proceeding for each sitting when the Speaker says ‘Members, at the beginning of this sitting of the Assembly, I would ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.’²⁷ The Tasmanian House of Assembly has gone a step further by providing in its standing orders for Members, at the start of a new Parliament, to subscribe to a code of conduct which commences with a recognition of their obligations to the people of Tasmania.²⁸

First people

- 3.56 While it is important to recognise the role of the Australian people in general in the formation and purpose of the Parliament, special recognition of indigenous culture and identity is a key to acknowledging

26 For a detailed survey *see* Campbell

27 Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, Standing Order No. 30

28 Tasmanian House of Assembly, Standing Orders Nos. 2 and 2A

that the Parliament exists to serve these people too. As Australia works to achieve reconciliation the Parliament can take a lead in reinforcing a message of inclusiveness and unity.

- 3.57 The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has recommended that ‘All Parliaments, governments and organisations observe protocols and negotiate with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders or representative bodies to include appropriate Indigenous ceremony into official events’.²⁹ Having agreed to a resolution expressing commitment to reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians,³⁰ the Parliament has an opportunity, in reviewing its opening procedures, to take a practical step to affirm and symbolise this commitment.
- 3.58 Canberra, as the seat of Government, and Parliament House within it, exist on land originally peopled by the Ngunnawal. These people are best placed to advise on an appropriate ceremony, possibly of welcome or cleansing, which could be incorporated in the procedures for the opening of Parliament.

Televising

- 3.59 The major focus of two of the committee’s recent reports³¹ has been to look at ways in which the procedures of the House can assist, or at least not hinder, the community’s understanding of how the House works and what its role in society is. A key to reducing the scepticism of the community about the Parliament and its members is to help people to better understand what the House does and to become aware of the range of its work beyond the theatre of question time.
- 3.60 The ceremonial opening of a new Parliament is an obvious area of procedure where the Parliament’s obligations to the people of Australia can be recognised and stated.
- 3.61 The opening of Parliament ceremony is primarily for the initiation of members into their service in a new Parliament. Ideally, however, as noted earlier, involvement should extend to the broader community that is responsible for its existence.
- 3.62 Having introduced a greater recognition of the importance of the Australian people into the ceremony, the committee believes that the opportunity should also be taken to show that to the community. If the

29 Ridgeway submission

30 Votes and Proceedings 26 August 1999, 804-7; Senate Journals 26 August 1999, 1580-81

31 *It’s your House* and *Promoting community involvement*

proceedings were televised people would have an opportunity to learn more about their Parliament and to observe the seriousness with which members of Parliament take their duties. At least one submission to the committee remarked on the need to televise the opening saying ‘the greater the involvement of Australians in the ceremony the better for democracy it will be’.³² The opening of Parliament could be shown live or as an edited package to be shown at a time when a wider audience might be drawn.

32 Gourlay submission

Proposals

Introduction

- 4.1 As was noted in chapter 1, the Government responded to the committee's 1995 proposals in 1997 by stating that it did not intend to change the traditional procedures. The committee believes that in this, the year of the centenary of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, it is timely to revisit the matter of the Parliament's opening procedures. However there is little point in repetition. The committee proposes to advocate a new way of looking at the purpose of the opening procedures.

A new focus

- 4.2 The existing procedures and their historical background were described in chapter 2. Omissions, defects and anomalies were examined in chapter 3. Against this background the committee believes that the opening ceremony should be seen from a new perspective, one which accords more with the spirit of Australia's system of government in the twenty-first century.
- 4.3 The ceremony which was performed with little change through the twentieth century reflects British history. But too much of that history is early history. In particular, the ceremony fails to reflect changed power relationships over the centuries. As was outlined in chapter 1, the evolution of Parliament has proceeded on the successive transfer of power from an absolute monarch to representatives of the people. This is not evident in the opening procedures which still emphasise a flow of power

downwards and do not sufficiently recognise the pre-eminent role of the Australian people in determining their government.

- 4.4 The opening of Parliament is preceded by an election. The individual decision of each citizen who casts a vote determines who is sworn in as a new Senator or Member. The collective decision of the voters, expressed by which political party has the numbers on the floor of the House of Representatives, determines the shape of the legislative program which the Governor-General announces to the members of the new Parliament, and to the citizens who elected them.
- 4.5 The ceremony at the opening of a new Parliament should emphasise that:
- the people have spoken;
 - Parliament is an ancient but adaptable institution;
 - the Australian system of government is a unique mixture of inherited and home-grown elements; and
 - the Senate and the House of Representatives are equal partners in the Parliament of Australia.

How to proceed

- 4.6 It may not be feasible to implement a complete overhaul of the opening procedures in a single instance. To do so might mar the sense of continuity which is a vital aspect of parliamentary ceremonial. Moreover, there are measures involved which are beyond the House's ability to put in place acting on its own. Collaboration between all who are involved will be necessary.
- 4.7 The committee therefore wishes to submit an option for the future which may be considered by all who need to be involved and which could perhaps be adopted in stages. There are a number of more detailed points which the committee also wishes to address. Some are matters which the House can determine in its own right. Others may need to be addressed in a broader context.

An option for the future

- 4.8 The committee concedes that sudden radical change is not consistent with the manner in which the Australian Parliament has adapted, throughout

its one hundred years of existence, to its changing environment. In particular the House of Representatives, in most of its innovations, has preferred to proceed with caution. The committee also acknowledges that ritual and ceremony should not be tampered with lightly. Nevertheless the following outline of a revised opening ceremony is intended to suggest a way of overcoming perceived problems with the existing procedures; a combination of tradition and unique Australian qualities; a positive evolution.

- 4.9 It includes all elements of the existing opening ceremony, some of which should be retained without change, and is meant as a signpost for further consideration. More detailed comments follow the outline.

Outline of proposed opening ceremony

Summons by the Governor-General

The Governor-General issues a proclamation setting a day and hour for Parliament to assemble.

Forecourt ceremony

Senators and Members assemble at the forecourt of Parliament House where a brief ceremony—comprising an indigenous welcoming and a message from the Australian people—is conducted.

Procession of Senators and Members to their respective Chambers

Senators and Members proceed through the main entrance, foyer, Great Hall and Members' Hall to their Chambers and take seats.

Simultaneous declaration of opening of Parliament by Governor-General and a deputy

In each Chamber:

- the Clerk reads the Governor-General's proclamation summoning Parliament

In the Senate:

- the Governor-General declares the Parliament open

In the House of Representatives:

- the Clerk reads the Governor-General's instrument appointing a deputy
- the Governor-General's Deputy declares the Parliament open

Swearing of Senators and Members

In the Senate:

- if necessary, new Senators are sworn in before the Governor-General
- the Governor-General retires

In the House of Representatives:

- new Members are sworn in before the Deputy
- the Deputy informs Members that when their presiding officers have been elected the Governor-General will receive them in the Great Hall
- the Deputy retires

Elections of Presiding Officers

Senators (if necessary) and Members elect presiding officers including, in the case of the House of Representatives, the Deputy Speaker and the Second Deputy Speaker. A senior Member presides at the election of Speaker.

Presentation to Governor-General

The Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker, and other Members proceed to the Members' Hall where they meet the Governor-General. Senators may also participate. Senators and Members then proceed into the Great Hall.

Governor-General's speech

The Governor-General delivers the opening speech in the Great Hall.

Formal business

The Speaker and Members return to the Chamber. A resolution of commitment to the Australian people is adopted. The ministry, party leaders and whips are reported to the House.

Address in Reply

The Speaker reports the Governor-General's speech to the House.

At the first or a later sitting a new Member moves the address in reply to the Governor-General's speech in the form of a resolution and makes his or her first speech. Another new Member seconds the motion and also makes a first speech. Debate ensues over a number days.

The proposal in detail

Summons by the Governor-General

- 4.10 The proclamation meets a constitutional requirement and the form of this stage should not be changed. Some thought might be given to whether it is necessary to specify the place where Parliament should assemble.

Forecourt ceremony

- 4.11 There would be two elements to this stage. The first is a brief welcoming ceremony by representatives of the traditional owners of the land. The form of the ceremony would be determined in consultation with local indigenous representatives.
- 4.12 The second element is an address by a representative of the people of Australia. It is proposed that the incumbent Australian of the Year would make a brief formal statement to the assembly along the following lines:

Senators and Members of the House of Representatives, you have been chosen by the people of Australia to undertake duties in the Parliament of Australia and to serve the interests of the people in those duties. On behalf of all Australians I commend you to carry out your duties to the best of your ability and wish you well in your endeavours.

- 4.13 The form of the statement would remain the same for each Parliament, with time developing an aura of formality and ritual.
- 4.14 The selection of the Australian of the Year as an appropriate person to speak on behalf of all Australians rests on a number of factors, most significantly:
- it is a non-political appointment of a person who has contributed significantly to Australian society; and
 - while not representing any particular group, over time the Australian of the Year is drawn from a diverse range of backgrounds and could therefore be seen to be representative of all elements of Australian society.

Procession of Senators and Members to their respective Chambers

- 4.15 This procession would be similar to processions featuring in the current ceremony with the Serjeant, Black Rod, Clerks and party leaders taking the lead and others following informally. Members and Senators would mix together until they reached the Members' Hall, reflecting the fact that Parliament is not yet properly constituted.

Simultaneous declaration of opening of Parliament by Governor-General and a Deputy

- 4.16 The Governor-General would appear in person in the Senate. The Deputy appearing in the House of Representatives should be the senior State Governor who would serve as Administrator if the Governor-General were absent from Australia at the time.

Swearing of Senators and Members

- 4.17 The existing procedure would be followed in the House of Representatives.
- 4.18 The committee has proposed that some thought should be given to the form of the oath and affirmation used by members of Parliament, and recommends that it include an acknowledgment of responsibility to the people of Australia. Such a change would require an amendment of the Constitution and might take longer to achieve than other elements of the committee's proposal.
- 4.19 It should be noted that another element of the proposed opening procedures, a new means of transacting formal business (described

below), embodies a collective expression of the House's commitment to the Australian people, not the individual commitment which would be contained in a modernised oath or affirmation. If the oath should be updated in this manner it would be wise to consider the two elements to ensure that they are complementary.

Elections of Presiding Officers

- 4.20 The existing procedure for the election of a Speaker would be followed in the House of Representatives with the exception that a senior Member—not being a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, party leader or party whip—would preside. Appointment of the presiding Member would be determined by cumulative length of service in the House. The most eligible Member would not preside if he or she were a candidate and the next most eligible Member would be chosen. In any case an eligible Member would have the right to decline to preside and again the next most eligible Member would be chosen. If two or more eligible Members have equal seniority the presiding Member would be chosen by lot.
- 4.21 For the duration of the election the presiding Member would have all the powers of the Speaker except that he or she should be entitled to vote in the election of Speaker but not have a casting vote and in all other cases should have only a deliberative vote.
- 4.22 The election of the Speaker would be immediately followed by the election of the Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker, the Speaker presiding.

Presentation to Governor-General

- 4.23 The three newly elected presiding officers of the House would introduce themselves and accompanying Members to the Governor-General in the Members' Hall en route to the Great Hall to hear the Governor-General's speech. Senators may also wish to participate.

Governor-General's speech

- 4.24 The Governor-General would deliver the speech in the Great Hall.

Formal business

- 4.25 The traditional assertion of the House's right to order its own business would be retained by the adoption of a resolution of commitment to the Australian people. A motion to this effect would be moved by the Prime

Minister and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. The question would be put immediately without debate.

4.26 A possible form for the resolution could be:

That this House:

- (1) recognises that the electors of Australia have determined its membership;
- (2) acknowledges the allegiance it owes to all Australian people;
- (3) affirms its commitment to work for the benefit of the nation and all Australians; and
- (4) calls on all Members to dedicate themselves to well and truly serve the people of Australia.

4.27 The resolution could be subject to broad consultation across the community to seek agreement to the proposed form or submission of alternative versions. This would help to ensure wide agreement and might highlight for many people the *raison d'être* of the Parliament and their connection with it.

4.28 A separate 'privilege' bill would not be introduced but other announcements (ministry, party leaderships, whips) normally made at this stage would be retained.

Address in Reply

4.29 As with the oath and affirmation, the committee urges consideration of the form of the address by those involved in its development to modernise it and recognise the place of the people in our democratic system.

4.30 The committee believes that the mechanism by which the address is initiated should be simplified. The appointment of a committee to prepare the address is redundant. However, the recognition of new Members to initiate the response to the Governor-General's speech should be retained.

4.31 A more modern formulation of the House's response to the speech would be moved by a new Member in the form of a resolution in a similar way to the procedure used in the United Kingdom House of Commons. The motion would be seconded by another new Member—both the mover and the seconder delivering their first speeches in the House, either on the opening day or at a later sitting. Both the Members would be selected by the Government as at present but a formal address in reply committee would not be appointed.

What the proposed opening ceremony achieves

- 4.32 The proposed ceremony preserves many of the traditional elements of the opening of Parliament and maintains links with the Westminster heritage. (for example: the swearing in ceremony; the introduction of the Speaker to the Governor-General; the Governor-General presenting the Government's legislative agenda for the Parliament; the conducting of formal business before the Governor-General's speech is reported; the address in reply to the speech).
- 4.33 In addition the proposed forecourt ceremonies add an element which is missing from current procedures—a recognition of the Australian people, indigenous and non-indigenous, and their importance for the parliamentary institution. This stage provides members of Parliament with an overt expression of their responsibility to serve the interests of all Australians. This commitment is emphasised by other proposals to change the form of the oath and the address in reply and in the proposed formal business resolution.
- 4.34 The involvement of Members and Senators together in the forecourt ceremonies, followed by their procession together towards their respective Chambers and the later presentation of the Governor-General's speech in the Great Hall emphasise the coequal status of the two Houses. This arrangement also gives Senators a greater involvement in the ritual and ceremonial parts of the proceedings—they will participate in processions, to their Chamber and to the Great Hall, and will be included in the forecourt ceremonies.

Recommendations

- 5.1 The committee recommends that the standing orders be amended as necessary, all relevant parties be consulted as appropriate and other action be taken to implement the following specific recommendations.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Parliament adopt procedures for the opening of Parliament as follows:

Summons by the Governor-General

The Governor-General issues a proclamation setting a day and hour for Parliament to assemble.

Forecourt ceremony

Senators and Members assemble at the forecourt of Parliament House where a brief ceremony—comprising an indigenous welcoming and a message from the Australian people—is conducted.

Procession of Senators and Members to their respective Chambers

Senators and Members proceed through the main entrance, foyer, Great Hall and Members' Hall to their Chambers and take seats.

Simultaneous declaration of opening of Parliament by Governor-General and a deputy

In each Chamber:

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In the Senate:

- the Governor-General declares the Parliament open

In the House of Representatives:

- the Clerk reads the Governor-General's instrument appointing a deputy
- the Governor-General's Deputy declares the Parliament open

Swearing of Senators and Members

In the Senate:

- if necessary, new Senators are sworn in before the Governor-General
- the Governor-General retires

In the House of Representatives:

- new Members are sworn in before the Deputy
- the Deputy informs Members that when their presiding officers have been elected the Governor-General will receive them in the Great Hall
- the Deputy retires

Elections of Presiding Officers

Senators (if necessary) and Members elect presiding officers including, in the case of the House of Representatives, the Deputy Speaker and the Second Deputy Speaker. A senior Member presides at the election of Speaker.

Presentation to Governor-General

The Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker, and other Members proceed to the Members' Hall where they meet

the Governor-General. Senators may also participate. Senators and Members then proceed into the Great Hall.

Governor-General's speech

The Governor-General delivers the opening speech in the Great Hall.

Formal business

The Speaker and Members return to the Chamber. A resolution of commitment to the Australian people is adopted. The ministry, party leaders and whips are reported to the House.

Address in Reply

The Speaker reports the Governor-General's speech to the House.

At the first or a later sitting a new Member moves the address in reply to the Governor-General's speech in the form of a resolution and makes his or her first speech. Another new Member seconds the motion and also makes a first speech. Debate ensues over a number days.

- 5.2 The following recommendations add additional detail to the outline form in recommendation 1 and are described more fully in the relevant paragraphs in chapter 4.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that representatives of the ACT indigenous community be consulted to advise on a suitable indigenous ritual to be included in the opening procedures.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the incumbent Australian of the Year be invited to take part in the opening proceedings on each occasion to present a formalised message on behalf of the Australian people.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the Deputy appointed by the Governor-General to declare open the Parliament in the House of Representatives and witness the swearing in of Members be the State Governor who, at that time, would be appointed as Administrator of the Commonwealth in the event of the absence of the Governor-General.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the form of the oath and affirmation of allegiance taken by Members and Senators be reviewed with a view to including recognition of the people of Australia and that a proposed new form be put to the people in a referendum.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the Member presiding at the election of Speaker be the person, not being a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, party leader or party whip, or a candidate for the Speakership, who has the longest cumulative service in the House. In the case of equal service the presiding Member shall be chosen by lot. The presiding Member during the election of Speaker shall have all the powers vested in the Speaker during debate except that he or she:

(a) shall be entitled to vote in the election of Speaker but shall not have a casting vote in the event of there being an equal number of votes cast for two candidates; and

(b) in all other cases shall have only a deliberative vote and shall vote by stating to the House whether he or she is voting with the 'Ayes' or the 'Noes'.

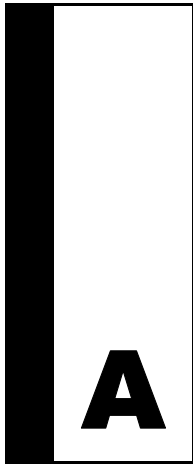
Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that the form of the address in reply be reviewed with a view to modernising it and including a recognition of the Australian people.

Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that efforts be made to enable the opening of Parliament to be shown on national television.

Gary Nairn MP
Chair
8 August 2001



Appendix A

Conduct of the inquiry and evidence

The committee resolved at its meeting on 28 February 2001 to conduct an inquiry into the procedures for the opening of Parliament. The terms of reference appear at the front of this report.

The committee surveyed all Members and Senators and sought submissions from a range of potentially interested parties. The inquiry was notified in the *Australian* (7 March 2001), on the committee's Internet page and through a media release issued on 14 March 2001.

Evidence received by the committee

Sixty Members (40%) and 21 Senators (28%) responded to the survey.

Submissions were received from the following people:

Mr Martin Bonsey, Official Secretary to the Governor-General

Mr Harry Evans, Clerk of the Senate

Dr Chris Gourlay

Mr Ian Harris, Clerk of the House

Hon Bill Hayden AC

Ms Adrienne Isnard

Mr Tony Lamb, Vice-President, Association of Former Members of the Parliament of Australia

Mrs Ruth MacKinnon

Mr Don Morris, Private Secretary to the President of the Senate

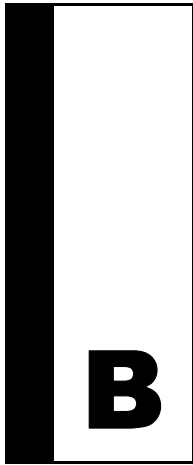
Senator Aden Ridgeway

Dr Glenister Sheil, Queenslanders for a Constitutional Monarchy (2 submissions)

Rt Hon Sir Ninian Stephen KG AK GCMG GCVO KBE

Dr Greg Taylor, Law School, Adelaide University

An unknown author



Appendix B

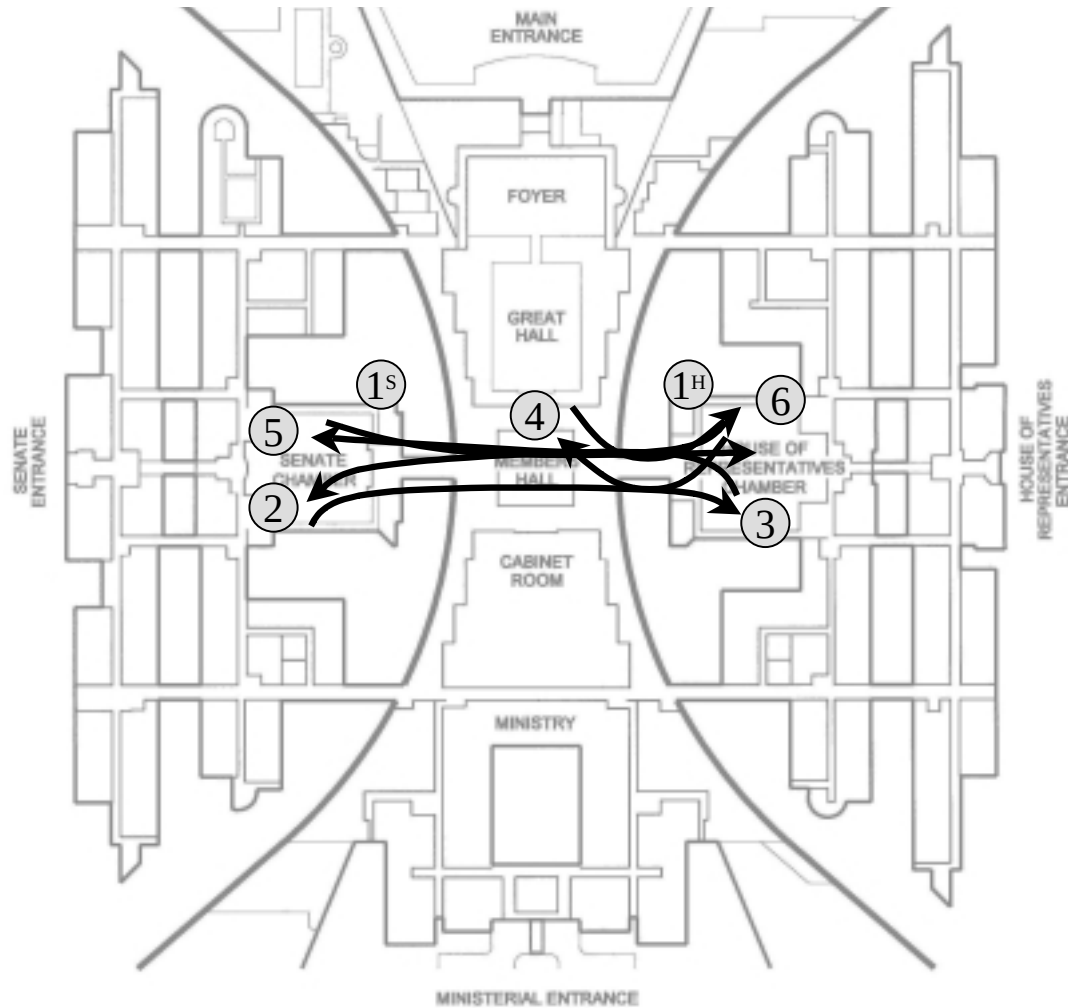
Diagrams of current and proposed ceremonies

The following pages depict diagrammatically the current and proposed ceremonies for the opening of Parliament.

The first diagram shows the current ceremony, including the three processions made by Members of the House of Representatives. Senators are not involved in the processions.

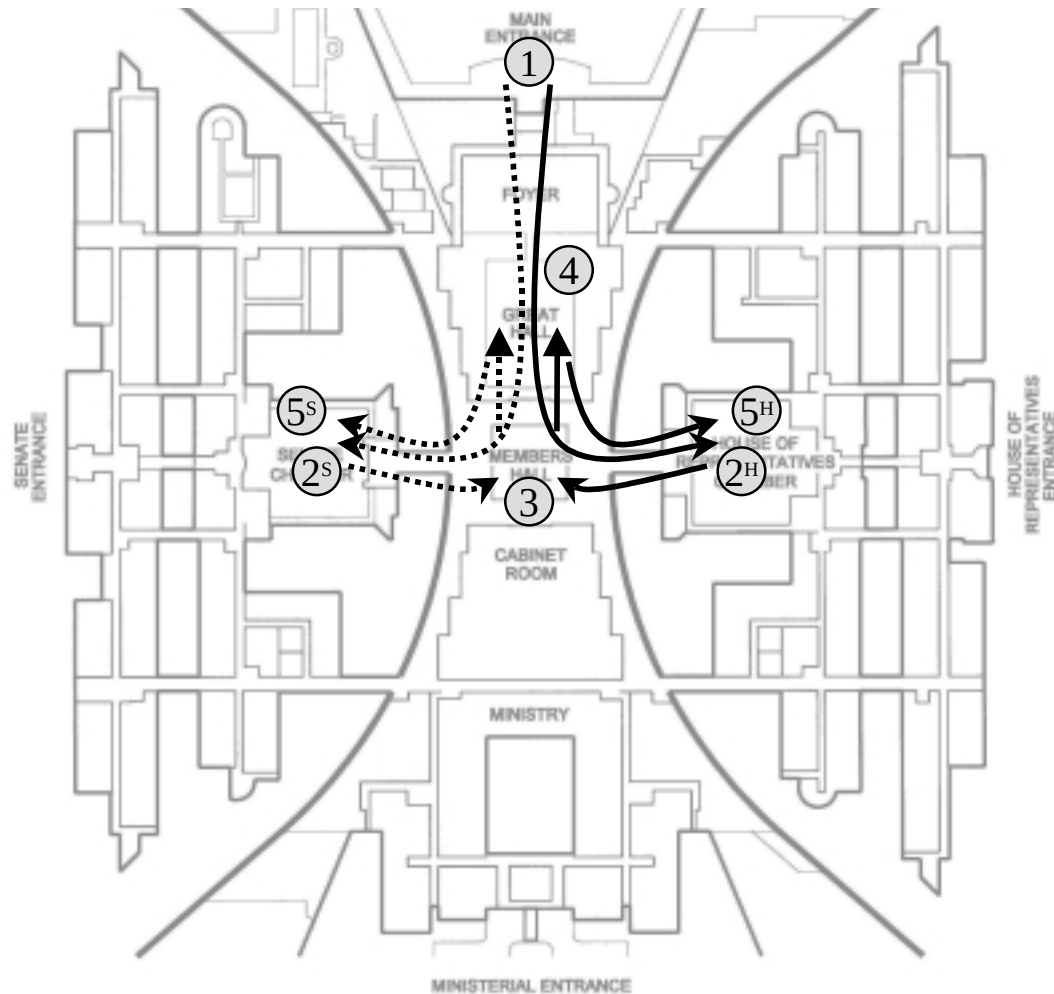
The second diagram shows the proposed ceremony, including the involvement of Senators and Members of the House of Representatives.

Current Ceremony



- 1 Assembly in Chambers
- 2 Procession of House to Senate
Declaration of opening
Return to House
- 3 Swearing in of Members
Election of Speaker
- 4 Procession of House to Members' Hall
Introduction to Governor-General
Return to Chamber
- 5 Procession of House to Senate
Governor-General's speech
Return to House
- 6 Formal business (House)
Announcements
Address in Reply

Proposed Ceremony



- 1 Ceremony in forecourt
- 2 Procession to Chambers
Declaration of opening
Swearing in
Election of presiding officers
- 3 Processions to Members' Hall
Introduction to Governor-General
Procession to Great Hall
- 4 Governor-General's speech
Return to Chambers
- 5 Formal business (House)
Announcements
Address in reply

.....➔ Senators

——➔ Members

