

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

The Eyes Have It!

**Inquiry into the Televising
of the House of Representatives
and its Committees**

**Report of the House of Representatives
Select Committee on Televising**

August 1991

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FOREWORD

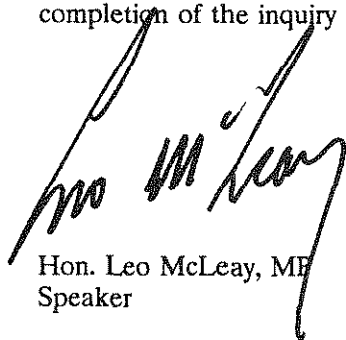
The trial period of televising the House of Representatives and its committees has been a timely development which recognises the importance of the television medium in providing the public with the opportunity to become better informed about the workings of the House of Representatives.

In agreeing to the television trial the House adopted conditions to be complied with by the broadcasters and also guidelines for the operators of the sound and vision equipment. Having reviewed the suitability of these conditions and guidelines, this Report now proposes a number of reforms which will have the effect of relaxing some of the restrictions which applied during the trial period, whilst at the same time ensuring that the dignity and propriety of the unique and dynamic House of Representatives Chamber is preserved.

A number of other reforms designed to improve access to parliamentary proceedings have also been proposed, including arrangements to formalise the televising of public proceedings of committees.

The Committee thanks all interested individuals and organisations for their interest and assistance during the inquiry. In particular I would thank the representatives of the television networks for their co-operation, and trust that the House will be able to co-operate with the networks rather than be in conflict with them.

As inquiry Chairman, I would like to thank my fellow Committee Members for the time and effort they devoted to the inquiry. Thanks are also due to the members of the Secretariat involved with the inquiry, the Secretary, Mr Phil Bergin and Principal Research Officer, Ms Sue Morton, whose professionalism has contributed to the completion of the inquiry in just over two months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leo McLeay', is written over the printed name and title.

Hon. Leo McLeay, MP
Speaker

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SELECT COMMITTEE ON TELEVISING**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Hon. Leo McLeay, MP (Chairman)
Mr David Jull, MP (Deputy Chairman)
Mrs Elaine Darling, MP
Mr Ron Edwards, MP
Mr Noel Hicks, MP

Secretary: Mr Phil Bergin

Inquiry Staff: Ms Sue Morton

Executive Assistant: Ms Elizabeth Robertson

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

The Committee is inquiring into the televising of the proceedings of the House of Representatives and its committees, with particular reference to:

- (a) the impact of the trial period of televising from 12 February 1991;
- (b) the reactions of Members and others to the trial period;
- (c) the suitability of the conditions governing the televising of proceedings adopted for the trial period;
- (d) the suitability of the guidelines for the camera operators;
- (e) difficulties encountered by the broadcasters in complying with the conditions; and
- (f) any other matters relevant to this issue.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends continuing the live broadcast and rebroadcast of excerpts of House of Representatives proceedings (subject to the remaining conditions outlined later in this Report). (para 1.9.3)

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the Government amend the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946 to provide for televising the proceedings of the Senate and the House of Representatives and their committees. (para 1.10.4)

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that:

- (a) the House adopt the revised conditions for broadcasters attached to this Report at Appendix F; and
- (b) the conditions be further reviewed prior to the end of the Autumn Sitting of the House in 1993. (para 2.16.7)

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that the Members of the House of Representatives on the Joint Broadcasting Committee be given the power to operate independently of the Joint Committee in the matter of determining breaches of the conditions for televising by broadcasters of the House of Representatives. (para 2.16.8)

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that :

- (a) the House adopt the revised guidelines for operators of the sound and vision equipment attached to this Report at Appendix G; and
- (b) the guidelines be further reviewed prior to the end of the Autumn Sitting of the House in 1993. (para 3.14.4)

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Committee recommends that:

- (a) the House authorises the televising of public proceedings of its committees;
- (b) the guidelines set out above be adopted for the televising of all House committees; and
- (c) the guidelines be reviewed as part of the review of conditions governing televising of the House itself in 1993. (para 5.1.16)

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that, to provide statutory recognition, the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946 be amended to formalise the arrangement for televising committee proceedings. (para 5.1.17)

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Committee recommends that the Joint Broadcasting Committee review the scheduling for radio broadcasting of proceedings of the House and the Senate. (para 5.4.6)

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Committee recommends that the SAVO make the necessary arrangements to accommodate requests from Members, Senators and the print media for access to 'stills' from their 'feed' on a cost recovery basis. (para 5.6.6)

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Committee recommends that the Government seek advice from the Attorney-General as to the position of bodies authorised to receive the signal of proceedings. Subject to this advice, the Committee recommends SAVO prepare a fully costed feasibility proposal for consideration by the Speaker to extend access to the SAVO signal by government departments, political party headquarters and others. (para 5.7.5)

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Committee recommends SAVO investigate the possibility of preparing a weekly program of about one hour's duration on what happened in Parliament. (para 5.9.6)

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Committee recommends that a group comprising representatives of the networks, the Chamber departments and the Sound and Vision Office be established to discuss matters of mutual concern in regard to the broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Representatives. (para 5.10.3)

CHAPTER 1

IMPACT AND REACTION

1.1 The Television Age

1.1.1 The move in 1988 to the New Parliament House brought with it not only a sense of pride in the achievement of Australians and more space for Members but also a range of new technologies. This was particularly so in relation to the televising of proceedings. No longer was it necessary for special lighting to be installed in the Chamber for filming or for Members to be limited to hearing the proceedings. In due course each Member was provided with a television set through which he/she could view the proceedings in his/her room. There is in fact a cable network throughout Parliament House with some 40 channels available to it. It thus seemed only natural for the question to be asked if anyone in Parliament House can watch the proceedings why not the nation?

1.1.2 It is this issue that this Report addresses. However it should be acknowledged that not many people would necessarily want to watch all the proceedings; for many citizens the interest is in the highlights of the day which are included in the daily news and current affairs programs. The trial period did not appear to have quite the same impact as the introduction of radio broadcasting which had the effect of:

installing different gadgets which have converted the Chamber into something resembling a magnified dental parlour or a Barnum and Bailey circus.¹

¹ Hansard p. 2039, 28 June 1946.

1.1.3 Australia, at the federal level was a pioneer in the radio broadcasting of the proceedings of parliament, being the second national parliament of the Commonwealth to introduce the broadcasting of proceedings of the House of Representatives on 10 July 1946.² However, as we have moved into the age of television, the House has moved more cautiously, leading up to the trial period of televising which commenced on 12 February 1991. The current trial is partly in response to a 1986 report of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings which recommended that proceedings of the Houses and the public proceedings of their committees be available for televising in the new Parliament House.

1.1.4 Radio broadcasts, since 1946, have been made and controlled under the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946 (the Broadcasting Act) and are subject to the determination of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings (Broadcasting Committee). The Broadcasting Act authorised the then Australian Broadcasting Commission, now the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to make sound recordings of any proceedings of either House of the Parliament. It was not until 1974 when, under an amendment to the Act, visual recordings, with or without accompanying sound, were permitted and that only applied to a joint sitting of both Houses.

1.1.5 The 1974 joint sitting has been perhaps the most extensive telecast of proceedings of the parliament prior to the current trial period. In a submission from the Department of the House of Representatives, details of the joint sitting were described:

On that occasion the telecast was conducted by the ABC under the overall direction of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings. The telecasts were carried out in accordance with the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946, which was amended to cover televising (and

² New Zealand was the first, commencing broadcasts in 1936. In the United Kingdom the House of Commons did not endorse public sound broadcasting of its proceedings on a permanent basis until 1976. Regular sound broadcasting began two years later in 1978. Televising and Radio Broadcasting of both Houses of Parliament and their Committees, Report from the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings, June 1986, pp. 1 and 5-6.

broadcasting) of the joint sittings, and in accordance with determinations made by the committee under the Act. The amendments to the Act extended absolute privilege to any person involved in the televising of proceedings or televising from a recording of proceedings. More than half of each day's proceedings of the joint sitting was telecast 'live' and transmitted to all States. The ABC was directed to prepare a one-hour composite program of extracts from the entire proceedings of the joint sitting. The extracts were chosen and compiled under the supervision of a parliamentary officer.

Guidelines were issued for producers, directors and editors. These guidelines were framed to provide a means, in conformity with acceptable standards of dignity, propriety and decorum, by which debates could be covered accurately and impartially.³

1.1.6 A decade later, in 1984, the House authorised the televising of the Budget Speech and reply. These annual telecasts have now become an accepted component of the presentation of the proceedings of the House.

1.1.7 Since then additional authority has been given to televise major statements by the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the principal responder of the Opposition. For example, the House authorised coverage of the April 1989 economic statement by the Treasurer and the Opposition reply; and the Prime Minister's industry statement and reply by the Leader of the Opposition in March 1991.

1.1.8 Most recently, prior to the trial period, the House agreed to televise the debate on the Prime Minister's motion relating to the Gulf War in January 1991.

1.1.9 On 31 May 1990, the Senate agreed to a trial period of televising. The trial commenced on 21 August 1990. The Senate has continued to televise its proceedings since then during which time there have been some refinements of the guidelines.

1.1.10 During the trial period the ABC televised House Question Time live on 23 occasions with replays on the remaining 13 days of the 36 days of sitting. All coverage was produced by the Sound and Vision Office (SAVO) of the Department of the

³ Submission 22 p. 2.

Parliamentary Reporting Staff which also makes the recordings available to commercial networks.

1.2 The Inquiry

1.2.1 The Leader of the House in moving to allow the trial period indicated that the trial would be reviewed at the end of that period of sittings. On 6 June 1991 the Leader of the House moved to appoint a select Committee of the House to conduct that review.

1.2.2 The Committee was appointed to inquire into and report on the televising of the proceedings of the House of Representatives and its committees. The Terms of Reference are set out at page v.

1.2.3 The Committee met on 20 June 1991. The Hon. Leo McLeay, MP was elected Chairman. Mr David Jull, MP was elected Deputy Chairman. The other members of the committee are: Mrs Elaine Darling, MP, Mr Ron Edwards, MP and Mr Noel Hicks, MP.

1.2.4 The Committee advertised in major newspapers, inviting interested persons or organisations to lodge submissions. The Committee also wrote to individuals and organisations with specific interest in the matter inviting submissions.

1.2.5 A total of 24 submissions has been received from Members, media networks, parliamentary departments, educational organisations, and private individuals. A list of all submissions received is provided at Appendix A.

1.2.6 Evidence was also taken from 13 witnesses who appeared before the Committee during public hearings held in Sydney and Canberra. A list of witnesses who appeared is provided at Appendix B.

1.3 Guidelines

1.3.1 In the 1974 joint sitting the Broadcasting Committee established the guidelines for coverage. Since then, the Speaker, on the authority of the House, has generally made arrangements for the proceedings to be filmed. For example, in the case of the Budget Speeches and reply, guidelines for coverage have evolved over the years, with a gradual relaxation of restrictions and conditions. In the case of the Gulf War debate, specific conditions were adopted, governing the televising of proceedings for 21 and 22 January 1991. Guidelines for technical staff operating the sound and vision equipment were also adopted. *These guidelines and conditions closely resemble the conditions which applied during the trial period of televising.*

1.3.2 The current conditions for broadcasters and guidelines for camera operators have evolved from the experience gained during the ad hoc televising of proceedings which occurred before the trial period. They are also loosely based on the rules of coverage which apply to the televising of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom.

1.3.3 The conditions governing the televising of proceedings which applied during the trial period are included at Appendix C. The guidelines for technical staff operating the sound and vision equipment are included at Appendix D.

1.4 Question Time

1.4.1 In the absence of any direction from the Joint Broadcasting Committee which currently has no jurisdiction over television scheduling, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation decided that it would televise Question Time live each day from either the Senate or the House of Representatives. In all, House Question Time was televised live on 23 occasions and replayed 13 times.

1.4.2 The full impact of the trial period of televising of Question Time is difficult to measure without extensive research. However audience research data provided to the Committee by the ABC indicate that:

- . The daily average audience for live telecasts of Question Time from the House of Representatives was estimated to be 68,550.
- . An average of 51,900 Australians were estimated to have watched each late evening replay of Question Time in the House.⁴

1.4.3 It was pointed out in the ABC submission that these estimates are for TV viewers at home only and do not take into account those people viewing in schools, offices, hospitals etc. It can thus be inferred that the total television audience for ABC-TV's parliamentary telecasts is somewhat larger.⁵

1.4.4 The ABC also noted that 'overall ratings were low but significant increases in House of Representatives Question Time ratings were recorded on the days of important political events (eg. 12 March Industry Statement and 3 June ALP Caucus leadership ballot)'.⁶

1.4.5 Other audience research data indicate that an average of 13.82% of viewers in major cities had seen a telecast of the House Question Time during the trial period.⁷

1.5 News and Current Affairs

1.5.1 The greatest impact of the trial period of televising seems to have been in the increased use made by media networks of excerpts of parliamentary footage in their news and current affairs programs. The networks can decide which extracts if any of the days proceedings they will use in their news bulletins. It was suggested that the use of excerpts from proceedings added authenticity to their reports. According to one reporter:

⁴ Submission 21 p. 3.

⁵ Submission 21 p. 3.

⁶ Submission 21 p. 3.

⁷ Submission 21 p. 3.

the fact that I used the doorstops outside the Parliament rather than the remarks inside the Parliament in his view (the producer's) detracted from my report.⁸

1.5.2 Another reporter stated:

If the issue centred around an event in the House of Representatives and the choice was between using the material from the House and using something outside, we would certainly rather use the material inside the House.⁹

1.5.3 The importance of the events in Parliament can perhaps best be illustrated by the amount of parliamentary footage used by networks in national news bulletins. SBS indicated that their use of excerpts has increased 'perhaps by one third' since the move from the still with voice-over to live excerpts.¹⁰ Mr Harvey, National Nine Network, told the Committee of a recent survey which indicated that '30 - 35% of the content of national news bulletins is generated from the Parliament of the Commonwealth, including the Executive'.¹¹

1.5.4 Mr Harvey also provided another indicator of the impact of and audience reaction to the televising of parliament. He informed the Committee that responses to telephone polls on issues in Parliament conducted by the program *A Current Affair*, is greater than in the past.

The only factual evidence that we have is the experience from *A Current Affair* that when it runs telephone polls on issues that have been in Parliament and reported as part of a televised debate, the response is greater than it has been in the past. It is anecdotal in that sense, but the producers working for *A Current Affair* have noticed that whenever an issue has been reinforced by or centred around something that has happened in Parliament, since televising, the response

⁸ Evidence p. 119.

⁹ Evidence p. 141.

¹⁰ Evidence p. 71.

¹¹ Evidence p. 147.

to the phone polls has been greater.¹²

1.5.5 All submissions from media networks highlighted the view that the inclusion of parliamentary footage has enabled them to improve their coverage of the National Parliament. For example, in their submission, the Seven Network pointed out that 'the availability of televised material from the nation's leaders has significantly added to our coverage and created an appetite for more'.¹³ Further, the network commented that the new system of daily access has been a considerable improvement over the previous system which only allowed access to brief periods of proceedings for the purposes of recording file footage material.¹⁴

1.5.6 Network Ten also commented that 'access made the reporting of parliament the central news story. The need for morning doorstops just to get pictures became peripheral'.¹⁵

1.5.7 The ABC submitted in evidence to the Committee that:

the introduction of televised excerpts of House proceedings from 12 February has had a significant impact upon the quality of television news and current affairs reporting from Parliament. ... The ABC believes that the introduction of excerpting has ... provided millions of Australians with a clearer and more detailed perspective on House and Committee activities.¹⁶

1.5.8 The media networks, although supportive, have expressed some criticism in relation to the restrictions placed on their use of the material supplied by the SAVO. The Committee too has some concerns about the methods of excerpting which have truncated

¹² Evidence p. 140.

¹³ Submission 14 p. 2.

¹⁴ Submission 14 p. 1.

¹⁵ Submission 13 p. 1.

¹⁶ Submission 21 p. 7.

events for dramatic effect and led to possible breaches of the guidelines. The Committee is particularly concerned as excerpting probably reaches a far greater audience and is probably more important in terms of increasing familiarity with the proceedings of Parliament than the Question Time telecasts. These concerns are addressed in Chapter 2 dealing with Conditions Governing Televising.

1.6 Public Support

1.6.1 All of the submissions received from private citizens reflected support for the continuing broadcasting of proceedings. For example, Mr A Raymond commented that 'I personally would very much like to see this put on a permanent basis, because it gives one an insight into the workings of parliament'.¹⁷

1.6.2 Similarly, Mr Andrew Priest believes that:

broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings provides the opportunity for the people of Australia to see our elected representatives at work for the benefit of their constituents. It is a step in the right direction to the making of the function of Parliament more relevant to the average Australian.¹⁸

1.6.3 Mr Fischer, MP, Leader of the National Party, noted in his submission that televising is particularly pertinent to rural and regional areas of Australia.¹⁹

1.6.4 It was drawn to the Committee's attention in a submission from the Department of the House of Representatives that it is a point of conjecture whether the public has taken advantage of televising of the House. They point out that it may be more than coincidence that two disturbances in the gallery this year have occurred on days when the House has been televised live.²⁰

¹⁷ Submission 2 p. 1.

¹⁸ Submission 6 p. 1.

¹⁹ Submission 11 p. 1.

²⁰ Submission 22 p. 9.

1.6.5 Some submissions, such as the submission from the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff²¹ and the Department of the House of Representatives²², commented that the televising of proceedings may have contributed to an increased interest in parliamentary proceedings.

1.6.6 The results of an informal survey of 1255 visitors to Parliament House, conducted for the Committee by the Parliament House Guides, revealed that whilst only 40% of visitors had seen the House of Representatives Question Time on television, 76% had seen excerpts of proceedings on news and current affairs programs. A total of 45% of visitors surveyed felt that the televised proceedings of the House of Representatives were interesting.

1.6.7 Although the public reaction appears to have been generally favourable, some submissions indicated that increasing the flexibility of the camera angles and reducing editing of the proceedings would be a desirable improvement. These matters are discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3 of this Report.

1.7 Educational Organisations

1.7.1 Educational organisations too have indicated that the televising of proceedings has been of benefit. In Western Australia, for example, the Social Science Consultant with the Ministry of Education submitted to the Committee that 'teachers of Politics have welcomed the televised proceedings which have become an integral part of the teaching program';²³ whilst the Curriculum Corporation comments that 'having the proceedings of the House and its Committees available to schools as an immediate and up-to-date

²¹ Submission 20 p. 2.

²² Submission 22 p. 9.

²³ Submission 16 p. 1.

resource for learning and teaching' is very important in the educative process.²⁴

1.7.2 In the survey referred to at paragraph 1.6.6 it was found that the awareness of school students is above that of other visitors. 53% of students had viewed Question Time compared with 38% of the general public. The proceedings of the House had been seen on current affairs programs by 83% of students compared with 75% of the general public.

1.7.3 In evidence presented to the Committee, the ABC drew attention to the findings of the National Advisory Council, a body set up to advise the ABC Board on matters relating to programs. The National Advisory Council particularly noted the use being made of the telecasts by students in schools and universities to meet that educative purpose.²⁵

1.8 Members' Reactions

1.8.1 A significant component of the Committee's Terms of Reference relates to the reactions of the Members themselves to the trial period of televising.

1.8.2 It has been recognised that there were some teething problems during the trial²⁶, but Members generally shared the view put forward by the Leader of the House, Hon. Kim Beazley, MP, who submitted to the Committee that 'the trial period has generally worked well'.²⁷ The Manager of Opposition Business in the House, the Hon. Wal Fife, MP, referred to his previous statements in support of televising and suggested the guidelines should be broadened rather than being further restricted.²⁸

²⁴ Submission 10 p. 1.

²⁵ Evidence p. 51.

²⁶ Submission 11 p. 1.

²⁷ Submission 23 p. 1.

²⁸ Submission 9 p. 1.

1.8.3 Some specific concerns have been raised by parliamentarians during the trial period both in the House and through correspondence with the Speaker as well as in their submissions to the inquiry. For example, Mr Beazley notes that he has been concerned 'about the way in which certain events have been presented by the television networks'.²⁹ The specific concerns deal with the conditions governing the broadcasting and the guidelines for camera operators. These issues are addressed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this Report. A list of the possible breaches of the guidelines is included at Appendix E.

1.8.4 Despite the teething problems, one network reported that Members' remarks have been complimentary³⁰, while the SAVO indicated that 'no negative comments have been received from Members'.³¹

1.9 Conclusion

1.9.1 The Committee is of the view that there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the trial period of televising of proceedings has been successful in that it has increased an awareness of the Parliament and its people and its procedures.

1.9.2 The Committee considers that the continuation of televised proceedings will assist the public to develop an even better knowledge and awareness of the work of the House of Representatives and the issues discussed there. However, this does not imply that there is not room for a more informed presentation. There have been occasions when proceedings of the House would appear to have been misreported. These issues are considered later in the Report.

²⁹ Submission 23 p. 1.

³⁰ Submission 14 p. 1.

³¹ Submission 20 p. 2.

1.9.3 RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends continuing the live broadcast and rebroadcast of excerpts of House of Representatives proceedings (subject to the remaining conditions outlined later in this Report).

1.10 The Broadcasting Act

1.10.1 In an additional submission the Department of the House of Representatives suggested the amendment of the Broadcasting Act to provide for the televising of both Houses of Parliament to be covered by that Act.

1.10.2 As noted earlier the Act does not cover televising of proceedings. Amending the Act was suggested by the Department 'with a view to eliminating gray areas that have developed, and in accordance with the method of legislative change that has previously been adopted'.³² For example, it would have the added advantage of resolving questions of privilege which have been raised during the inquiry.

1.10.3 Section 15 of the Act confers absolute privilege to those persons required to broadcast or rebroadcast proceedings of either House or of a joint sitting. It is 'cast in the broadest of terms'. The Department suggested the Committee consider the matter further particularly in regard to the provisions of the Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987 and the possibility of containing all the relevant provisions in one act which would be 'more tidy legislatively'.³³

1.10.4 RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the Government amend the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946 to provide for televising of the proceedings of the Senate and the House of Representatives and their committees.

³² Submission 24 p. 3.

³³ Submission 24 p. 3.

1.10.5 The Committee considers it incongruous that an act can cover the televising of a joint sitting of both Houses but not the sitting of either House.

CHAPTER 2

CONDITIONS GOVERNING TELEVISIONING

2.1 General

2.1.1 The conditions governing the televising of the House of Representatives which were adopted by the House for the trial period are included at Appendix C. The conditions authorise the live broadcast and rebroadcast of proceedings except for the adjournment debate.

2.1.2 The conditions for users of the signal recorded and transmitted by the Sound and Vision Office of the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff, have been developed in the light of earlier experiences with the televising of proceedings of the House. As previously mentioned, they are also loosely based on the rules of coverage which apply to the televising of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom.

2.1.3 The Committee received evidence that the coverage of proceedings of parliament should be as 'free and unfettered' as possible.¹ Many witnesses supported this view, arguing that they would be in favour of no restrictions and no editing of coverage.

2.1.4 However, it is the Committee's task to review the suitability of the conditions which applied during the trial. A review of each condition in turn follows.

¹ Submission 15 p. 1.

2.2 Condition 1 - authority to broadcast

2.2.1 As discussed in Chapter 1, the evidence received by the Committee supports the conclusion that continuing the live broadcasts, rebroadcasts and excerpts of the House proceedings is warranted. However, this condition also includes reference to the restriction on access to the adjournment debate.

2.2.2 Several submissions presented the Committee with arguments in support of the deletion of this restriction.² This matter is discussed further under Condition 2(f) below.

2.2.3 This condition is to be amended, to be consistent with 2(f) below.

2.3 Condition 2(a) - use of House monitoring system

2.3.1 The Sound and Vision Office has the responsibility to provide broadcast quality televising of the proceedings of both Houses of Parliament. From the occupation of the new building in mid 1988 until the beginning of the 1990 Budget Sittings, the vision was produced for internal use only on the House monitoring system. During the trial period of televising the proceedings of the House of Representatives, SAVO also had a responsibility to provide broadcast quality signals to the media bureaus in Parliament House. According to SAVO:

The House monitoring system is a reticulation closed-circuit system throughout the building. It is of a high quality, but it is a re-broadcasting of the signal like any re-transmitting of the signal from a television station. While the media bureaus have the capacity to record from that it is, if you like, a second generation recording of the material coming from the Sound and Vision Office.³

² Submissions 9, 13, 14, 21 and 22.

³ Evidence p. 78.

2.3.2 In their submission to the Committee, SAVO point out that a dedicated, composite sound and vision signal would allow for 'minimal loss of picture quality during re-transmission from media equipment'⁴ (and that) 'They (the networks) add their own supers of the material they use. That is the only difference, and we are taking this opportunity to correct that anomaly that existed within the system'.⁵

2.3.3 The Committee accepts that the technology is now available to improve the quality of the direct lines to the media bureaus, rather than relying on a 'retransmitted "off-air" signal from the House monitoring system'. The bureaus would then receive a higher quality clean 'feed' which does not include captions or 'supers'. They would be free to add their own 'supers' on the material they use. This approach is favoured by the Nine Network which prefers a clean 'feed'.⁶

2.3.4 Channel 1 of the House monitoring system would remain as the signal for in-house transmission, with appropriate captions.

2.3.5 The Committee recommends that this condition be amended accordingly.

2.4 Condition 2(b)(i) - political party advertising

2.4.1 The Committee received no evidence specifically commenting on this condition which also applies to the rebroadcasting of radio excerpts.

2.4.2 In the interests of 'fair and accurate' reporting it seems sensible to retain this condition to avoid any possibility of parliamentary footage being used for political party advertising.

⁴ Submission 20 p. 4.

⁵ Evidence p. 78.

⁶ Evidence p. 154.

2.5 Condition 2(b)(ii) - satire or ridicule

2.5.1 This condition seems to be the crux of the issue of 'fair and accurate' reporting. Although the Committee received no evidence specifically commenting on this condition, the Committee's attention was directed to the differences in guidelines applying to the different forms of media, including the print media where no such restrictions apply. This condition, however, does apply to radio broadcasts.

2.5.2 The Committee is of the view that for the television medium, this condition should be retained.

2.6 Condition 2(b)(iii) - commercial sponsorship or commercial advertising

2.6.1 Again the Committee received no evidence specifically commenting on this condition. However, as the parliament must not be seen to be connected with the promotion of commercial enterprises for commercial gain, the Committee remains convinced of the necessity to retain this condition. Further, the Committee would suggest that where excerpts are to be used on commercial networks, the station should try to ensure that advertising before and after excerpts is of an appropriate nature.

2.6.2 This condition should be retained and an appropriate note made in the new conditions.

2.7 Condition 2(b)(iv) - television station advertisements or promotion

2.7.1 The Committee received evidence in a number of submissions urging the deletion of this restriction, although SAVO recommend caution in opening up opportunities for

the promotion of events other than special events, such as the Budget speech and reply.⁷

2.7.2 In their submission, Network Ten argued that they wish to include parliament in their generic news advertisements in order to convey to the public the message that: 'We have the important stories covered, parliament is among the most important'.⁸ A similar point of view was expressed by the Seven Network⁹ which also indicated that they could be trusted to be responsible about the use of the material.¹⁰

2.7.3 The ABC also supports the deletion of this condition, claiming that use of such material not only promotes television coverage but also encourages the increased viewing of parliamentary proceedings.¹¹

2.7.4 The Department of the House of Representatives pointed out that although film should not be used to promote a station, 'it has the disadvantage of preventing the station promoting the televising of Parliament'.¹²

2.7.5 The Committee is persuaded by the evidence presented to it and recommends that this condition be deleted, subject to stations complying with the remaining conditions within 2(b).

2.8 Condition 2(c) - balance

2.8.1 Whilst many of the networks would prefer to see no restrictions on the reporting of proceedings and claim that their professional approach, governed by the code of ethics

⁷ Evidence pp. 89-90.

⁸ Submission 13 p. 2.

⁹ Submission 14 p. 2.

¹⁰ Evidence p. 168.

¹¹ Submission 21 p. 5.

¹² Submission 22 p. 11.

of the Australian Journalists Association, is sufficient to guarantee balanced and accurate reporting, it needs to be noted that possible breaches of this condition have been brought to the attention of the Speaker during the trial period.

2.8.2 It has been submitted that, for example, SBS did not show the reply of the Leader of the Opposition (on 14 March) to the Economic/Industry Statement made by the Prime Minister (on 12 March). An apology was received from the SBS which recognised that it was 'an obvious breach and an unfortunate one'.¹³

2.8.3 Mr Cadman, MP, also drew the attention of the Speaker to a lack of balance in an ABC news item on 14 May 1991. Whilst he had no complaints about the political balance, Mr Cadman did express concern that there was no photographic balance between Government and Opposition Members.¹⁴

2.8.4 The Seven Network, however, submitted that they have difficulty with this condition, in view of the restriction relating to points of order. They maintain that it is difficult to show balance 'if we are unable to present a differing view'.¹⁵

2.8.5 The Committee does not accept the argument of the Seven Network, and believes that reports should continue to provide a balanced presentation of differing views. The conditions for radio provide for 'Fairness and accuracy and for overall balance to be maintained'. Accordingly, this condition should be retained.

2.9 Condition 2(d) - withdrawal

2.9.1 The Committee received contradictory evidence on this point.

¹³ Evidence p. 66.

¹⁴ Hansard p. 3779, 15 May 1991.

¹⁵ Submission 14 p. 3.

2.9.2 On the one hand, media networks such as the ABC, SBS and Network Ten argue that withdrawn remarks should be able to be broadcast. The ABC make the point that 'this condition is inconsistent with the conditions governing House and Senate radio broadcasts and Senate televising and this inconsistency can cause confusion for television reporters and producers working to tight deadlines'.¹⁶ A similar view was expressed by SBS.¹⁷ Network Ten also puts the view that, in addition to not being required by the Senate, the condition is 'an unwarranted restriction on fair and accurate reporting. It in effect serves to disadvantage Opposition parties in their use of the cut and thrust of parliamentary tactics'.¹⁸

2.9.3 On the other hand, the Department of the House of Representatives argues that 'It is appropriate that the Speaker's ruling on such remarks be upheld in the interests of not rebroadcasting what may be slanderous remarks'.¹⁹ Similarly, Mr Wilson Tuckey, MP, makes the point that 'The only restrictions to the broadcasting and rebroadcasting of our Parliament should be of matters declared as unparliamentary or otherwise withdrawn by the Member concerned'.²⁰

2.9.4 The Committee is concerned that the public may not fully understand what is meant by a withdrawal and that the direction to withdraw is made by the Chair under Standing Orders and not as a personal foible of the person in the Chair. The Committee also accepts that it may be difficult having a guideline which is different from that applying to radio broadcasts, but having noted three possible breaches of this guideline

¹⁶ Submission 21 p. 5.

¹⁷ Submission 17 p. 1.

¹⁸ Submission 13 p. 2.

¹⁹ Submission 22 p. 12.

²⁰ Submission 5 p. 1.

during the trial period²¹ it cannot countenance permitting the rebroadcast of slanderous remarks even if the withdrawal is reported.

2.9.5 In this context it is interesting to note the comments of the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Menzies while speaking in 1946 on the Broadcasting Bill:

I have always been troubled, as I am sure other honourable members have, about one matter which I have regarded as a defect of the Standing Orders. Some honourable member makes, perhaps in the heat of debate, a grossly improper statement about another honourable member. Mr Speaker intervenes, and orders the honourable member to withdraw the grossly improper statement. He complies with the request of the Chair. But the offensive remark still appears in Hansard. It is still available to be reported to the public, and as the public do not pay too much attention to withdrawals, the statement may do almost infinite harm to the man to whom it was applied, long after the heat went out of the debate.²²

2.9.6 The Committee recommends that this condition be retained.

2.10 Condition 2(e) - deletions from Hansard

2.10.1 Several submissions urged the Committee to delete this condition, largely on the grounds that it has not proven necessary and that condition 2(j) covers any such eventuality.²³ Network Ten further submit that it is 'another instance of an unwarranted restriction on fair and accurate reporting which appears to advantage the Government party at the expense of the Opposition'.²⁴

²¹ On 6 March the ABC broadcast a withdrawal of a reflection on the Chair; on the 16 April the ABC's 7.30 Report broadcast the Prime Minister's attack on the Leader of the National Party without reporting the withdrawal; on 8 May the Seven Network broadcast the Prime Minister making a statement and immediately withdrawing it.

²² Hansard p. 2036, 28 June 1946.

²³ Submission 21 p. 5 and Submission 22 p.12.

²⁴ Submission 13 p. 2.

2.10.2 Nevertheless, the Committee believes that retention of this condition is appropriate, in the interests of ensuring that any unparliamentary language or misrepresentation is not rebroadcast.

2.11 Condition 2(f) - adjournment debate

2.11.1 The Committee received a number of submissions²⁵ and heard a great deal of evidence on this subject, all of which supported the inclusion of the adjournment debate in the proceedings to be available for rebroadcast.

2.11.2 The Department of the House of Representatives pointed out that the non-inclusion of the adjournment debate in the televising arrangements was largely based on the fact that the sound broadcasting has never included the adjournment debate. The Clerk of the House suggested 'The historical reason for that was the economics involved at the time when the ABC started the sound broadcasting way back in 1946'.²⁶

2.11.3 The Department also commented that the adjournment debates would make for excellent television. Mr Ian Harris, Acting Deputy Clerk, stated that 'the adjournment debates are short speeches with a wide variety of speakers and cover a wide variety of subjects. ... They are of vital interest to constituents'.²⁷

2.11.4 Mr Harvey of the Nine Network suggested there was a wide interest in the provincial areas in having particular extracts of the adjournment debate:

After their local members have got up on the adjournment debate, having told the local television station that they are going to do this, we will get phone calls from all over Australia saying, 'Can you pass onto us a few shots?'. We have explained that we do not have the right to do it. There is a wide interest in provincial areas.

²⁵ Submissions 9, 13, 14, 21 and 22.

²⁶ Evidence p. 101.

²⁷ Evidence p. 102.

Of course, on occasions - not as often perhaps - there will be for the network. Certainly, the rural interest has been quite marked.²⁸

2.11.5 Representatives from the ABC and commercial networks also argued that this could have an impact on both national and regional coverage, as it 'often introduces material which might otherwise not find its way into the public domain'.²⁹

2.11.6 The Committee is convinced of the desirability of extending access to networks to broadcast this section of the day's proceedings and recommends deleting this restriction. This deletion will have the effect of amending Condition 1, which currently restricts the inclusion of the adjournment debate in proceedings to be televised.

2.12 Condition 2(g) - points of order

2.12.1 The Committee received a considerable body of evidence supporting the inclusion of points of order in the proceedings authorised for rebroadcast.³⁰

2.12.2 However, it was also drawn to the Committee's attention that the definition of what actually constitutes a point of order requires clarification. As noted in the submission from the Department of the House of Representatives:

the current guidelines do not make it clear whether the condition applies only to those points of order which are accepted as such by the Speaker. It could be argued that since the point of order has not been accepted by the Speaker it is not a point of order and therefore can be rebroadcast.³¹

²⁸ Evidence p. 144.

²⁹ Evidence pp. 28, 123, 144, 164.

³⁰ Submissions 5, 13, 14, 17 and 21.

³¹ Submission 22 p. 13.

2.12.3 The Committee is not moved by the evidence in support of the inclusion of points of order in the proceedings authorised for rebroadcast. It recommends that this condition not only be retained but be clarified to avoid possible confusion as to what constitutes a point of order. It could be argued that a point of order is only regarded as such if the Speaker accepts that a point of order is valid. However it is the Committee's view that points of order and matters claimed to be points of order should not be rebroadcast.

2.13 Condition 2(h) - technical restrictions

2.13.1 The Committee has also received conflicting evidence on this issue. On the one hand, Network Ten, the Seven Network, SBS and the ABC all submit that this condition should be deleted in order to permit them to apply more 'imaginative' and 'creative' production techniques designed to improve the coverage of the parliamentary proceedings. Even so, they do not all agree on the most desirable approach.³²

2.13.2 On the other hand, the Committee received evidence from the Department of the House of Representatives that:

these technical guidelines for broadcasters have been included to ensure that the parliamentary proceedings are presented in the same way as visitors to the public galleries would view proceedings. In this way all Members are presented 'normally' rather than at the mercy of less scrupulous broadcasters who may take advantage of the opportunity to juxtapose vision and/or sound to ridicule or satirise proceedings.³³

2.13.3 The Clerk of the House stated:

³² For example, the ABC are reluctant to use the 'freeze frame' form as it is 'not a natural television form' (Evidence p. 7); whilst the SBS favours the use of 'freeze frame' as being a potentially dramatic use of the medium of television. (Evidence p. 63).

³³ Submission 22 p. 13.

In my view, people watching the telecast of the proceedings in the House should see it the way they would see it if they were in the galleries of the House. There may be an occasion where there could be a split screen shot - perhaps Mr Kerin delivering the Budget Speech and Dr Hewson sitting at the table watching - and limited use in that way but, generally speaking, I believe that the proceedings viewed by viewers watching television should be those which people sitting in the galleries would see, not some concoction taken from two cameras.³⁴

2.13.4 The Committee is of the view that retaining the conditions which specify normal speed and synchronised sound and vision would meet the needs of Members wishing to be seen as members of the public would see them. However, the Committee accepts the views of media organisations that, in the interests of compressing news reporting, there may be some value in deleting the restriction on use of split-screen shots. For example, the ABC submitted that 'by the careful use of split screening you might be able to get a sense of the debate in a shorter time and in context'; that is, improving the presentation without using footage for satire or ridicule.³⁵

2.13.5 The Committee recommends amending this condition by deleting the restriction on the use of split screen shots. However this recommendation would also be subject to the usual conditions which prohibit material being used for satire or ridicule.

2.14 Condition 2(i) - penalties

2.14.1 The Committee also received conflicting evidence on the issue of penalties - whether penalties are required at all, and if so, who should determine the penalty.

³⁴ Evidence p. 103.

³⁵ Evidence pp. 33-34. SBS do not support the use of split screen shots however, because of the potential to confuse viewers and be abused or misused by broadcasters. Evidence p. 63.

2.14.2 Many of the media networks argued that penalties were not required³⁶; another argued that penalties 'may' be imposed.³⁷ Against this view, Mr Beazley, MP, indicated his support for the availability of penalties.³⁸ Mr Lyn Barlin, Clerk of the House, suggests that 'they should remain ... as an option available to the Speaker or to the Parliament ... should a need arise'.³⁹

2.14.3 The Department of the House of Representatives, in their submission, indicated that the imposition of penalties has significant implications for the monitoring of adherence to the guidelines.⁴⁰ An officer of the Department is obliged to view the nightly news and respond to comments from Members or members of the public in order to maintain a list of the possible breaches.

2.14.4 During the trial period, several possible breaches of the guidelines were noted with one network being given a warning by the Speaker that another breach of the guidelines would be treated as a second breach and the appropriate penalty would apply. Under the current arrangements, the Speaker is required to determine not only if a breach has occurred, but also to determine the penalty on a matter in which he may have earlier made a determination.

2.14.5 It could be argued that the opportunity for redress is not as readily available through the medium of television as it is through the radio or print media and a Member's right to seek to make a personal explanation may not always be appropriate. In order to diffuse the sensitivities of dealing with the possible breaches of the guidelines, the Committee believes that Members themselves are best placed to identify any possible breaches of the guidelines. The most appropriate course of action is then for Members

³⁶ Submissions 14 and 21 and Evidence p. 65.

³⁷ Submission 13 p. 3.

³⁸ Submission 23 p. 1.

³⁹ Evidence p. 104.

⁴⁰ Submission 22 p. 13.

to refer possible breaches of the guidelines to the House representatives on the Joint Committee on Parliamentary Broadcasting. The House members on the Joint Broadcasting Committee could then determine appropriate penalties on a case by case basis.

2.14.6 Although their first choice was for no penalties the media networks also favoured referral of possible breaches to the Broadcasting Committee: 'I think the Joint Parliamentary Committee as the watchdog is the one that we would prefer'.⁴¹

2.14.7 The Committee recommends that the House formalise this arrangement, as it would appear incongruous to have Senators on a joint committee sitting in judgement on House matters while the Senate is not subject to the same condition.

2.15 Condition 2(j) - Speaker's instructions

2.15.1 The Committee received no direct evidence on this condition other than a suggestion from the Department of the House of Representatives that a delegate for the Speaker be specified.⁴²

2.15.2 The Committee regards it as appropriate to retain the flexibility inherent in the current arrangement.

2.16 Conclusion

2.16.1 The conditions which have applied during the trial period have provided a useful basis for the experiment. Just as conditions governing the guidelines for the televising of Budget Speeches have evolved over the years, so it is expected that the conditions governing televising of proceedings of the House of Representatives will also evolve.

⁴¹ Evidence p. 168.

⁴² Submission 22 p. 14.

2.16.2 In the light of the experiences of the trial period, the Committee accepts that there is a case to relax some of the conditions. The relaxations recommended relate to the inclusion of the adjournment debate; the lifting of restrictions on using parliamentary footage in station promotions; the lifting of restrictions on the use of split-screen shots; and revised procedures for the determination of breaches and the imposition of penalties.

2.16.3 These changes should bring the conditions more into line with those that apply to the rebroadcast of radio excerpts.

2.16.4 A set of revised conditions which incorporate the Committee's recommendations arising out of this review is included at Appendix F.

2.16.5 The Committee does not believe that any further relaxation of the rules is appropriate at this time. However, the Committee recommends that a further review of the conditions be undertaken prior to the end of the Autumn Sitting of the House in 1993.

2.16.6 Over this evolutionary period, it is the Committee's expressed wish that the guidelines can gradually be developed in harmony with those of the Senate and consistent with those which apply to radio broadcasts. The Committee would not propose that the House adopt without question, and without consultation, conditions adopted by the Senate, however acceptable they might be to the media. In some ways it is this acceptability, or rather endorsement by the media which could be a cause for concern.

2.16.7 RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that:

- (a) the House adopt the revised conditions for broadcasters attached to this Report at Appendix F; and**
- (b) the conditions be further reviewed prior to the end of the Autumn Sitting of the House in 1993.**

2.16.8 RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that the Members of the House of Representatives on the Joint Broadcasting Committee be given the power to operate independently of the Joint Committee in the matter of determining breaches of the conditions for televising by broadcasters of the House of Representatives.

CHAPTER 3

GUIDELINES FOR CAMERA OPERATORS

3.1 Sound and Vision Office

3.1.1 The signal used by broadcasters is produced from recordings made by the Sound and Vision Office of the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff. Under the current arrangements, this signal is produced and transmitted at no charge to the networks. The SAVO staff operate under a set of guidelines developed for the trial period of televising. These guidelines are included at Appendix D.

3.1.2 Most media networks¹ and one private citizen² have commented that the camera work is of a high standard and that the work of the SAVO is appreciated. The Seven Network submitted that 'we have been impressed by the professional standards and skills of the (SAVO) operators'.³ This view is shared by the Department of the House of Representatives.⁴

3.1.3 The Seven Network also made the suggestion that, at a pre-arranged time, SAVO record and supply individual shots of all Members for file purposes.⁵ This suggestion

¹ Submissions 13, 14 and 21.

² Submission 2.

³ Submission 14 p. 4.

⁴ Submission 22 p. 9.

⁵ Submission 14 p. 4.

would seem to be a reasonable one and the Committee hopes that SAVO will respond positively to Channel Seven's suggestion that such shots be made available. This aspect is considered in more detail at paragraph 5.6 'Still Photography'.

3.2 Guidelines

3.2.1 The Sound and Vision Office have submitted that the guidelines adopted for the trial period have provided an effective basis for the trial. However, in the light of the experience gained during the six months (10 sitting weeks) of the trial, they recommend changes to some of the guidelines. Their comments, and the comments of others, are addressed in turn below.

3.3 Proposals for Change

3.3.1 A number of submissions, including one from Mr Jim Snow, MP, and some from private citizens⁶ and media organisations⁷, referred to the desirability of allowing the camera operators more freedom in their coverage of proceedings.

3.3.2 Some submissions argued that camera operators should be able to focus on the general public⁸; others that interjectors should be included in the coverage.⁹

3.3.3 The Committee is cognisant that the recording of proceedings should aim at producing a full, balanced, fair and accurate account of proceedings. Such a recording would have the effect of informing viewers about the work of the House. However, it must also be balanced against preserving the dignity, propriety and decorum of the Chamber.

⁶ Submissions 6, 7, and 18.

⁷ Evidence p. 143.

⁸ Submission 12 p. 1.

⁹ Submissions 6 and 7

3.4 Guideline 1 - focus on the Member with the call

3.4.1 The Committee has received no evidence which indicates that there is a problem with this general principle, although Mr Andrew Priest submitted his preference for 'televising of not only just the person on his feet speaking, but of other Members of the House'.¹⁰

3.4.2 The Committee believes that there already exists sufficient scope for reaction shots and wide-angle shots of the Chamber which show other Members of the House.

3.4.3 However, the Clerk of the House, Mr Lyn Barlin, drew the Committee's attention to a further area of concern, namely that:

on a couple of occasions ... viewers have felt that the cameras have focused in much too closely on a Member in particular circumstances. It is felt that they have zoomed right in and that all of the facial expressions and the emotion that the Member is feeling at that time is being televised.¹¹

3.4.4 The Committee accepts that this concern could be addressed by an amendment to the guidelines indicating that shots should be no closer than 'head and shoulders'. This condition should be retained but amended accordingly.

3.5 Guideline 2 - fine tuning or variations to depths of field

3.5.1 This condition appears to be self explanatory and the Committee has no problem recommending the retention of this guideline.

¹⁰ Submission 6 p. 1.

¹¹ Evidence p. 115.

3.6 Guideline 3 - wide-angle shots

3.6.1 This guideline attracted comment in two submissions,¹² both of which recommended that more use of the wide-angle shot would be appreciated.

3.6.2 In their submission to the Committee, the SAVO, although not specifically referring to Guideline 3, noted that 'it is important to establish the size and layout of the House of Representatives Chamber'.¹³

3.6.3 The Committee accepts that sparing use of the wide-angle shot may achieve a better orientation of the scene at times other than Divisions and Question Time and recommends amending this condition accordingly.

3.7 Guideline 4 - reaction shots

3.7.1 The Committee received no evidence that this condition has caused any problems for the camera operators, broadcasters or the Members themselves. However, two private citizens¹⁴ and one media organisation¹⁵ indicated that interjectors should also be included in the coverage.

3.7.2 The Department of the House of Representatives has submitted that reaction shots of Members should only be permitted if the Member being filmed is in his/her seat in the Chamber.¹⁶

¹² Submissions 7 and 20.

¹³ Submission 20 p. 3.

¹⁴ Submissions 6 and 7.

¹⁵ Evidence p. 152.

¹⁶ Submission 22 p. 15.

3.7.3 The Committee concurs with this view and recommends that the guideline be amended accordingly.

3.8 Guideline 5 - exchange between Members

3.8.1 No problems have been drawn to the Committee's attention in relation to this guideline. It is recommended that it be retained.

3.9 Guideline 6 - galleries and advisers' seats

3.9.1 Coverage of the galleries and the advisers' seats has not been permitted under the current guidelines as events in these areas are unrelated to the proceedings of the parliament. Whilst journalists like Mr Paul Bongiorno, Network Ten, have expressed interest in being able to have the events in the galleries covered¹⁷, others like Mr Peter Harvey, Nine Network, recognise the dilemma facing the Parliament that television coverage of events like demonstrations in the House could have the effect of encouraging other demonstrations.¹⁸

3.9.2 Mr Bongiorno told the Committee that 'if the camera in the House can, in fact, pick up the demonstrator who is about to jump over the balcony, I would argue that that should be shown';¹⁹ whilst Mr Harvey acknowledged the concerns:

There is a real risk that television coverage of demonstrations in the House of Representatives or the Senate would encourage other demonstrations. It is for the Parliament to decide whether that is necessarily a bad thing.²⁰

¹⁷ Evidence p. 123.

¹⁸ Evidence p. 152.

¹⁹ Evidence p. 123.

²⁰ Evidence p. 152.

3.9.3 Despite the potential for disturbance in the galleries, it must be noted that distinguished visitors such as former Members of Parliament, heads of state and parliamentary delegations are occasionally present in the Speaker's Gallery. In the interests of extending the courtesy of acknowledging their presence in the Gallery, the Speaker or Deputy Speaker may draw the attention of the House to their presence. In this case, the Committee believes that it is appropriate for the camera operators to be able to focus briefly on that section of the Speaker's Gallery where the distinguished visitors are located. This view is shared by the SAVO and the Department of the House of Representatives.²¹ SAVO point out that it is 'quite disconcerting for the viewers in that they can hear that the delegation or the Member is being spoken about, they can see the Members looking to the former Member or delegation and in some cases applauding them, but they cannot see them'.²² Coverage of disturbances in the galleries would continue to be prohibited.

3.10 Guideline 7 - disturbance in the House

3.10.1 This guideline has been included in the guidelines for camera operators so that unparliamentary behaviour and other forms of grave disorder will not be covered and therefore encourage others to perform what may be 'illegal activities'. Mr Snow, MP, submitted that 'I appreciate that illegal activities should not be telecast if they would by example entice members of the general public to perform similar activities'.²³

3.10.2 The Department of the House of Representatives submits that it may be necessary to clarify this guideline 'to ensure that it is disturbances by strangers on the floor of the House which should not be covered',²⁴ so that the potential consequences of actions such as those described in the preceding section at paragraph 3.9.2 would not be covered.

²¹ Submissions 20 and 22.

²² Evidence p. 77.

²³ Submission 12 p. 1.

²⁴ Submission 22 p. 15.

3.10.3 SAVO have submitted that this guideline should be amended to permit a 'slightly wider shot only incorporating the Chair and the despatch boxes area'.²⁵ They argue that this is to provide for alternative shots of the Chair while maintaining controlled coverage during any disturbance.

3.10.4 The Committee regard both suggestions for amendment to this guideline as appropriate with the proviso that the wider shot should not be such as would allow the coverage of a disturbance.

3.11 Guideline 8 - panning and split screen shots

3.11.1 The Committee has heard no direct evidence on this guideline from the point of view of the camera operators. However, as mentioned in the previous Chapter (paragraph 2.13.5), the Committee is prepared to relax the conditions applying to broadcasters in the use of split-screen shots. This relaxation of the conditions for broadcasters has no effect on the guidelines for camera operators. It is the Committee's view that the feed provided to the broadcasters should continue to follow these guidelines, even if the broadcasters themselves choose to use the split-screen shot in their own productions.

3.12 Guideline 9 - Members' papers

3.12.1 The rationale for retaining this guideline is self explanatory. The guideline should be retained.

3.13 Guideline 10 - Speaker's instructions

3.13.1 As for the conditions governing the broadcasting of proceedings, the only

²⁵ Submission 20 p. 3.

suggestion to improve this guideline relates to the identification of the Speaker's delegate.

3.14 Conclusion

3.14.1 The Committee believes that the guidelines adopted for the trial period have generally been adequate. However, as with the conditions which govern the broadcasting of proceedings, the development of guidelines for camera operators is also an evolutionary process.

3.14.2 The Committee has developed a revised set of guidelines for operators of the sound and vision equipment in the light of this review. These revised guidelines incorporate the Committee's recommendations in this section of the report. They are included at Appendix G.

3.14.3 These revised guidelines refer specifically to the recording of proceedings within the House of Representatives Chamber. The Committee is aware that proceedings of the House also take place away from the Chamber, in committee rooms and in interstate venues. Guidelines for the media in such situations are discussed in Chapter 5 of this Report in the section dealing with committees.

3.14.4 RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that :

- (a) the House adopt the revised guidelines for operators of the sound and vision equipment attached to this Report at Appendix G; and**
- (b) the guidelines be further reviewed prior to the end of the Autumn Sitting of the House in 1993.**

CHAPTER 4

DIFFICULTIES

4.1 Teething Problems

4.1.1 The trial period of televising proceedings of the House has been a learning experience for all those involved - the camera operators, the broadcasters and the Members themselves. It is natural therefore, that as part of the learning experience some mistakes may be made and confusion may sometimes occur. Indeed this is just what did happen and why this review is a timely evaluation of the experiment.

4.1.2 It is acknowledged that even from the first day (12 February 1991) there was a problem with the live broadcast of proceedings. Question Time was due to commence at its usual 2.00 o'clock timeslot. However, the motion for the trial period was not moved until after a condolence motion for a former Member and Minister, the Hon. Gordon Bryant, had been debated - closer to 3.00 o'clock. In this situation the ABC decided not to commence televising once the motion had been passed because of the uncertainty and because of other programming commitments. The following day Question Time was televised live.

4.1.3 Since then there have been a number of possible breaches of the guidelines, by both the ABC and the commercial networks, which have been brought to the attention of the Speaker. As previously mentioned, a list of these possible breaches is included at Appendix E.

4.2 Different Guidelines

4.2.1 Most of the broadcasters have indicated that the main difficulties which they have experienced in complying with the guidelines relate to the existence of different guidelines for television which apply to the Senate and the House.

4.2.2 The Seven Network submitted to the Committee that 'we regard (the existence of different guidelines for the Senate and the House) as confusing and unnecessary. Issuing two sets of guidelines to editors, producers and reporters across the five stations of the Seven Network significantly increases the margin for error'.¹ Similarly Network Ten advances the argument that 'this divergence creates confusion in the minds of tape editors and journalists working under deadline pressure'.² The ABC also drew the Committee's attention to the differences in guidelines.³

4.2.3 Unlike the guidelines which apply to the House, the Senate guidelines provide for broadcasting of the adjournment debate, points of order and withdrawal. They have no restriction on the use of parliamentary footage for television station promotion. Neither the rule governing rebroadcast of deletions from Hansard nor penalties apply in the Senate guidelines.

4.2.4 The networks and the Department of the House of Representatives favour a common set of guidelines for both Houses. This view is shared by the Hon. Wal Fife, MP, who submitted that 'I am ... of the opinion that the guidelines should be common, as far as practical, to both Houses'.⁴ The majority of networks indicated that they have

¹ Submission 14 p. 4.

² Submission 13 p. 2.

³ Submission 21 p. 4.

⁴ Submission 9 p. 1.

a preference for the guidelines of the Senate⁵, although Mr Bongiorno of Network Ten argues that 'even the Senate guidelines are unnecessarily restrictive'.⁶

4.2.5 The Committee notes the concerns of the broadcasters over the different guidelines which may have caused them some difficulty during the trial period. However, the Committee is of the view that the House has its own requirements which, although they may coincide with those of the Senate in many respects, will not always be exactly the same. The dynamic and unique nature of the House of Representatives requires that in some instances different guidelines will be required. However, as previously mentioned in this Report, it is the Committee's expressed wish that over the years the guidelines may evolve in harmony with those of the other place and consistent with those which apply to radio broadcasting of excerpts. The Committee's earlier recommendation to include the adjournment debate in proceedings authorised for coverage is an example of its commitment to these ends. In this regard the Senate amended its own guidelines to include the adjournment debate.

4.3 Television versus Radio

4.3.1 A second difficulty experienced by broadcasters concerns the difference in guidelines between those which apply to radio broadcasting of proceedings and those which apply to televising of proceedings.

4.3.2 Unlike the House guidelines for television, the radio guidelines, which apply to both Houses, permit the broadcasting of the adjournment debate, points of order and withdrawals. There is no restriction on the use of parliamentary material for station promotion and penalties are not implied.

4.3.3 The ABC submitted to the Committee that 'televising guidelines should be common to both Houses, clear in both intention and application, and consistent with the

⁵ Submissions 13, 14 and 21 and Evidence p. 70.

⁶ Evidence p. 119.

radio broadcast guidelines'.⁷ They also indicated that viewers critical of a particular presentation expressed surprise when told that the guidelines prohibit them from showing what has been widely reported on the radio and in the print media.⁸

4.3.4 The Committee notes these concerns and indeed has recognised the validity of some comments in making recommendations for change to the conditions governing televising. Such recommended changes as the permitting broadcasting of the adjournment debate and removal of restrictions on use of parliamentary excerpts in station promotion demonstrate the Committee's commitment to developing a set of guidelines which, in due course, will closely match those relating to radio broadcasting.

4.4 Television versus the Print Media

4.4.1 The third aspect of differences in guidelines to which broadcasters found it difficult to adapt relates to the differences between the television medium and the print medium. The Seven Network began their submission by questioning the rationale for any restrictions on television broadcasters, 'particularly since no such restrictions apply to our colleagues in the print media'.⁹

4.4.2 In evidence to the Committee witnesses were asked to comment on this perceived difficulty. Mr Paul Bongiorno, Network Ten, submitted that:

There are such things in newspapers as cartoons which daily hold up to ridicule our leaders, our politicians and our church leaders at times. They make them look very silly and we all laugh at them.

⁷ Submission 21 p. 4.

⁸ Evidence p. 20.

⁹ Submission 14 p. 1.

On television, if you are going to do, for example, a political satire or cartoon, naturally enough you are going to hold up the politicians or our leaders to some sort of ridicule.¹⁰

4.4.3 The Committee views the medium of television as being a much more powerful medium than any other and therefore discounts any suggestion that televising of proceedings should be as unrestricted as publishing in newspapers and magazines.

4.5 Interpretation of the Guidelines

4.5.1 The Committee also received evidence from organisations indicating that interpretation of the guidelines had caused them some difficulty. Network Ten, for example, related a particular experience when they had difficulty in determining what constituted the rebroadcast of a point of order. In an attachment to the Network Ten submission, Mr Paul Bongiorno contended that 'I did not rebroadcast a point of order as stipulated in Term 2(g) of the Conditions ... I do not consider one word a rebroadcasting of a point of order'.¹¹ The Department of the House of Representatives also drew the Committee's attention to the need to clarify what constitutes a point of order.¹²

4.5.2 In order to assist broadcasters to interpret the guidelines SAVO, who have been asked on many occasions what certain conditions mean, have indicated their willingness to assist with briefing senior media representatives in order to clarify the definition of each guideline.¹³

¹⁰ Evidence p. 129.

¹¹ Submission 13, Annexure dated 24 May 1991.

¹² Submission 22 p. 13.

¹³ Submission 20 p. 4.

4.5.3 The Committee has earlier in this Report referred to the role of the Broadcasting Committee and of the possible expansion of its role. At present the Secretary of that Joint Committee edits the radio rebroadcast of House Question Time. It is the Committee's view that the Secretary's role in editing Question Time for the radio would continue and expand to include the televised rebroadcast of Question Time.

4.6 Application of the Guidelines

4.6.1 The ABC, being the major user of the signal produced by the SAVO, indicated that, in addition to the difficulties identified above with different guidelines, they had experienced significant difficulties in relation to the excerpting conditions.

4.6.2 They cited three examples to illustrate the problems created by the trial excerpting conditions:

(i) On 8 May, when the Prime Minister referred to the Opposition as 'a bunch of crooks', the radio and print media reported the event but as far as viewers watching the television news that night were concerned, it might not have happened.

(ii) On 16 May, when the Member for O'Connor was ejected from the House following a point of order, television reports were able to show his ejection but not its cause. Radio and print media gave a fuller account of the incident.

(iii) On 6 March, when the Member for Bennelong was asked to withdraw and did withdraw but was named, we technically breached the conditions by running the Speaker's direction to withdraw. We did so because it was in the middle of a rapid exchange between the Speaker and the Member. To have removed it would have been to distort those proceedings.¹⁴

4.6.3 It appears that the difficulty facing the ABC on these occasions was not so much a problem of interpretation of the guidelines, but one of application.

¹⁴ Submission 21 p. 7.

4.6.4 A further area of difficulty which the ABC outlined in their submission concerns the editing of Question Time for late night replay. They submit that the conditions are 'unintentionally distorting the public transmission of those proceedings' and that the average duration of Question Time replays is 'almost 5 minutes shorter than for the live telecasts due to the replay conditions'.¹⁵

4.6.5 The ABC commented that 'if the guidelines were intended to protect context and guard against deliberate or accidental distortion and sensationalising, their application to full replays threatens to achieve the opposite'.¹⁶ Further, they contend that some viewers have voiced concern about the editing process applied to House Question Time replays. 'On days when contentious proceedings (eg points of order) have already received wide radio and newspaper coverage their exclusion from a Question Time television replay appears pointless'.¹⁷ Their preference is to replay the full presentation of Question Time at night rather than an edited version, particularly in view of the fact that unlike the day schedule, they have no scheduling problems at night.¹⁸

4.6.6 The Committee accepts that the ABC may have some problems coping with the requirements of editing House of Representatives Question Time for late night replay. However, at this stage of the evolution of the guidelines for televising, it is not appropriate to relax the conditions governing the rebroadcast of withdrawal and points of order. Similar conditions relate to the delayed broadcast of question time on radio and there do not seem to be the same difficulties.

¹⁵ Submission 21 p. 4 Appendix G of the ABC submission lists examples of the editing problems experienced by them in presenting the Question Time replay - on 6 March, 17 April, 8 May, 13 May and 15 May.

¹⁶ Submission 21 p. 4.

¹⁷ Submission 21 p. 4.

¹⁸ Evidence p. 17.

4.7 Monitoring of the Guidelines

4.7.1 The Department of the House of Representatives submitted that the immediate impact on the Department has been on the officers involved in monitoring the guidelines.¹⁹

4.7.2 As noted earlier an officer of the Department has the responsibility of maintaining a list of possible breaches. The breaches are identified in a number of ways, from a view of the nightly news, from comments by the public or by a Member raising the matter in the House.

4.7.3 Mr Barlin, Clerk of the House, indicated his preference for the supervisor of broadcasting in SAVO to exercise a monitoring role with respect to the proceedings of the Australian Parliament.²⁰

4.7.4 The Committee is cognisant of the difficulties associated with monitoring of the guidelines and, as previously mentioned, recommends that Members themselves play a major role in monitoring the broadcasts and reporting any possible breaches of the guidelines to the House representatives on the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings.

4.7.5 The Committee concurs with the view expressed by Mr Beazley, MP, that monitoring of adherence to the guidelines is desirable and that a clear message must be sent to the television networks 'that the letter and spirit of the rules for televising the House are to be strictly followed'.²¹

¹⁹ Submission 22 p. 9.

²⁰ Evidence p. 105.

²¹ Submission 23 p. 1.

CHAPTER 5

OTHER MATTERS

5.1 Committee Proceedings

5.1.1 There is no provision under statute or the standing orders of the House for the televising of committee proceedings; nor is televising expressly forbidden. However the traditional view has been that a committee should not permit the televising or filming, with sound, of its hearings without the authority of the House. This view has been taken because it was seen as desirable for a uniform approach to be taken to the question, rather than having committees making ad hoc arrangements. In addition, it has been felt that if a problem arises in relation to the use of footage taken, the position of the committee would be much stronger if it were acting with the authority of the House.

5.1.2 Despite the absence of any formal authority from the House, it has become reasonably common for some footage to be taken, without sound, at committee meetings or prior to the start of the meeting. This footage has been used as background to news reports. These excerpts are particularly valued by the media especially when they are aware that the key statement is to be made to a committee or a committee is to hear a particular piece of information on a given day. '(In that case) we would like to use (the footage) as the basis of excerpt material in a current affairs program'.¹

¹ Evidence p. 45.

5.1.3 Whilst media networks favoured access to public proceedings of committees, many reported that they had experienced significant problems in this regard. These problems relate largely to the conflicting rulings on access by various chairpersons and the location of some committee hearings outside Parliament House in Canberra.

5.1.4 The ABC told the Committee that:

At the moment the chairman of the committee, usually on a motion or a vote of the committee itself, allows coverage. This system has meant that a number of committees have been covered in various ways.²

and that:

There have been committee hearings outside Canberra that we have been interested in covering but it tends to be the case that the further you get away the more difficult they are to cover for any sustained period.³

5.1.5 The ABC also referred to the problem of resources in the 'live' covering of committees:

The problem with covering committees is resources. If we want to cover a committee for a full day we have to devote a camera crew for a full day which quite often we cannot afford.⁴

5.1.6 In their submission, the Department of the House of Representatives pointed out that during its inquiry into the banking industry, the Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration, after consultation with the Department of the House of Representatives, adopted a resolution which not only permitted televising but set out conditions.⁵

² Evidence p. 44.

³ Evidence p. 45.

⁴ Evidence pp. 44-45.

⁵ Submission 22 p. 7.

5.1.7 A uniform set of conditions covering the televising of committee hearings was generally supported by SAVO, the Department and the networks.

5.1.8 Mr Harvey of the Nine Network expressed a preference for the guidelines which apply to all Senate committees. He told the Committee:

The Senate committees say they have no problems and do not have any problems in allowing television cameras in. The House committees tend not to allow television cameras in, apart from natural sound footage at the beginning. I think all of us would like to see the system that the Senate committees use adopted by the House so that we could cover committee hearings.⁶

5.1.9 The Committee notes the concerns expressed by the Department of the House of Representatives about the difficulties which televising of committee proceedings pose:

These relate not only to the legal position of the parties involved, but also, for example, to the rights and legitimate interests of witnesses and third parties who may be the subject of comment in the proceedings conducted under privilege. ... Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are real concerns that the interests of witnesses need recognition in relation to televising. Giving evidence before a committee can be a difficult and stressful experience, especially for persons who may not be used to the environment or experienced and confident in such matters. The presence of camera crews etc. can add significantly to the moment of such proceedings, and the use of material recorded could ... be a cause of concern to some'.⁷

5.1.10 One of the media representatives also noted:

I wonder whether there is a perception that television is more intrusive in committee proceedings, and proceedings of all sorts of things generally, than is print and, to some extent, radio because there is fairly bulky camera gear still involved in doing it.⁸

⁶ Evidence p. 156.

⁷ Submission 22 p. 16.

⁸ Evidence p. 171.

5.1.11 According to the Department of the House of Representatives a further difficulty relates to the reduced control over the televising of proceedings in locations away from Canberra and Parliament House where, according to the Department, 'we would be more at the mercy ... of the camera angles ... and the selective presentation (which independent operators) choose to make'.⁹

5.1.12 The Committee recognises the increased interest of the public in the proceedings of committees; the need for the House to delegate to its committees the authority to permit the televising of committee proceedings and for a common set of guidelines to be adopted, guidelines which afford witnesses a degree of protection such as applies in the Senate.

5.1.13 In their submission the Department of the House of Representatives submitted a set of draft guidelines for camera operators. These guidelines are set out below. The Committee believes that these guidelines represent a useful framework for granting access to the public proceedings of committees.

5.1.14 The guidelines provide for notice to be given to witnesses and also provide guidelines for the camera operators. As with all of the guidelines and conditions proposed in this Report, these too could be subject to review in 1993.

5.1.15 GUIDELINES FOR COMMITTEES

- 1. Only public hearings may be broadcast or televised. It is for the committee to decide in all cases whether such coverage will be permitted. The committee may at any time withdraw any approval granted.**
- 2. Members of the press and members of the public shall not encroach into the committee's working area nor issue instructions to members of the committee nor to persons giving evidence for the purposes of filming.**

⁹ Evidence p. 109.

3. Filming of documents in the possession of committee members, witnesses and/or committee staff is prohibited.
4. Excerpts may be taken from proceedings of the committee (whether or not the proceedings are being continuously broadcast).
5. Excerpts are not to be used for the purposes of satire or ridicule.
6. Excerpts shall not be used for the purposes of political party advertising or in election campaigns.
7. Fairness and accuracy and a general overall balance must be observed.
8. Excerpts must be placed in context. Commentators should identify members by name.
9. Anything occurring in the gallery is not part of the proceedings and should not be used.
10. Where excerpts are used on commercial television networks, any advertising that occurs either before or after excerpts of the committee's proceedings are shown should not in any way reflect on or detract from those proceedings.
11. Where a committee intends to permit the broadcasting or televising of its proceedings, a witness who is to appear shall be given reasonable opportunity, before appearing, to object and to state the ground of the objection. The committee shall consider any such objection, having regard to the proper protection of the witness and the public interest in the proceedings, and if the committee decides to proceed notwithstanding the witness' objection, the witness shall be so informed before appearing in the proceedings.

12. Access to proceedings for the purpose of broadcasting, televising or recording excerpts shall be on the basis of an undertaking to observe these conditions and those conditions which apply to the general broadcasting of proceedings of the House of Representatives which are not inconsistent with these guidelines.

5.1.16 RECOMMENDATION 6

The Committee recommends that:

- (a) the House authorises the televising of public proceedings of its committees;
- (b) the guidelines set out above be adopted for the televising of all House committees; and
- (c) the guidelines be reviewed as part of the review of conditions governing televising of the House itself in 1993.

5.1.17 RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that, to provide statutory recognition, the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946 be amended to formalise the arrangement for televising committee proceedings.

5.2 Scheduling of Question Time Broadcasts

5.2.1 The ABC began regular telecasts from the House of Representatives on 12 February 1991. It had previously commenced televising proceedings from the Senate in August 1990. To televise Question Time from both Houses to a nation-wide audience, ABC-TV scheduled two transmissions on each sitting day, one live between 2.00 pm and 3.00 pm Australian Eastern Time, the other a late evening replay. In all Question Time was televised live on 40 occasions (23 from the House and 17 from the Senate) and replayed 36 times (13 from the House and 23 from the Senate).¹⁰

¹⁰ Submission 21 p. 2 and Appendix A.

5.2.2 Whilst the scheduling of radio broadcasts is determined by the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings, no such authority determines the scheduling of television broadcasts.

5.2.3 The Committee recognises that, in practice, and in accordance with one of the principles adopted by the Broadcasting Committee in determining broadcast days, more time will be allotted to the House of Representatives than the Senate.

5.2.4 The ABC submitted that 'the distribution of the Question Time telecasts was chosen by ABC-TV, in the absence of any direction from the Parliament, as being in the best interests of its viewers. The current televising schedule ensures there is an approximate balance in live television coverage of Question Time from both Houses during the year'.¹¹

5.2.5 They also drew the Committee's attention to the scheduling and switching problems they face if Question Time exceeds the usual 60 minute time slot. Mr Macintosh and Mr White indicated that, if Question Time runs over 63 or 64 minutes 'the entire wrath of under five Australia ...(and their parents) ... descends upon us'.¹² The same problems of scheduling and switching also prevent the ABC from commencing the telecast 22 seconds earlier.¹³

5.2.6 Mr White told the Committee:

Scheduling and sticking to switching patterns is now, if anything, more important than it has ever been for that reason - the satellite configuration.¹⁴

¹¹ Submission 21 p. 6.

¹² Evidence pp. 9-10.

¹³ Evidence p. 19.

¹⁴ Evidence p. 10.

5.2.7 The Committee accepts that the ABC is attempting to provide balance in its presentation of Question Time from both Chambers. It acknowledges that any imbalance, as foreshadowed in the ABC's proposed parliamentary telecasts for the 1991 Budget Session reflects the differences in the number of sitting days in each House. However the situation whereby the same House is both televised and broadcast live is not only an irritant but unacceptable. At present the Broadcasting Committee determines radio broadcasts, while the ABC determines which House is to be televised. Should the Broadcasting Act be amended, this matter could be addressed by the Broadcasting Committee.

5.3 Late Changes to the Televising Schedule

5.3.1 ABC-TV advised the House and Senate last March of their desire to make late changes to the televising schedule if and when events in the Parliament so warranted. In their submission, the ABC pointed out that four such changes were subsequently made during the Autumn session (viz. 13 March, 28 May, 29 May and 3 June). House and Senate officials were advised immediately when the decision was taken to vary the normal schedule and efforts were made to advise viewers accordingly.

5.3.2 In evidence to the Committee, witnesses from the ABC made it clear that late changes to the schedule were not appreciated by viewers and that they 'copped a bit of flak' when such changes occurred, even though most viewers were later satisfied by the explanation for the change.¹⁵

5.3.3 The Committee recognises the ABC's right to make changes to the schedule but suggests that these changes be kept to a minimum as both Members and the public have expectations about scheduling. At the same time there needs to be a recognition with the media that the House is primarily a legislative body, and as such it cannot be entirely predictable; to be otherwise would be to destroy much of the spontaneity of the proceedings, particularly during Question Time.

¹⁵ Evidence p. 12.

5.4 Radio and Television Scheduling

5.4.1 Two submissions¹⁶, including one from Mr Philip Ruddock, MP, drew the Committee's attention to problems experienced by the current scheduling arrangements whereby the House which is televised live is also the same House which is broadcast on the radio. The suggestion in both submissions is that each Chamber could be covered by radio and television on an alternating basis.

5.4.2 Mr Ruddock submitted that 'The main problem is that both radio and television broadcast the same Chamber on the same day, rather than covering one each on an alternating basis.'¹⁷

5.4.3 The ABC also advised the Committee that complaints had been received from viewers on this same point.¹⁸

5.4.4 In response the complaints and queries, the ABC submits that:

to change the TV schedule to alternate with the long-established radio broadcast schedule would be to markedly reduce the annual number of live telecasts of House Question Time whilst significantly increasing those from the Senate. The approximate balance between the two Houses under the current television distribution would thus be lost.... It should be further noted that available data indicate the estimated size of the television audience for live House Question Time (68,550 viewers) is significantly higher than the comparable radio audience.

They conclude by stating that 'it is not in the interests of either the House or ABC-TV viewers to change the current televising schedule'.¹⁹

¹⁶ Submissions 3 and 8.

¹⁷ Submission 8 p. 1.

¹⁸ Submission 21 p. 6.

¹⁹ Submission 21 p. 6.

5.4.5 The Committee accepts that there may be instances where the alternate broadcasting would be helpful to some viewers/listeners. However, on balance, this does not appear to be a practical option given existing broadcasting constraints and the absence of a dedicated channel for the televising of parliamentary proceedings.

5.4.6 RECOMMENDATION 8

The Committee recommends that the Joint Broadcasting Committee review the scheduling for radio broadcasting of proceedings of the House and the Senate.

5.5 Use of Sub-titles

5.5.1 The Committee received suggestions to improve the presentation of parliamentary telecasts for the benefit of the general public.²⁰ The suggestions relate to the more frequent use of captions or sub-titles to identify speakers by their name, party, electorate and/or position and the identification by either sub-titles or commentary of the actual procedures taking place.

5.5.2 In the words of Mr and Mrs Jackson, private citizens:

one of the hallmarks of the best documentaries is the timely and unobtrusive use of subtitles. A brief dissolve on and off (every minute or so) of the name and seat of the speaker would give an air of professionalism to the telecast, and help those viewers not familiar with Member's names.²¹

5.5.3 The same individuals indicate that:

in the radio coverage of House sittings, there is often an interesting background commentary by the announcer. We would welcome such a discussion in the

²⁰ Submissions 18 and 22.

²¹ Submission 18 p. 1.

television coverage - either before or after the telecast. Perhaps it may even be possible to have an 'up-date' before the telecast commences, and a post-mortem afterwards.²²

5.5.4 Interest in the use of sub-titles or commentary to improve public understanding of proceedings was also expressed by the Department of the House of Representatives and SBS²³, although it is recognised that too much voice-over can be intrusive.²⁴

5.5.5 The Committee accepts that the use of sub-titles in particular can have the additional benefit of improving access to parliamentary proceedings to the aurally impaired. Proposals for the use of sub-script or a sign language insert on the screen were discussed with representatives of the SAVO and some media organisations during public hearings.

5.5.6 The Committee acknowledges that the provision of a sign language insert may be less cost effective than the provision of sub-titles or sub-script, even though SBS indicated that it can and has been done.²⁵ According to SAVO:

We would have to have a look at that. First of all, we would have to find someone to do it and then we would have to arrange the facilities to either split screen or put a box at the bottom of the screen for the sign language person to be seen. Of the two, probably captioning would be simpler for us. But we could certainly have a look at those suggestions.²⁶

²² Submission 18 p. 2.

²³ Submission 22 p. 21, Evidence p. 68.

²⁴ Evidence p. 111.

²⁵ SBS indicated that they have produced a number of important programs using sign language and an Auslan sign person. Evidence p. 68.

²⁶ Evidence p. 94.

5.5.7 The Committee urges the broadcasters to examine the feasibility of extending the current use of sub-titles, to meet not only the expressed needs of the public, but also the special needs of the deaf.

5.5.8 For special events, such as the Budget Speech and reply, where the script is known in advance, there may be considerable benefit in scrolling the text of the speech on the screen. The Committee urges SAVO to examine the feasibility of this approach, with the possibility of trialing it at the earliest possible opportunity.

5.5.9 On a related matter, the Committee also explored with SBS the possibility of using community languages other than English to introduce parliamentary programs. Mr Andrew Potter, SBS, pointed out the difficulties associated with this proposal, not least of which would be choosing which of the many community languages would be used.²⁷

5.6 Still Photography

5.6.1 The Committee received evidence from the Department of the House of Representatives that the print media is concerned at the inequity of the current conditions whereby Chamber photography is only allowed under special conditions.²⁸

5.6.2 In an effort to alleviate their concerns, whilst at the same time not permitting 'unfettered access' by photographers to the Chamber, the Department has advocated that consideration be given to grant the print media access to the SAVO 'feed'. Such photographs have principally been used by the Parliamentary Education Office, but the Committee recognises that the facility would have a far broader appeal as, in addition to the print media, Members and Senators might well wish to avail themselves of the facility.

²⁷ Evidence p. 67.

²⁸ Submission 22 p. 19.

5.6.3 This proposal has now been explored by the Committee with the SAVO and other media organisations, all of whom are supportive of the proposal, or at least have no objection to it. The Committee has seen examples of the quality of such 'stills' taken from the 'feed' and are satisfied that it represents a viable alternative to improve access to Chamber shots by the print media. The costs of such photographs would need to be considered.

5.6.4 According to SAVO:

We have a facility called a video copy processor downstairs which cost about \$8,000. It was the only one on the market at the time that could provide an A4 print-out from a video signal onto, basically, a polaroid-type image. Yesterday you saw some examples of that. The machine that we have at the moment is used principally in conjunction with the Education Office. It provides material from the proceedings for use in its packages and the material it sends out to schools. It pays the consumable costs for that, which is approximately \$5 a photograph.²⁹

5.6.5 Requests for the service would be likely to be able to be met within existing staffing resources, providing the requests were made within a week of the event. Costs associated with the recovery of stored footage would have to be borne if the request came later. The cost implications for media groups wanting immediate access to the service would have to be explored, as would the staffing implications. SAVO expressed a preference for the media groups to purchase the necessary equipment and make the 'stills' themselves.³⁰

5.6.6 RECOMMENDATION 9

The Committee recommends that the SAVO make the necessary arrangements to accommodate requests from Members, Senators and the print media for access to 'stills' from their 'feed' on a cost recovery basis.

²⁹ Evidence p. 83.

³⁰ Evidence pp. 84-86.

5.7 Extension of Access to SAVO signal

5.7.1 An additional suggestion drawn to the Committee's attention in two submissions³¹ relates to the possibility of extending access to the signal transmitted by the SAVO on the House monitoring system to government departments, political party headquarters and other institutions. SAVO indicated that:

Other government departments have expressed great interest in being able to get the House monitoring system feed from Channel 1 and Channel 2 for their use while Parliament is sitting. ... All the coordinating departments want it and quite a few of the line departments would like it as well. They see great advantage in being able to get a proper coverage of the proceedings of either Chamber, principally so they can support their Ministers'.³²

5.7.2 At present the House monitoring system is limited to offices within the Parliament. The Department of the House of Representatives advised the Committee that any consideration of extending access to others in the manner described may present difficulties as it is uncertain whether publication of parliamentary proceedings by way of landlines and monitors is covered by parliamentary privilege.³³

5.7.3 The Committee received evidence from the SAVO that 'the signals could be provided at no cost to the Parliament via the Telecom fibre-optic communications network currently being installed in the Barton region, which includes Parliament House and a number of major government buildings'.³⁴

5.7.4 Extending the SAVO signal in this way would seem to be a useful improvement designed to improve access to parliamentary proceedings to those who would benefit greatly from such access. Whilst SAVO claim that they could provide the signal at no

³¹ Submissions 20 and 22.

³² *Evidence* p. 82.

³³ Submission 22 p. 20.

³⁴ Submission 20 p. 2.

additional cost now³⁵ the Committee would seek a formal undertaking that the service would be provided on a cost recovery basis and that very strict guidelines would be developed to control the use of the signal.

5.7.5 RECOMMENDATION 10

The Committee recommends that the Government seek advice from the Attorney-General as to the position of bodies authorised to receive the signal of proceedings. Subject to this advice, the Committee recommends SAVO prepare a fully costed feasibility proposal for consideration by the Speaker to extend access to the SAVO signal by government departments, political party headquarters and others.

5.8 International Interest

5.8.1 While the televising of the House is of interest to Australians there has also been some overseas interest. A network in the United States - C-SPAN - (the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network) has expressed an interest in re-broadcasting the budget address. The network also 'wanted to talk about a future relationship for a fixed timeslot replay of Australian Parliament material on the C-SPAN network.'³⁶

5.8.2 In a letter of 26 June 1991 C-SPAN provided some background on its operations:

For the past eleven years, our television network has been broadcasting live coverage of the entire proceedings of the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1986, we added a second network, C-SPAN 2, to bring our viewers coverage of the United States Senate. Then as we continued to grow, we added occasional coverage of various parliaments around the world, including the British House of Commons, and the Canadian House of Commons. We now have a regular slot every Sunday evening at 9:00 pm eastern time for the British Question Time.

³⁵ Evidence p. 83.

³⁶ Evidence p. 87.

5.8.3 The C-SPAN programs are carried by over 3000 cable systems to a potential 40 million viewers. To have exposure on such a network would provide an opportunity for Australia to relay its concerns about the policies of the United States Administration.

5.8.4 The C-SPAN opportunity is one which should be pursued by the Sound and Vision Office not only in relation to the budget speech and reply but also in terms of a regular weekly program. As noted earlier C-SPAN already covers the British and Canadian Houses of Commons.

5.9 A Parliamentary Program

5.9.1 The possibility of a regular program about the Australian parliament on overseas networks raises the question as to whether there should be a similar program available to Australian networks.

5.9.2 The ABC advised that it had considered such a program:

Certainly the idea is there; it has always been there since the televising of Parliament was discussed over the years. At the moment there is no definite plan to proceed with that program; it is on the consideration board;³⁷

while the Nine Network referred to one of its programs:

I understand the producers of the *Sunday* program have thought along those lines; in fact, when Parliament is in session, the *Sunday* program's *Week in Review* invariably has a segment that reports the highlights of the week in Parliament as it reports the highlights of the week. Beyond that, I am not aware of any other area, but certainly the *Sunday* program does that.³⁸

5.9.3 It had also been considered by the Seven network:

³⁷ Evidence p. 15.

³⁸ Evidence p. 155.

One of the things that we looked at within the news division at Channel 7 was actually a sort of 'This Week in Parliament', or whatever we were going to call it. It was a review of the proceedings of the Parliament when it was sitting on a weekly basis. Unhappily, the proposal never went outside the news department to the programmers.³⁹

5.9.4 An alternative suggested by SAVO was:

....for the Parliament, through the Sound and Vision Office working with the two chamber departments, to prepare a one-hour or 45 minute program each day. It would then be purely a parliamentary production. We would take responsibility for what went into it.⁴⁰

5.9.5 The proposal by SAVO has much to commend it, whether it would be accepted and re-broadcast by the networks is another matter. It is however a matter worthy of further investigation.

5.9.6 **RECOMMENDATION 11**

The Committee recommends SAVO investigate the possibility of preparing a weekly program of about one hour's duration on what happened in Parliament.

5.10 **Discussion Group**

5.10.1 The proposed hourly program on what happened in Parliament during the week could and should be discussed with the networks. It would provide an opportunity too for the networks to have an input into the program.

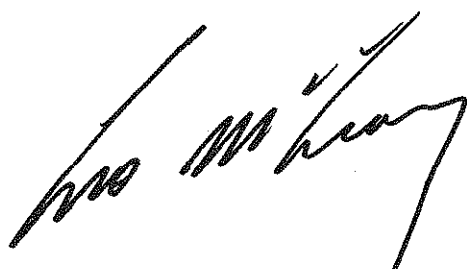
³⁹ Evidence p. 165.

⁴⁰ Evidence p. 98.

5.10.2 There are sure to be other matters which could be discussed at such a meeting. Matters to be considered include difficulties with the guideline arrangements for a special event and perhaps problems with the broadcasts.

5.10.3 **RECOMMENDATION 12**

The Committee recommends that a group comprising representatives of the networks, the Chamber departments and the Sound and Vision Office be established to discuss matters of mutual concern in regard to the broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Representatives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leo McLeay', with a long, sweeping underline.

Hon. LEO McLEAY, MP
Speaker

August 1991

APPENDIX A

SUBMISSIONS

Number:	From:	Date:
1.	Mr Will Day PERTH WA	19/6/91
2.	Mr A Raymond HIGHVALE QLD	16/6/91
3.	Mr John Moran CANBERRA ACT	24/6/91
4.	(Submission Withdrawn)	
5.	Mr Wilson Tuckey, MP Member for O'Connor, WA	4/7/91
6.	Mr Andrew Priest WANNEROO WA	4/7/91
7.	Mr Kevin Fletcher BELLBIRD NSW	18/5/91 (f o r w a r d e d 10/7/91)
8.	Mr Philip Ruddock, MP Member for Dundas, NSW	24/6/91
9.	Hon. Wal Fife, MP Member for Hume, NSW	6/7/91
10.	Mr David Francis Executive Director Curriculum Corporation CARLTON VIC	8/7/91
11.	Mr Tim Fischer, MP Leader of the National Party Member for Farrer, NSW	11/7/91
12.	Mr Jim Snow, MP Member for Eden-Monaro, NSW	11/7/91

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| 13. | Mr Paul Bongiorno
Bureau Chief
Network Ten
CANBERRA ACT | 14/7/91 |
| 14. | Mr Bob Johnson
News and Current Affairs Director
The Seven Network
EPPING NSW | 17/7/91 |
| 15. | Mr Peter Harvey
Canberra Bureau
National Nine Network
CANBERRA ACT | 19/7/91 |
| 16. | Ms Kathy Cook
Social Science Consultant
Ministry of Education
EAST PERTH WA | 19/7/91 |
| 17. | Mr Andrew Potter
Director
TV News and Current Affairs
Special Broadcasting Service
MILSON'S POINT NSW | 16/7/91 |
| 18. | Mr B and Mrs R Jackson
CHATSWOOD WEST NSW | 11/7/91 |
| 19. | Mr John Hodgman
Director
Videopak Programme Sales
FRENCHS FOREST NSW | 15/7/91 |
| 20. | Mr J W Templeton
Secretary
Department of the Parliamentary
Reporting Staff
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT | 22/7/91 |
| 21. | Mr David Hill
Managing Director
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
SYDNEY NSW | 22/7/91 |

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| 22. | Mr Ian Harris
A/g Clerk of the House
Department of the House of
Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT | 18/7/91 |
| 23. | Hon. Kim Beazley, MP
Leader of the House
Member for Swan, WA | 30/7/91 |
| 24. | Mr Lyn Barlin
Clerk of the House
Department of the House of
Representatives
- additional submission | 9/8/91 |
| 25. | Mr Derek White
General Manager,
Corporate Relations
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
- additional submission | 7/8/91 |

APPENDIX B

WITNESSES

SYDNEY: MONDAY 5 AUGUST 1991

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Mr Russell Barton, Political Editor
Mr Ian Macintosh, Executive Producer, Television News and Current Affairs
Ms Ellen Rainson, Head of Research and Development (Television)
Mr Derek White, General Manager, Corporate Relations

Special Broadcasting Service

Mr Andrew Potter, Director, News and Current Affairs (TV)

CANBERRA: TUESDAY 6 AUGUST 1991

Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff

Mr Harry Hall, Manager, Sound and Vision Office
Mr John Templeton, Secretary

Department of the House of Representatives

Mr Lyn Barlin, Clerk of the House
Mr Ian Harris, Acting Deputy Clerk of the House

Network Ten Australia

Mr Paul Bongiorno, Bureau Chief

National Nine Network

Mr Peter Harvey, Canberra Director of News

Australian Television Network (Seven)

Mr Dennis Grant, Political Editor
Mr Bob Johnson, Network Director of News and Current Affairs

APPENDIX C

CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE TELEVISING OF PROCEEDINGS

1. The House authorises live broadcast and rebroadcast of House of Representatives proceedings, excluding debate on a motion for the adjournment of the House on television, for a trial period from 12 February 1991.
2. Access to the proceedings of the House of Representatives for the televising of proceedings is subject to an undertaking to observe, and to comply with, the following conditions:
 - (a) Televising may occur and recordings may be made only from channel 1 on the House monitoring system.
 - (b) *Televising shall be used only for the purposes of fair and accurate reports of proceedings, and shall not be used for:*
 - (i) political party advertising or election campaigns;
 - (ii) satire or ridicule;
 - (iii) commercial sponsorship or commercial advertising; or
 - (iv) television station advertisements or promotion.
 - (c) Reports of proceedings shall be such as to provide a balanced presentation of differing views.
 - (d) Remarks in respect of which a Member claims misrepresentation or otherwise seeks withdrawal, and which are subsequently ordered to be withdrawn, or are voluntarily withdrawn, are not to be rebroadcast.
 - (e) If the Speaker orders that a remark be deleted from Hansard, either at the time the remark was made or at a later time, the remark, the Speaker's direction and the proceedings relating to the matter, are not to be rebroadcast.
 - (f) Debate on a motion for the adjournment of the House shall not be broadcast.
 - (g) Points of order are not to be rebroadcast.
 - (h) Footage must be broadcast at normal speed without use of a freeze frame. Split screen shots are not to be used. Only synchronised sound and vision shall be rebroadcast.

- (i) Non compliance with the guidelines listed above will incur the following penalties for the stations involved:
 - (i) first breach - access to the broadcast service withdrawn for three sitting days;
 - (ii) second breach - access to the broadcast service withdrawn for six sitting days; or
 - (iii) such other penalty as is agreed by the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings.
- (j) The instructions of the Speaker of the House of Representatives or the Speaker's delegates in respect of the broadcasting which are not inconsistent with these conditions, shall be observed.

Serjeant-at-Arms' Office
12 February 1991

APPENDIX D

GUIDELINES FOR TECHNICAL STAFF OPERATING SOUND AND VISION EQUIPMENT

1. As a general principle cameras should focus on the Member with the call.
2. Fine tuning or variations to depths of field at the discretion of the operator is acceptable.
3. A wide-angle shot of the Chamber may be used during divisions and Question Time.
4. Reaction shots of a Member are permitted
 - when the Member has sought information which is being supplied by a Member having the call; or
 - when the Member is referred to in debate.
5. If an exchange between Members is too fast to permit normal camera switching, then a wider camera shot incorporating those involved in the exchange including the Chair is permitted.
6. Coverage of the Galleries and the advisers' seats is not permitted.
7. In the event of disturbance in the House the camera is to focus on the Chair.
8. No panning along the Benches or split screen shots shall be permitted.
9. Close up shots of Members' papers are not permitted.
10. Instructions from the Speaker or the Speaker's delegates in relation to the operation of sound and vision equipment in the House of Representatives shall be observed.

Serjeant-at-Arms' Office
12 February 1991

APPENDIX E **POSSIBLE BREACHES OF THE GUIDELINES**

1. AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

6 March 1991	News	Withdrawal of a reflection on the Chair. Proceedings shown out of sequence.
16 April 1991	7.30 Report	Did not provide fair and accurate report (balance) - withdrawal and apology not shown.
14 May 1991	News	Did not provide (photographic) balance

2. SPECIAL BROADCASTING SERVICE

14 March 1991		Economic/Industry Statement by Prime Minister shown live. Did not show reply by the Leader of the Opposition. An apology received from SBS.
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3. NETWORK TEN AUSTRALIA

19 February 1991		Implied Speaker given a cue by Treasurer. Lack of continuity.
16 May 1991		Part of a point of order by Mr Tuckey shown.

4. NATIONAL NINE NETWORK

6 March 1991		Withdrawal of a reflection on the Chair. Proceedings shown out of sequence.
14 June 1991		'Burke's Backyard' segment on Parliament House Courtyards has non-synchronised sound and vision.

5. AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION NETWORK (SEVEN)

8 May 1991		Statement and withdrawal by Prime Minister.
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APPENDIX F

PROPOSED CONDITIONS FOR BROADCASTERS

Authority to Broadcast

The House authorises live broadcast and rebroadcast of the proceedings and excerpts of proceedings of the House of Representatives, including the adjournment debate, on television from 12 September 1991.

Conditions

Access to the proceedings of the House of Representatives for the televising of proceedings is subject to an undertaking to observe, and to comply with, the following conditions:

1. Source of Recording

Broadcast and rebroadcast may occur and recordings may only be made from the official and dedicated, composite vision and sound feed provided by the Sound and Vision Office.

2. Fair and Accurate Reporting

Televising shall be used only for the purposes of fair and accurate reports of proceedings, and shall not be used for:

- (i) political party advertising or election campaigns;
- (ii) satire or ridicule;
- (iii) commercial sponsorship or commercial advertising.

Note: Where excerpts are used on commercial networks, the station should try to ensure that advertising before and after excerpts is of an appropriate nature.

3. Balanced Reporting

Reports of proceedings shall be such as to provide a balanced presentation of differing views.

4. Context

Excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context.

5. Withdrawn Remarks

Remarks in respect of which a Member claims misrepresentation or otherwise seeks withdrawal, and which are subsequently ordered to be withdrawn, or are voluntarily withdrawn, are not to be rebroadcast.

6. Deletions from Hansard

If the Speaker orders that a remark be deleted from Hansard, either at the time the remark was made or at a later time, the remark, the Speaker's direction and the proceedings relating to the matter, are not to be rebroadcast.

7. Points of Order

Points of order, and matters claimed to be points of order, are not to be rebroadcast.

8. Technical Restrictions

Footage must be broadcast at normal speed, with synchronised sound and vision.

9. Acknowledgement of Speaker's Gallery

Events in the galleries are not a part of the proceedings and should not generally be covered. However acknowledgement may be made of distinguished visitors in the Speaker's Gallery if the Speaker, or the Deputy Speaker, makes such a reference.

10. Privilege

Subject to an appropriate amendment to the Broadcasting Act, absolute privilege is to apply to live broadcasts. Qualified privilege only shall apply to broadcasters in the use of excerpts and delayed broadcasting of proceedings.

11. Speaker's Instructions

The instructions of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, or the Speaker's delegate, in respect of broadcasting, shall be observed.

12. Penalties

Non-compliance with the guidelines listed above may incur the following penalties for the stations involved:

- (i) first breach - access to the broadcast service withdrawn for three sitting days;
- (ii) second breach - access to the broadcast service withdrawn for six sitting days;
- (iii) such other penalty as is agreed by the House members on the Joint Broadcasting Committee.

Breaches of the guidelines shall be considered and determined by the House members on the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings.

NB Conditions are subject to review.

APPENDIX G

PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR CAMERA OPERATORS

1. As a general principle cameras should focus on the Member with the call. Shots should be no closer than 'head and shoulders'.
2. Fine tuning or variations to depths of field at the discretion of the operator is acceptable.
3. Wide-angle shots of the Chamber may be used during Divisions and Question Time. Sparing use of the wide-angle shot may be used at other times.
4. Reaction shots of a Member are permitted:
 - when the Member has sought information which is being supplied by a Member having the call; or
 - when the Member is referred to in debate; and
 - if the Member is in the designated seat.
5. If an exchange between Members is too fast to permit normal camera switching, then a wider camera shot incorporating those involved in the exchange, including the Chair, is permitted.
6. Coverage of the Galleries and the advisers' seats is not generally permitted except when distinguished visitors are referred to by the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker. In this case, the camera may focus briefly on that section of the Speaker's Gallery where the distinguished visitors are located.
7. In the event of unparliamentary behaviour or disturbance by strangers on the floor of the House, the camera is to focus on the Chair or a slightly wider angle shot of the Chamber which incorporates the Chair and the despatch boxes area but which does not show the offending incident.
8. No panning along the Benches shall be permitted.

9. No split-screen shots shall be permitted.
10. No close-up shots of Members' papers shall be permitted.
11. Instructions from the Speaker, or the Speaker's delegate, in relation to the operation of the sound and vision equipment in the House of Representatives, shall be observed.

NB Guidelines are subject to review.

