



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATIONS

31 August 2015

Senator Marshall  
Chair  
Procedure Committee

Dear Senator Marshall

Over the past year the Joint Committee of Publications (JCP) has been considering various developments relating to the Parliament being provided with documents in digital format. You would be aware that in 2010 the Committee recommended the implementation of an electronic Parliamentary Paper Series (ePPS). The ePPS was implemented in 2013 and there is now interest in broadening its scope to include all documents presented to Parliament. Earlier this year the JCP requested the Minister for Finance to provide it with the Australian Government Printing and Publications Review. The review and the Minister's accompanying letter recommend "efficiencies in the production of digital and printed communication". The JCP wrote to the Minister indicating its support for online publishing and its role in continuing to identify efficiencies for the Parliamentary Papers Series. The JCP has also been briefed by the Senate Public Information Office about the e-chamber (ParkWork) project being undertaken by the Department of Parliamentary Services and how that project plans to provide a dedicated access point for documents presented to parliament on any sitting day. This project, of course, has the JCP's full support.

With this background in mind, the JCP has reviewed the standing orders which establish the powers of the committee, with particular reference to whether they remain relevant in respect of digital document developments. It was noted that the House standing orders and Senate standing orders differ (see attachment 1), with the Senate standing orders retaining a reference to "printing" at standing order 22(3)(a). At its last meeting the JCP agreed that, by removing the word "printing" from 22(3)(a), the "publication and distribution of parliamentary and government publications" could be more appropriately interpreted as referring to documents in both printed and digital format.

Accordingly, the JCP recommends that Senate standing order 22(3)(a) be amended to remove the word "printing" and would welcome the Procedure Committee's response to this recommendation.

I look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry O'Sullivan'.

Senator Barry O'Sullivan  
Chair  
Joint Committee on Publications

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## Attachment 1

### Extract from standing orders relevant to the joint committee's functions

#### *Appointment of committees*

##### *Senate standing order 22*

- 22 (1) A Publications Committee, consisting of 7 senators, shall be appointed at the commencement of each Parliament, with power to act during recess and to confer and sit as a joint committee with a similar committee of the House of Representatives.
- (2) All documents presented to the Senate which have not been ordered to be printed by either House of the Parliament shall stand referred to the committee, which shall make recommendations on the printing of documents.
- (3) When sitting with a similar committee of the House of Representatives, the committee shall also have power:
- (a) to inquire into and report on the printing, publication and distribution of parliamentary and government publications and on such related matters as are referred to it by the relevant minister; and
  - (b) to send for persons and documents.
- (4) The committee shall elect as its chair a member nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

##### *House of Representatives standing order 219*

- 219 (a) A Publications Committee shall be appointed to consider all documents presented to the House which have not been made a Parliamentary Paper by either House of the Parliament. The committee may report when it sees fit and may recommend a document be made a Parliamentary Paper, in whole or in part.
- (b) The committee shall consist of seven members.
- (c) If conferring with a similar committee of the Senate the committee may inquire into and report on the publication and distribution of parliamentary and government publications and on matters referred to it by a Minister.