

# Preface

It is pleasing to have this fifth edition of *House of Representatives Practice* available for publication. It is always useful to have the text updated regularly to take account of new decisions and interpretations; however, the adoption of redrafted and reorganised standing orders in 2004 made the production of a new edition not only a very high priority, but also a larger task than any earlier revision.

The redrafted and renumbered standing orders came into effect with the opening of the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament on 16 November 2004. The terms of the new rules were as recommended by the Procedure Committee, which had sought to make the standing orders clearer and more intelligible, although the committee did not wish to recommend changes to the substantive provisions. As well as the terms of most orders being altered, the set was given a new structure and sequence. The Department had been pleased to play its part in this process, having given the Procedure Committee a thorough analysis of the old rules, together with options for improvement. The impact on *House of Representative Practice* of the first full rewrite of the standing orders since 1963 was considerable, with numerous references and quotations needing to be altered and much paraphrasing having to be checked and adjusted.

While the standing orders are important features of the framework within which the House, its committees and Members operate, it is through the actions and interpretations of Members, especially those of the Speaker and Deputy Speakers, that practice develops. This edition again seeks to take account of significant procedural decisions and actions taken since publication of the fourth edition in 2001, as well as relevant court decisions, and to place them in the appropriate context.

The cut-off date for matters to be covered in the text of this edition was the end of March 2005. Annual statistics in tables and appendixes are complete to the end of 2004. In order to keep the length of the text within reasonable limits it has been necessary to delete some material, but in many such cases references to earlier editions have been inserted.

While the text represents the understanding of the editors as to the law and practice of the House, we recognise that on many issues, but especially on some of the larger legal or constitutional matters, alternative views exist. In recognition of this, and in order to help readers to reach their own conclusions, the text contains many references to other authorities, such as the works of Professor Enid Campbell on parliamentary privilege and to *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice*. Many references are again to be found to *May's Parliamentary Practice*, and these help in understanding the background to much current House practice.

I am grateful for the contribution of the Assistant Editors. The successful completion of the revision reflects particularly well on Peter Fowler. Peter has displayed admirable procedural and technical expertise, as well as great commitment to the task. The Deputy Clerk of the House, Bernard Wright, again played a vital role. Bernard's procedural knowledge and the continuity he has brought to a number of editions is greatly appreciated. We are also very appreciative of the contribution of many departmental colleagues, who have variously made comments on the former text, noted developments in their own areas or commented on drafts of the revised text: the product indeed reflects the knowledge of the Department.

I wish to thank officers of the Australian Electoral Commission for their assistance in reviewing the chapter 'Elections and the electoral system'. I am also grateful to the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, Ms Hilary Penfold, PSM, QC, and her staff who have assisted in relation to the references to the responsibilities of their Department.

The work of the House and its committees is important to the good government of Australia. It is our hope that this new edition will be of use to the Speaker and all other Members who have responsibilities in this work, as well as to other readers and scholars.

Ian Harris  
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