

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
—Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing—October 2016**

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Flag at Parliament House**

Question: **17**

Hansard Reference **p 26; 17 October 2016**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 2 December 2016

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Do you have someone here who can respond to questions about the flag on Parliament House?

The President: The one currently flying?

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Yes. How often is it changed over?

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Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Perhaps you could provide the committee, on notice, how often the flag is changed. Is it meant to be at half-mast out of respect to the Thai king?

Mr Stefanic: Correct.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: It does not much look like half-mast, either. Perhaps it is the health of the flag that is contributing to that.

Mr Stefanic: I will look into it, Senator Collins.

Answer

The flag is changed between 7am and 8am on the first Wednesday of each month, subject to weather conditions being favourable.

When flying the flag at half-mast, DPS follows the protocols for the appropriate use and flying of the flag as determined by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2015), which state:

To bring the flag to the half-mast position, the flag must first be raised to the top of the mast (the 'peak'), then immediately lowered slowly to the half-mast position. (This position is estimated by imagining another flag flying above the half-masted flag – in European mythology, the flag flying above is the flag of death.) The flag must be lowered to a position recognisably half-mast so that it does not simply appear to have slipped down from the top of the flagpole. An acceptable position would be when the top of the flag is a third of the distance down from the top of the flagpole.

Furthermore, due to the unique construction of the APH flagpole, flying the flag too low presents logistical difficulties which can pose risks to maintenance crews. To minimise these risks, DPS lowers the flag by one flag height for the half-mast position.