

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-13, 15 October 2012
Answers to Questions on Notice

Dept/Agency: Department of the Senate (President)

Topic: Review of media arrangements by the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings

Senator: Rhiannon

QON reference No: 6

Hansard page reference: pp 7-8 (Proof)

Question:

Senator RHIANNON: ...I noted, in a brief you put out last year, you said that there was a review of media arrangements being undertaken by the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings. I think it mentioned there—or at some point I have read about—a roundtable that was to be held at the start of this year. So I was interested: has that roundtable happened, when will the report come out and will it be made public?

The President: Yes, the roundtable has taken place. I cannot recall the details of that. I have not personally been involved in the actual proceedings. I can get details of what happened and I can get those to you.

Senator RHIANNON: Is there somebody here who oversaw that, who could speak to my questions, please?

The President: No. If I can assist you, that has been run through the House of Representatives secretariat. They have looked after the detailed running of that affair. So I will get you the detail and I will get back to you.

...

Senator RHIANNON: So maybe it is back to the President. Was that considered in the review, this inconsistency between the chambers with regard to still shots and filming?

The President: That I do not know. I attended only one of the meetings of the review, at its very early stages, and then it was passed over to the secretariat to conduct the rest of the review. So I can find out that detail for you and get back to you and give you a report on that.

...

Senator RHIANNON: Have you had any complaints from the media about these rules and their restrictive nature?

The President: As I said, I have not participated in the taking of evidence or the roundtable sessions, so I am not familiar with the business that was transacted at those meetings. But, again, I can take that question on notice and have it responded to for you.

Senator RHIANNON: Thank you for taking it on notice and for supplying that other information.

Answer:

Below is information about the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings ('the Committee'). This information has been approved by the Speaker in her capacity as chair of the Committee.

Background

The *Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946* ('the Act') requires the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to broadcast proceedings of the Senate and the House of Representatives, including joint sittings (s.4).

Functions of Committee

Section 5 of the Act establishes the Committee. Section 12 of the Act sets out the role of the Committee:

- (1) The Committee shall consider and specify in a report presented to each House of the Parliament, the general principles upon which there should be determined the days upon which, and the periods during which, the proceedings of the Senate and the House of Representatives shall be broadcast.

(2) The Committee shall, in accordance with general principles specified by the Committee and adopted by each House of the Parliament, determine the days upon which, and the periods during which, the proceedings of either House of the Parliament shall be broadcast.

(3) The Committee shall determine the days upon which, and the periods during which, the proceedings of a joint sitting shall be broadcast.

The 'general principles' and recommendations of the Committee are reflected in several resolutions adopted by each chamber (with some variations). A copy of those adopted by the House is attached.

Current Membership

- Speaker of the House (Ms Burke elected chairman 11 October 2012) – ex officio;
- President of the Senate (Senator Hogg elected vice chairman 15 November 2010) – ex officio;
- Mr Coulton MP;
- Mr Hayes MP;
- Mr Murphy MP;
- Senator Parry;
- Mr Roy MP;
- Senator Thorp; and
- Ms Vamvakinou MP.

Meetings

The Committee meets on an irregular basis as needed. In the 43rd parliament it has met formally 5 times (15 November 2010, 15 June 2011, 21 September 2011, 2 November 2011 and 11 October 2012).

The Act does not empower the Committee to conduct broad inquiries, so any investigatory activities need to be conducted by the committee on an informal basis. Thus, contributions to such inquiries cannot be accepted as submissions nor authorised for publication nor can public hearings be held.

Review

However, the Committee is currently preparing a report to the Presiding Officers on "the arrangements for the media applying in Parliament House, having regard to the relationship between the media and the Parliament and to evolving media technologies. The review is to cover:

- the Presiding Officers' guidelines for filming and photography and general media rules in Parliament House and its precincts;
- the resolutions of the two Houses that provide for the broadcasting of the proceedings of the Houses and their committees; and
- any other matters relating to the arrangements for the media in Parliament House that may be relevant to the review".

The Committee held separate informal round table meetings with representatives of the media, the parliamentary departments and members of parliament in February and March 2012. As these were not formal proceedings, the discussions were held in private and transcripts and formal minutes were not taken.

A draft report for the review is scheduled to be presented to committee members at the Committee's next meeting in November 2012. It is anticipated that the report, once agreed to, will then be presented to the Presiding Officers in their capacity as the Presiding Officers (as distinct

from as members of the committee). The Presiding Officers may choose to table the report and seek its adoption by the two chambers.