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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# **Promoting community involvement in the work of committees**

**Conference of committee chairs, deputy chairs and secretaries  
6 March 2001**

House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Procedure

May 2001

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# Contents

Foreword.....	v
Membership of the committee .....	vii
Committee secretariat.....	vii
Terms of reference of the committee.....	ix
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
'It's your House' report.....	1
The work of committees .....	3
Strategies for promoting inquiries .....	3
<b>2 Conference of committee chairs, deputy chairs and secretaries .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Format of the conference .....	5
Since It's your House.....	5
Identity.....	6
Advertising.....	7
Publications .....	8
Seminars .....	9
Media liaison.....	10
Internet .....	11
Developing staff.....	11
Involving schools .....	12
<b>3 Ideas in action.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Case study 1—Economics Committee.....	13
Taking the city to the country .....	13

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Case study 2—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee .....	17
Working with remote communities .....	17
Case study 3—Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.....	19
Explaining international treaty making to the public .....	19
Some other effective ways of improving input to inquiries .....	20
Letting large numbers of people have a say .....	20
Radio advertising.....	21
<b>4 Conclusions and recommendations.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Organisation of the conference .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Structure .....	25
<b>Proposals emerging from the conference .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Support services.....	25
Issues .....	26
<b>Appendix A – Conference agenda and participants.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Appendix B – It’s your House report: Recommendations relating to committees and the community.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix C – Speaker’s response to Procedure Committee report: It’s your House.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendix D – Government response to Procedure Committee report: It’s your House.....</b>	<b>59</b>



## Foreword

When he was tabling *It's your House*, the report of the Standing Committee on Procedure into community involvement in the procedures and practices of the House of Representatives and its committees, the then chair of the committee, Christopher Pyne MP, remarked that the committee had 'ventured beyond the parameters of its normal, dry, procedural field of activity to look at the interaction between the House and the community'.<sup>1</sup>

That inquiry reflected a concern among Members that the constructive work that the Parliament achieves was being discounted by the increasing cynicism with which the institution of Parliament and its Members are regarded by the community. That report and this follow up represent the Procedure Committee's concern to look at the processes of the House, especially its committees, to try to make them more effective and relevant to today's Australians. Bob McMullan MP, Manager of Opposition Business in the House, rightly reflected when discussing the *It's your House* report:

If people's respect for these institutions is declining, it is those of us in the institutions who have to look at what we are doing. We should not say, 'Why is it that the people do not understand what a wonderful job we are doing?' In a democracy, we need to respond to the concern that they are articulating. ... It is important that members of the House and the Parliament as a whole give serious attention to questions about the processes: their openness, their accessibility and their appropriateness to the coming 21<sup>st</sup> century and its demands and expectations.<sup>2</sup>

This report gathers together information about some of the action that committees have been taking to improve community understanding of their work and get people more involved in what they are doing.

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1 House of Representatives Debates, 22.11.99, p.12237

2 House of Representatives Debates, 8. 12.99, p.13173

I trust that Members of the House to whom this report is principally addressed will take encouragement from the efforts of their peers and be inspired to pursue greater innovation and outreach to the community they work in and represent. The process of improving connections between the Parliament and the community is an ongoing one and I look forward to reports of continuing progress at the next conference.

**Gary Nairn MP**  
**Chair**



## **Membership of the committee**

<b>Chair</b>	Mr G R Nairn MP
<b>Deputy Chair</b>	Hon L R S Price MP
<b>Members</b>	Mr R A Cameron MP
	Mr M J Ferguson AM MP
	Mr J A Forrest MP
	Mrs J Gash MP
	Ms J Gerick MP

## **Committee secretariat**

<b>Secretary</b>	Robyn Webber
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## **Terms of reference of the committee**

To inquire into and report on the practices and procedures of the House generally with a view to making recommendations for their improvement or change and for the development of new procedures

