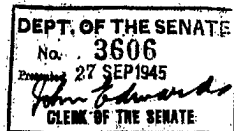


1945.



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

EIGHTH REPORT

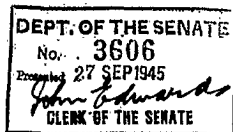
Senator Amos -

I present the Eighth Report
of the Parliamentary Standing Committee
on Broadcasting relating to the broad-
casting of Parliamentary debates, and
move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

Sept 27.

1945.



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

EIGHTH REPORT

of the

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON BROADCASTING

relating to

THE BROADCASTING OF PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

CANBERRA, 26th September, 1945.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON BROADCASTING.

(Seventeenth Parliament)

Chairman Senator Stanley Kerin Amour (a)
Vice Chairman The Honourable Josiah Francis, M.P. (b)

Senate.

House of Representatives.

Senator the Honourable
Herbert Hays (c)
Senator Richard Harry
Nash (c)

George James Bowden, M.C., M.P. (b)
William George Bryson, M.P. (b)
Cyril Chambers, M.P. (b).
The Honourable James Allan Guy, M.P. (b)
David Oliver Watkins, M.P. (b)

(a) Appointed 30th September,
1943.

(b) Appointed 14th October, 1943.

(c) Appointed 14th September, 1944.

NOTE:- The late Senator Richard Darcey ceased to be a member of the Committee when his term as Senator expired on 30th June, 1944. Senator the Honourable Allan Nicholl MacDonald resigned from the Committee on 20th July, 1944. They were succeeded by Senators Hays and Nash.

THE BROADCASTING OF PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

We have been requested by the Postmaster-General, in terms of reference under section 85 of the Australian Broadcasting Act, to consider and report to Parliament -

- "(a) whether the broadcasting of Parliamentary debates is desirable, and
- (b) if so, to what extent and in what manner should such broadcasts be undertaken."

2. In the course of our investigations we have consulted -

The Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party;
A representative of the Leader of the Government in the Senate;
The President of the Senate;
The Speaker of the House of Representatives;
The High Commissioner for New Zealand;
The Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Liberal Party;
The Leader of the Country Party;
The Acting Leader of the Opposition in the Senate;
The Commonwealth Solicitor General;
The Principal Parliamentary Reporter at Canberra;
The Acting Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs;
The Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Commission;
The General Manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission;
The former Controller of Commercial Broadcasting in New Zealand;
The Chief Engineer, Postmaster-General's Department;
The Chief Inspector (Wireless), Postmaster-General's Department.

The New Zealand Service.

3. As is well known, debates in the Parliament of New Zealand have been broadcast since 1936. The service was introduced at the direction of the Government, in response to an agitation that the Parliament and the people should be brought closer together. It became so popular that, notwithstanding differences of opinion at its beginning, rival political organisations are now in favour of its continuance.

4. All the proceedings are broadcast. They extend from 2.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday inclusive, and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays; but these times may be varied by Government instructions according to the importance of the debate or any change in hours of attending.

5. The service is limited to the proceedings of the House of Representatives. The proceedings of the Legislative Council (which, in contrast with the Australian Senate, is a nominee Chamber) are not broadcast.

6. One high powered station (60,000 watts) is used to broadcast the proceedings, its scheduled programmes being transferred to another station whose programmes are automatically cancelled when Parliament is on the air. The programmes of the remaining twenty-one stations are not affected except on special occasions such as the submission of the budget when five additional main stations are used to rebroadcast its presentation.

7. The high power station gives a fairly good coverage at night time to the principal populated areas of the Dominion. In the day time the coverage is more restricted but, due to the station's location, the listeners of the principal cities are able to hear the broadcast. In areas where the reception of the station is difficult,

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there have been requests for the proceedings to be relayed from the local coverage station.

8. Two officers of the National Broadcasting Service have a place on the floor of the House. One is the announcer who keeps listeners advised very briefly and at very infrequent intervals of what is taking place and the names of the speakers as they rise, and the other attends to the technical equipment.

9. It is said that the movement of a measure during the Committee stages is of greater listener-interest than the second reading stage, due to the cross-fire talk, the quicker tempo and the shorter speeches.

10. In print a casual remark may appear far more important than was intended; hence the listener has an advantage over the reader in appraising its significance.

11. Debates are arranged to ensure that they take place when the maximum listening audience is likely to be available. Times are divided fairly, usually by mutual agreement between the Whips, and independent members get their share. There is, however, an inclination on the part of the Whips to influence the arrangement of proceedings so that members who are the most expert on the subject before the House or who are likely to make the best showing before the public, may have priority.

12. It is not uncommon for radio listeners to be introduced into a speech by such expressions as "listeners will appreciate", "I assure listeners", and so on. One effect of this consciousness of addressing, not only the House, but also the general public, including constituents, is a marked improvement in both the matter and manner of speakers. Members acquire what has been called "a sense of theatre". They realise that listeners will readily detect lack of earnestness and conviction and their awareness of this is a safeguard against any attempt to build up "spurious radio personalities."

13. The proportion of listeners to the debates has not been scientifically determined. Prior to the establishment of the service, the commercial stations claimed to attract 75 per cent. of listeners, but during the Parliamentary sessions their audience is estimated to drop to 50 per cent., and still lower when an issue of primary importance is being debated. There is a swing of listeners from even the most popular of programmes, and there would be strong protests from the public if the service were discontinued. It is stated that its popularity is not due to insufficient press reports of the debates; the press of New Zealand gives a little greater cover of the New Zealand Parliament than the Australian press gives of the Australian Parliament. Broadcasting has quickened interest in press reports of the proceedings.

14. The broadcasts have played an important part in the political education of the people, enabling them to be better informed on the positive and negative sides of public questions and thereby ensuring more effective functioning of the democratic system of government. The service has forged a link between the Parliament and the people of New Zealand which, it is said, is not to be found in Australia, where many people are believed to be unaware of even the names of their Parliamentary representatives.

An Australian Service.

15. The weight of evidence in favour of broadcasting the proceedings of the Commonwealth Parliament has convinced us that the innovation should be introduced in this country as soon as circumstances permit. We share the views of those who have expressed the opinion that the result would be to raise the standard of

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debates, enhance the prestige of Parliament, and contribute to a better informed judgment throughout the community on matters affecting the common good and the public interest, nationally and internationally.

16. The need for some such service is much greater in Australia owing to the long distances separating the Commonwealth Parliament from the principal centres of population. Many thousand more people are able, and do, see Parliament in session in New Zealand than can ever hope to in Canberra.

17. It is believed that the re-action of the Australian listening public would be wholly favourable to the service. One index to this is the increasing demand for the printed debates, showing that there is a widening interest in Commonwealth politics. The circulation of Hansard has increased very considerably as the result of requests for copies. In addition, Members have asked in the House for a liberalisation of the free issue, and the Treasurer has agreed to permit this as soon as possible. This indicates a growing interest in public affairs. Any simplification of the process of adequately informing the public in affairs which affect their interests would probably be welcomed, and broadcasting is the most effective method of achieving that objective.

Legal Aspects.

18. The Solicitor-General considers that if the whole of the proceedings, not small selected portions, were broadcast, a qualified privilege would apply. This qualified privilege could only be upset by proof of malice, and it would be difficult to establish malice if the whole of the proceedings were broadcast. As Parliament has provided for the absolute protection of Hansard reports, it would be wise to introduce legislation to provide for absolute privilege to broadcasts of the proceedings.

19. In the event of Parliament reaching a decision that the proceedings should be broadcast, the Solicitor-General advises that it would be necessary to amend the Broadcasting Act to ensure compliance with Parliament's decision, because section 89 (1) of the Act vests authority in the Commission to determine the extent to which political speeches should be broadcast. It is possible that there might be sufficient authority under section 23, which empowers the Minister to direct the Commission to make broadcasts in the public interest, but the Solicitor-General is inclined to think that the broadcasting of Parliamentary debates would come within the meaning of political speeches as referred to in section 89 (1), as speeches in Parliament could certainly be political. It would be more satisfactory, in the Solicitor-General's opinion, especially if legislation is to be introduced on the aspect of privilege, to provide at the same time for a direction to the Commission in regard to the broadcasting of the proceedings.

The Extent of the Australian Service.

20. In the sphere of international relations, there appears to be a lot of merit in the suggestion of a witness that special debates dealing with Australia's post-war developments and matters affecting affairs in the Pacific could be advantageously broadcast on short wave from the special station recently constructed for overseas broadcasting. Such broadcasts would probably assist in sustaining recognition of Australia's newly-won position as a Pacific power.

21. In the domestic service, there are problems to be solved which are not experienced in New Zealand. In the first place, it would be unthinkable that the broadcasts should be confined to the proceedings of the House of Representatives. Unlike the corresponding Chamber in New Zealand, the Senate is an elected body and its claims to inclusion

in the service are undeniable. Simultaneous broadcasts from both Houses, however, would involve duplication of technical facilities and costs, as well as very considerable complication of the problem of providing transmitting stations and telephone relay lines.

22. One of the suggestions we have received is that there should be an arbitrary decision as to the proportion of time which might be allotted to each House, say, two hours for the House of Representatives and one hour for the Senate.

23. Another suggestion put to us is that the service should follow measures right through Parliament, that is, broadcast the debates on each in the originating Chamber and then broadcast the corresponding debates in the other House when the measure reaches it. In this connection, the question has been raised whether more measures could be initiated in the Senate than has hitherto been customary, but there appears to be considerable doubt whether this would be practicable, at any rate to any appreciable extent.

24. There are also differences of opinion as to the extent to which the proceedings in general should be broadcast. Doubt has been expressed as to the wisdom of broadcasting the whole of them. It has been pointed out, for instance, that many of the answers given to questions on notice would be unintelligible to listeners, that is, answers of the type "see reply to No. (1)". Reference has also been made to the frequent experience that Ministers are not in a position to give considered replies to questions without notice, with the result that by the time the answer is eventually given, many listeners who heard the question in the first instance may not be listening at the time the answer is given, - an experience which might tend to lessen their interest in Parliamentary proceedings.

25. On the other hand there is evidence of strong objection to the idea of limiting the broadcasts to certain hours of the sitting and confining them to certain selected members on each side. Opponents of such an idea hold that the manoeuvring for position among members so that they might be called during some limited period when the broadcast was on would be most undesirable. Such a procedure could not be adopted without the sanction of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives in their respective domains of authority, and on the evidence we have heard there is very considerable doubt whether such sanction would be given, because in the eyes of the Chair no member should be denied his right to the "call", irrespective of his capacity as a debater or his knowledge of the subject matter.

26. On balance, we are inclined to favour the principle that there should be "straight" broadcasts of the proceedings on trial for periods to be determined in respect of the sittings of both Houses, but in view of the differing conditions obtaining in Australia in comparison with those of New Zealand, we feel that it would be unwise to arbitrarily set down details of the service in legislation. It would be preferable, in our opinion, to introduce the innovation as an experiment and eventually decide what the regular practice is to be after experience of its operation.

27. The Broadcasting Commission is in favour of broadcasting selected debates throughout the whole period of the Commonwealth Parliamentary sittings during the hours 2.30 to 5.30 p.m. and 7.30 to 10.30 p.m., and is agreeable to one set of the main metropolitan transmitters being allotted for the purpose. The Commission also advocates the use of one of the new high power short wave transmitters for country coverage.

28. Having regard to the normal hours of Commonwealth Parliamentary sittings, the Chairman of the Commission, in reply to a question, intimated that, as an alternative to the hours

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specifically mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the Commission would be prepared to devote six hours each sitting day to the broadcasts.

29. To implement its proposals, the Commission suggests that Parliament should set up a House Committee which would have the responsibility of determining which debates should be broadcast and the House from which the transmissions should be made. The Commission would be prepared to accept the decision of such a Committee and "would for this purpose delegate to the Committee its power under Section 89 (1) of the Act."

30. We recognise that the Commission's delegation suggestion is actuated by a desire to be helpful, but the idea it has put forward would really be a reversal of the natural order of things. Actually the Commission has a delegation from Parliament under Section 89 (1) to determine these matters itself; and the Commission's proposal means, in effect, that the Commission would delegate this power back to Parliament through the medium of a House Committee. We feel that such a situation would be incompatible with the dignity and authority of Parliament. Moreover, a delegation may be revoked by the authority which confers it; consequently the Commission or its successors could, if they so desired at some future time, decide to discontinue broadcasts of Parliamentary proceedings and under the existing law Parliament would have to accept the Commission's decision.

31. In our opinion, if Parliament reaches the conclusion that these broadcasts should be made, the proper procedure is to amend section 89 (1) to provide for an appropriate direction from Parliament to the Commission, without interfering with the power already conferred on the Commission by that section to determine to what extent and in what manner political broadcasts other than Parliamentary proceedings may be made.

32. With regard to the disability arising from certain types of answers to questions on notice, we suggest that this might be overcome by the Government issuing instructions to all concerned in the preparation of such answers that replies of the type "see answer to No. (1)" should be avoided, and that in framing the answers the phraseology should be such that the information supplied will be readily intelligible to the radio audience.

Technical Aspects.

33. The manner of establishing the service is the most difficult problem to surmount, if the broadcasts are to commence within a reasonable time.

34. Were it not for the high expenditure involved, the ideal arrangement would be the provision of a network of twenty-two national medium wave stations capable of serving nearly all the populated portions of Australia. Equipment alone, however, would entail expenditure in the neighbourhood of £500,000. But apart from the cost, there are insuperable difficulties owing to the shortage of radio channels, unless the licences of some commercial stations were not renewed at the expiration of their annual period of tenure, to enable their channels to be allocated for the purpose, or unless recourse is made to the sharing of channels to a greater extent than at present, with resultant degrading of service to listeners on account of the clash of simultaneous transmissions from stations operating on the same channel. The remedy for this would lie in the use of the very high frequencies in addition to the medium frequency band of channels at present used in Australia's domestic system, as the method of operation known as "frequency modulation", which would then be possible, would permit of stations operating on the same channel without the mutual interference involved in medium wave channel sharing. Nevertheless, this solution is out of the question, if immediate broadcasting of Parliamentary debates is to be achieved, because of the time which would be required to provide the transmitters and because listeners' receiving sets at present in use would not be capable of receiving the transmissions. We are advised by
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the Post Office that some years would elapse before a frequency modulation system could provide adequate service to listeners.

35. Consideration has been given to another possible method of overcoming the difficulty by establishing local service stations in each capital city on a common frequency. This idea, known as the "synchronisation" system, would involve expenditure approximating £36,000. The system has been applied to some extent in European countries of small areas with concentrated populations. In Australia, however, there would be difficulty in finding a radio channel suitable for the operation of the stations. Moreover, in the opinion of the Post Office, the proposal would prove unsatisfactory from the coverage standpoint as the reliable service areas would be limited to a radius of 10 to 15 miles from the transmitters. It would probably take at least two years to establish these stations and there would be difficulties, which the Post Office considers to be insuperable, in making the necessary land lines available between the stations. Moreover, not only would this proposition be valueless to country listeners but it is very doubtful whether the stations would adequately serve all the residents of the capital cities.

36. A third idea is the provision of a service of short wave (high frequency) transmitters only. Approximately 50 per cent. of listeners in capital cities are equipped for short wave reception but the number in country districts is not known. Such a service would therefore only cater for a restricted number of listeners. Moreover, there are technical difficulties in receiving short wave transmissions in city areas with a degree of satisfaction comparable with reception from local medium frequency stations.

37. A fourth suggestion examined is the possibility of using selected commercial stations. This would probably entail very considerable expenditure in payments to the stations for air time. It would also probably involve legislation, if it were desired to compel the stations to allocate the necessary programme time.

38. A fifth proposition is to use the second national stations in the capital cities and Newcastle. This idea would result in the service being withheld from country districts which rely on their local regional station for national broadcast reception. On the other hand, if these regional stations were included, listeners in areas which rely on such stations exclusively for broadcast service would not have an alternative national programme. But, judging from the experience of New Zealand, probably the majority of these listeners would not be much concerned about an alternative national programme while Parliament is on the air; in fact, there are demands from country listeners in the Dominion that their local stations should be included in the relay of Parliamentary proceedings because they are unable to satisfactorily hear the broadcasts from the main station. In Australia, taking the average length of sessions during the years 1942, 1943 and 1944, the service would be provided for only 50 days and approximately only 36 nights in any year, even if the whole of the proceedings were broadcast, although it should not be overlooked that the average periods would be greater if account were taken of the longer time the Parliament has been sitting this year. The average periods would be reduced if it were decided to restrict the service to the most important debates until other technical facilities could be provided.

39. A sixth proposition involves a combination of three possibilities:-

(a) the use of the second national stations in each capital city and Newcastle;

(b) the

- (b) the use of short wave stations to augment the service for listeners in the country and remote areas; and
- (c) the use of selected country commercial stations willing to sell time.

It is estimated that this combination would provide a service to the majority of listeners, and it would afford an opportunity to gauge public reaction to the innovation for the purpose of facilitating review of the question of establishing a complete service later on by the addition of stations in the very high frequency bands.

40. Adoption of this sixth proposition, however, would entail withdrawal of telephone trunk channels between Canberra and Sydney, Sydney and Melbourne, and Melbourne and Adelaide for the full period required. At present these lines are used mainly during the evening hours for relays on the alternative national network, and they would not be available for telephone calls for a considerably greater number of hours than is now the case. Extremely serious overloading now exists on the Canberra-Sydney, Sydney-Melbourne and Melbourne-Adelaide routes, and exceptionally long delays to traffic are now in evidence. Should channels on these routes be withdrawn from traffic for any longer periods than at present, greater congestion would be caused and delays to calls would be much worse than they are now, bringing in many more complaints and adverse criticism of the interstate trunk line service.

41. Between Sydney and Brisbane, and Melbourne and Hobart, the debates would be transmitted over the second permanent programme line and the radio link respectively, and there would be no effect on the disposal of trunk line calls on these interstate routes. Between Adelaide and Perth a second channel suitable for broadcast relay transmission is not available at present. It is anticipated that considerable time will elapse before the second programme line is available. In these circumstances it would not be practicable to transmit Parliamentary debates to Perth under this sixth proposition, except by withdrawing from its normal use the existing programme line over which the National programme is transmitted.

42. These and other technical difficulties which have been outlined by the Post Office make it necessary to form a judgment on the question whether telephone users should be subjected to the very serious disability involved in this sixth proposition?

43. In our opinion, the answer should be in the negative. Already under existing conditions there are delays to trunk line calls of as much as six hours between Sydney and Melbourne, five hours between Sydney and Brisbane, three hours between Melbourne and Adelaide, three hours between Melbourne and Perth, and two and a half hours between Canberra and Sydney. In addition, the inclusion of commercial stations in country districts would render it necessary to withdraw intrastate trunk lines from telephone users. The majority of these, too, are very heavily overloaded and calls are subject to long periods of waiting for service.

44. We feel that it would be most unfair to expect the public, in business and social relations, to tolerate the longer delays which would result from the adoption of this proposition.

45. The only remaining proposition under present conditions is the use of the main national stations in the capital cities and the national regional stations in the country districts, supplemented by short wave service to remote areas. This would mean the substitution of Parliamentary broadcasts in place of entertainment, commentaries on current affairs, and other items normally broadcast from these stations during the period involved. But taking the long range view, and bearing in mind that the substitution would be limited to an average of 50 days and 36 nights in the year, and having

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regard to the evidence that country listeners in New Zealand prefer the Parliamentary proceedings to the alternative programmes available to them, we consider it is more important, in a democracy, to use a publicly-owned instrumentality such as the National Broadcasting Service to keep the community adequately informed of the activities of their elected representatives, and thereby stimulate individual thought in national and international affairs, than to give priority to the use of that instrumentality as a medium mainly of entertainment. In the interests of country listeners particularly, however, an exception should be made as regards the "straight" news services, for the transmission of which the broadcasting of Parliamentary proceedings should be interrupted.

46. Later on, when the Post Office is in a position to provide additional trunk line channels, alternative means of broadcasting the debates could be considered.

47. In arriving at this opinion, we have been influenced, to some extent, by evidence tendered to our predecessors that, generally speaking, Australia is more extensively served with radio entertainment than other countries. In that evidence it was pointed out that England had only twelve stations to serve a population of 45,000,000, while Australia had no fewer than 125 stations for only 7,000,000; that we were getting 450,000 hours of broadcasting for our population of 7,000,000 as against only 120,000 hours for England's 45,000,000 people; and that in England there was only one station for every 3,500,000 and in America one station for 127,000, while in Australia there was a station for every 56,000.

48. The supply and installation of microphone, amplifier and control equipment are estimated to cost £4,000. This includes an amount for the erection of a small control booth in each Chamber.

49. The difficulty of varying times could be overcome, where necessary, by recording the proceedings as they occur and broadcasting from the discs at the proper times, using land lines for transmission of the recordings to the local stations from which the broadcasts would be made.

Recommendations.

50. In view of the Solicitor-General's advice, we recommend that provision be made in the Broadcasting Act for a direction to the Commission in regard to the broadcasting of the proceedings. We do not consider that it would be advisable at this stage to specify particulars of the service in legislation, as experience may disclose a need for modification of the detailed arrangements initially decided upon. It would therefore be preferable, as regards this particular subject, to prescribe the details in regulations under section 107 of the Broadcasting Act, as they could be altered more readily by amended regulations than under the processes involved in amending them if they were set out in the Act. Any such modifications would still be subject to the sanction of Parliament under the procedure laid down for making regulations. We suggest that the amendment of the Act might be framed to confer permissive power on the Minister responsible for the administration of the Act, somewhat in the following phraseology:-

"The Minister may require the Commission to broadcast the proceedings of the Commonwealth Parliament as prescribed."

51. The introduction of legislation to provide for the application of absolute privilege to such broadcasts is also recommended, as an extension of the privilege conferred by legislation passed in 1935 in respect of Hansard reports.

52. As technical, programme, and Parliamentary authorities are concerned in the proposal, we recommend that in the preparation of the initial regulations, the Broadcasting Commission, the Post Office, and the Parliamentary authorities should be consulted and that in the course of their deliberations they should give consideration to providing for the selection of mutually acceptable experimental periods in respect of both Houses. We suggest that provision be made for over-all control to be vested in the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives as regards broadcasts from their respective Chambers; that during the experimental periods the whole of the proceedings in the Chamber concerned should be broadcast from the main national stations and from the regional stations, as well as from the short wave stations, except during the short periods when "straight" news sessions (that is, excluding commentaries or observers' stories) are normally on the air; that no provision should be made for any pre-arranged selection of speakers at particular times, that is to say, there should be "straight" broadcasts of the proceedings exactly as they occur in the normal transaction of Parliamentary business, with the qualification that during divisions and such like intervals, an appropriate official (who should be an officer of the Commission) should broadcast an impartial description of what is taking place. Needless to say, the facilities should not be used for other purposes when Parliament is in recess.

53. We are aware that in New Zealand doubts have been expressed in certain quarters as to the wisdom of broadcasting the whole of the proceedings, but we are of the opinion that in Australia complete broadcasts of the actual proceedings should be tried at the outset, leaving the question of modification for consideration in the light of experience.

54. In conclusion, we suggest that at the appropriate time consideration be given to the issue of a publication for the information of listeners, incorporating an explanation of the Parliamentary system of Government, the method of transacting business in both Houses, diagrams of the seating arrangements and miniature photographs of each Member. A publication of this nature is issued in New Zealand. It is entitled "Listeners' Guide to Parliament on the Air" and contains certain advertisements associated with the radio industry which presumably offset the cost of its production, at least to some extent. We are indebted to the Chairman of the Commission, who recently visited New Zealand, for bringing this highly commendable idea to our notice. The circulation of a similar production in Australia would be a most valuable adjunct to the broadcasts and would assist in increasing their popularity, with resultant benefit to the nation in the long run. We believe that listeners would be eager to secure copies.

S.K. AMOUR, Chairman
JOS. FRANCIS, Vice-chairman
HERBERT HAYS
R.H. NASH
GEO. BOWDEN
W.G. BRYSON
G. CHAMBERS
DAVID WATKINS

26th September, 1945.

Reservation by Mr. Guy.

I concur with the above recommendations with the exception

/of

of the following sentence appearing in paragraph 52:

"We suggest that provision be made for overall control to be vested in the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives as regards broadcasts from their respective Chambers."

This concerns the privilege of all members of Parliament and my own belief is that broadcasting should be available as far as possible to all members who participate in debates.

I think that this is a matter which ought to be dealt with on a basis which recommends itself to all Parties.

I therefore suggest that in the case of the House of Representatives a Committee to determine these matters should be appointed to consist of:

Mr. Speaker,
The Prime Minister,
Another Minister nominated by the
Prime Minister,
The Leader of the Opposition, and the
Leader of the Country Party.

The Senate no doubt would feel that some similarly constituted Committee should be set up. The result should be a Joint Committee of the two Houses.

J. ALLAN GUY.
26th September, 1945.

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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

ANNUAL REPORT OF

THE NATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL.

The Minister.

The Medical Research Endowment Act of 1937, which provides the financial basis for the work of the National Health and Medical Research Council, requires that, "the Minister shall, each year, cause a General Report, containing a summary of the work done under this Act during the preceeding year, to be prepared and laid before both Houses of Parliament".

Owing to staff difficulties, there have been some difficulties in preparing a report for 1944, but this is now completed and available for presentation to Parliament.

The necessary copies are forwarded herewith and, in accordance with the usual practice, the actual letter of presentation is included inside the cover page. As this was prepared before Senator Fraser's departure, his name appears as having signed.

F. McCallum

26th September, 1944.

(F. McCALLUM)
Director-General of Health