

HOUSE REVIEW



Selected features of House of Representatives business

Sitting period 26 – 29 February 2024 (no. 67)

This single sitting week featured the resignation of a former Prime Minister and an address from an overseas head of state.

Address by President of the Philippines

On Thursday, in accordance with a resolution agreed the previous day, the House met at the later time of 10.21 am. After the acknowledgement of country and prayers, the Speaker welcomed the President of the Senate and Senators as guests before inviting the President of the Philippines, His Excellency Ferdinand R Marcos Jr, to the floor. The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition made welcoming remarks, and President Marcos then gave an address. At the conclusion of the address, proceedings were suspended until the ringing of the bells, as provided for by the resolution.

Resignation of Member

On Wednesday, the Member for Cook submitted a letter of resignation to the Speaker. Under section 37 of the Constitution, the resignation takes effect and the seat becomes vacant as soon as the letter has been received. The previous day, the Member made valedictory remarks, by indulgence, with the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Riverina also speaking by indulgence.

On Thursday, the Speaker informed the House that he had received the Member's resignation letter and that consideration was being given to possible dates for the by-election.

Marking the death of a former Member

Before Question Time on Monday, the Speaker referred to the death of Manfred Douglas Cross AM, a former Member for Brisbane. All Members stood, in silence, as a sign of respect.

Legislation

On Tuesday, as has become a regular practice in the 47th Parliament, the Leader of the House declared a number of bills referred to the Federation Chamber following adjournment of the second reading debate. Shadow ministers often make their speech before debate is adjourned and automatically referred to the Federation Chamber for consideration at a later hour or day.

Introductions

During the week, five Government bills were presented.

Two private Members' bills were introduced. The first related to the accountability of grants and investment mandates; the second to amend offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage legislation to cancel Petroleum Exploration Permit 11. In each case, the mover of the second reading shared their speaking time with the seconder – an informal arrangement sometimes used by private Members when presenting bills.

Passing the House

On Tuesday afternoon, the Leader of the House moved, pursuant to notice, a debate management motion in relation to the Help to Buy Bill 2023 and a consequential bill. The motion was to enable the House to sit until 10 pm that evening, or until no further Members rose to speak on the second reading, and then for a cognate second reading debate continuing without interruption when called

on after the discussion on the matter of public importance the following day, until the debate concluded or no later than 5.30 pm. The motion then provided for questions to be immediately on any second reading amendments and on the second reading, with any further questions necessary to complete the remaining stages to be put without amendment or debate—in other words, without providing for a consideration in detail stage. The second bill would then be called on and all questions put without amendment or debate.

The shadow minister for housing moved, as an amendment to the debate management motion, to omit all the provisions except that enabling a later debate on Tuesday evening. The amendment was negated, on division, before the original motion was carried on the voices.

On Tuesday evening, the House sat until 10 pm. On Wednesday, when called on, the second reading debate on the bills continued until interrupted by Members' statements at 1.30 pm. Following the discussion of the matter of public importance, the Leader of the House moved to vary the debate management resolution to provide for a consideration in detail stage of the Help to Buy Bill if required, with the bill being taken as a whole, and debate to continue until no later than 6.20 pm. This amendment was agreed to on the voices and debate on the second reading resumed. At 5.30 pm, the question on the second reading was put and passed on division. During consideration in detail, three crossbench Members each moved sets of amendments together, by leave, which were disagreed to. The detail stage concluded and the question on the third reading was put and passed. The consequential bill then passed all stages on the voices.

Four other government bills passed the House during the week.

Communication with the Senate

While the Senate sat during the week, few messages were received by the House. One bill was returned with amendments, which were considered immediately and agreed to.

The House sent a message to the Senate on 28 March inviting Senators to attend the House as guests for the address by the President of the Philippines. The message included the House's resolution to extend standing order 257(c), requiring Senators to follow instructions regarding good order, to the area of Members' seats. A Senator who held up a prop during President Marcos's speech was directed to leave by message from the Speaker conveyed by the Serjeant-at-Arms and was later censured by the Senate. While historically the practice was that the House and the Senate would meet concurrently to hear from foreign heads of state, more recent practice is that visiting dignitaries address a sitting of the House, which Senators attend as guests. This reflects recommendations made by the House and Senate Procedure Committees following a concurrent sitting in 2003.

The House is scheduled to meet next on 18 March.

Further information on the work of the House

[Bills and legislation](#)—access bills, explanatory memoranda, amendments, speeches, information about key stages of a bill's consideration, and a tracking option

[Live Minutes](#)—a real time summary of House decisions and proceedings. When used in conjunction with the [Daily Program](#), the Live Minutes are a simple way to track the House's work each day

[House of Representatives Practice](#) 7 ed., 2018—the most authoritative guide to House procedure

[House of Representatives Standing and Sessional Orders](#), as at 2 August 2022—the House's rules of procedure

[Procedural Digest](#)—a record of selected procedural events in the House of Representatives Chamber and the Federation Chamber. It includes Speaker's rulings, precedents and unusual situations.