

Making effective submissions and giving evidence at hearings

Bill Browne

Democracy & Accountability Program

Plan

1. Why parliamentary inquiries matter
2. How parliamentary inquiries work
3. Making an effective submission
4. Giving evidence at a hearing
5. Committee report, government response

Part 1: Why inquiries matter

Algal bloom exposes 'limitations' in government monitoring programs, Senate inquiry finds

By Thomas Kelsall

Environmental Management

Tue 11 Nov



The 207-page report tabled on Tuesday makes 14 recommendations. (ABC News: Che Chorley)

The **Australia Institute**

Research that matters.

Asking questions of power

Greens senator threatens Woolworths CEO with six months in prison for contempt of Senate

By business reporter [Gareth Hutchens](#)

Supermarkets

Tue 16 Apr 2024



Woolworths CEO Brad Banducci is threatened with contempt by Greens senator Nick McKim.

The **Australia Institute**

Research that matters.

Bringing new information to light

Sayers, Seymour round on Burrowes' global role

Maxim Shanahan and
Edmund Tadros

Aug 2, 2024 – 12.35pm



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3 min

Former PwC chief executives Luke Sayers and Tom Seymour have rounded on Kevin Burrowes' secretive arrangement with PwC International, telling a parliamentary committee the undisclosed dual roles went against the firm's ethos and would be perceived as a conflict by partners.

It emerged earlier this year that Mr Burrowes is being paid \$1.2 million per year by PwC International while chief executive of the Australian firm, a fact that was not initially disclosed to the Senate when Mr Burrowes was asked about his salary in February.

Speaking without risk of retaliation

‘Violated and humiliated’: Julie Bishop ‘laughed at’ crying academic



Julie Hare

Education editor

Aug 12, 2025 – 3.40pm



Listen to this article

5 min

Four current and former members of the Australian National University council have given evidence to a Senate inquiry about an atmosphere of threats and intimidation, including allegations chancellor Julie Bishop blocked a door during a heated meeting.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539 540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674 675 676 677 678 679 680 681 682 683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700 701 702 703 704 705 706 707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719 720 721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740 741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750 751 752 753 754 755 756 757 758 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000

Committees can change law and regulation

Andrew Leigh

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Senate rejects Coalition attack on charities - Media Release

POSTED BY ANDREW LEIGH **56SC** ON NOVEMBER 25, 2021

SENATE REJECTS COALITION ATTACK ON CHARITIES

The **Australia Institute**

Research that matters.

They can even have constitutional ramifications

Unions NSW v New South Wales [2019]

JSCEM recommended that before decreasing the cap to \$500,000, the New South Wales Government consider whether there was sufficient evidence that a third-party campaigner could reasonably present its case within that expenditure limit. No material has been placed before the Court which suggests that such an analysis was undertaken.

Archetypal example: The Murphy Report

Analysis

Online gambling reform had rare bipartisan support thanks to a brave MP. So why has Labor put action on hold?

By political correspondent Brett Worthington

Gambling

Tue 13 Aug 2024

Murphy Report on gambling reform delayed by sports bet lobby

by Rex Patrick and Philip Dorling | Dec 28, 2023 | Business, Latest Posts

Cup Day shame: Government still at the barrier on gambling reform

Wesley Mission

Crossbench calls for a governmental response to the Murphy Report on its 2nd anniversary

Australians lose while our government fails to ban gambling ads

28 June 2025

A letter to Anthony Albanese could allow Labor MPs to speak up on gambling reform

By investigative reporter Steve Cannane

Government and Politics

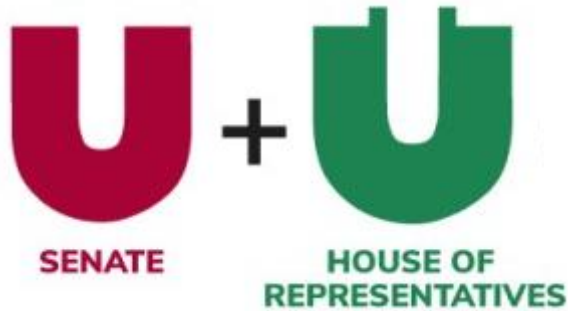
Sat 8 Nov

Albanese scuttles Murphy inquiry gambling reforms

Suzanne James

February 6, 2025, Issue 1423, Analysis

Part 2: How parliamentary inquiries work



 **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**



Inquiry into the 2025 federal election

Part 3: Making an effective submission

1. Type up your thoughts
2. Send them to the email address listed on the inquiry's webpage.

Finding an inquiry

Current Inquiries

Senate Committees

House of Representatives Committees

Joint Committees

Community Affairs Legislation Committee

- **New** [Aged care - review of legislative instruments](#)

Community Affairs References Committee

- [Impact of microplastics and other toxics on human health](#)
- [Support at Home Program](#)
- [The Transition of the Commonwealth Home Support Program to the Support at Home Program](#)

Economics Legislation Committee

- [Corporations \(Review Fees\) Amendment \(Technical Amendments\) Bill 2025](#)

Education and Employment Legislation Committee

- [Education Legislation Amendment \(Integrity and Other Measures\) Bill 2025](#)
- [Quality of governance at Australian higher education providers](#)
- [Tertiary Education Legislation Amendment \(There For Education, Not Profit\) Bill 2025](#)

Education and Employment References Committee

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Written submissions can be lodged via the inquiry webpage. Submissions in other formats, including video, should be emailed to em@aph.gov.au. Further information about making a submission to a parliamentary committee is available [here](#).

Submissions to the inquiry close on Saturday, 28 February 2026.

Committee Secretariat contact:

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Phone: +61 2 6277 2374
em@aph.gov.au

About this inquiry

The Committee will inquire into and report on all aspects of the conduct of the 2025 federal election.

- [Terms of Reference](#)
- [Submissions](#)
- [Media Releases](#)
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Past Public Hearings

11 Dec 2025: North Ipswich

10 Dec 2025: Brisbane

20 Nov 2025: Parramatta

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2 other matter

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3 terms of reference

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Terms of reference

That the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into and report on all aspects of the conduct of the 2025 federal election and related matters, including consideration of the following:

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That the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into and report on all aspects of the conduct of the 2025 federal election and related matters, including consideration of the following:

- assessment and review of the purported increase in incidents of aggressive conduct, deliberate obstruction, and intimidating behaviour towards voters, political participants, volunteers, and Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) officials;
- potential reform of safety and security arrangements, including consideration of the powers, processes, and capacity of the AEC to manage and address increasingly threatening or disruptive behaviour;
- the suitability and potential reform of measures to ensure universal voter access, including polling booth availability and location, early voting, remote polling, and postal voting arrangements; and
- the suitability of the current authorisation framework and requirements, having regard to the evolution of communication methods and technology.

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- the suitability of the current authorisation framework and requirements, having regard to the evolution of communication methods and technology.

The Special Minister of State has also asked the Committee to consider the interaction with the following:

- the implementation and operation of the electoral reform passed by the 47th Parliament, particularly regarding the use of money or capital in the most recent election;
- reforms to address the ongoing threats of interference in our electoral system, both foreign and domestic; and
- the composition of the Parliament as a whole, including: the length of the parliamentary term; the potential for fixed terms; and the number of elected representatives relative to the growth in population and the electorate.

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5 track inquiry

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6 public hearings

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7 submission

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7 submission

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8 other subs

Example topics

- Your experience voting (harassment, convenience, instructions, etc).
- Political parties in the postal vote process.
- Mass spam texts.
- Misleading political advertising.

Your submission is a “source”

- An inquiry report is like a uni assignment
- What information can I give a busy person to:
 - Prove my bona fides
 - Help them answer the “question” posed by the terms of reference
 - Prompt them to look at other submissions differently

What is useful?

- Personal experience
- Alternative points of view
- Evidence/arguments that the committee can put to *other* witnesses
- Recommendations

Things to look out for

- Committee claims ownership of your submission
 - Submission delayed for “right of reply”
- Hearings are sometimes held before submission due date
- Ask if you can make a late submission
- Parliamentary privilege – ONLY on their website

Part 4: Appearing at a hearing



Iron Man 2

Invitation

- Most submissions do not result in hearing invitations
- You'll be given some notice of a time and date for the hearing
- Ask the Secretariat if there's any questions
- You can almost certainly decline

Structure

- Chair will introduce the committee, your rights, illegal to lie, etc.
- Chance for opening statement.
 - One from each organisation/expert appearing.
- Each committee member is entitled to a time block; chair will keep time.
 - Any number of members may turn up.
 - Any number of members may have questions.
 - No guarantee that you'll get questions from every party.

Opening statement

- Short (maximum 3 minutes)
- Flag what questions you're interested in answering
- Flag any limitations/gaps in your expertise

What can you be asked?

- About your submission
- About your background and expertise
- About your opinion on other submissions
- About your opinion on other topics the inquiry has covered.

Sharing questions

- Tip: Can divide topics between colleagues beforehand.
 - As a starting point only.
- Can piggyback on questions asked of other organisations (but read the room).

Fielding difficult questions

- Take it on notice
- Entitled to give broader context
 - If asked about motives, can talk about outcomes
 - Don't fall for “yes or no question”
- Entitled to not have an opinion
- You can decline questions outside the terms of reference

Logistics

- Dress code
- Planning to use parliamentary privilege?
Seek advice
- Appearing alone or with a colleague
- Appearing online or in person

Preparing

- Watch/read transcripts of earlier hearings
- Read other submissions
- What's the simplest way to explain my ideas?
- What are some likely criticisms and concerns?

Follow up

- Check Hansard transcript.
- Answer any questions on notice.
 - These might not come from the hearing.
- Provide supplementary information (if you like).

Part 5: Report and response

- Most inquiries will end with a report.
 - Findings
 - Recommendations
- Some publish interim reports.
- Some never get a chance to report.
- Reports depend on evidence received.

Multipartisan committees don't always make multipartisan recommendations

- Main report
- Dissenting report
- Additional comments

Government response

- Timeliness and level of detail is inconsistent.
- Options include: Noted, supported, not supported, supported in part

**Government Response to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters report:
Conduct of the 2022 federal election and other matters – Final Report**

Majority:

#	Recommendation	Government Response
1	The Committee recommends the Government consider asking the Committee to inquire into increasing the size of the House of Representatives to reduce malapportionment and improve the ratio of electors to MPs.	<p>Noted</p> <p>The Government notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The process for electing members of the House of Representatives involves a combination of provisions from the Constitution and the <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i> (Electoral Act).</p> <p>The Government notes that the membership of the House of Representatives increased from 125 to 148–151 members in 1984, although since then the population of Australia has increased significantly. If Members of Parliament's (MPs') divisions are too populous, this may negatively impact democracy and the MPs' capacity to represent their constituents.</p> <p>Whilst the Government does not propose to increase the membership of the House of Representatives, this important issue requires further inquiry and consideration.</p>

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