

Election of the President of the Senate

ON July 7 2014, Senator Stephen Parry, Liberal Senator for Tasmania, was elected as the 24th President of the Senate of the Australian Parliament.

After serving a three-year term as Deputy President, Senator Parry was elected unopposed as the Coalition's nomination for the position, and was then elected as President in a Senate ballot against Senator Scott Ludlam, Greens Senator for Western Australia.

The ballot vote was as follows:

Senator Parry:	63
Senator Ludlam:	10
Informal:	2
Absent:	1

The Roles and Responsibilities of the President of the Senate

The President of the Senate of the Australian Parliament:

- Is the presiding officer and, while in the President's chair in the Senate chamber, manages the meetings of the Senate. All debate must be addressed to the President. When the Senate votes on a matter, the President ascertains and declares the will of the Senate.
- Interprets and applies the standing orders of the Senate, which are the rules of procedure which the Senate has agreed will govern its business and proceedings.
- Is the spokesperson for the Senate and represents the Senate in dealings with the Governor-General, the executive government, House of Representatives and overseas dignitaries.
- Is required to be impartial when making decisions relating to the duty of the office, both inside and outside the chamber, in order to maintain the confidence of all its members.
- Is the executive head of the Department of the Senate and is responsible for the department's activities in the service of the Senate, its committees, and senators.
- Chairs the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing, which determines the annual budget and oversees the organisational structure for the Department of the Senate.
- Together the presiding officers (the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives) are jointly responsible for the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS). DPS is responsible for publishing Hansard, supplying and maintaining of audio visual and information technology to the Parliament, the physical environment of Parliament House and the parliamentary precincts, including care of the building and gardens, the Parliament House Art Collection and Parliamentary Library.

For more information www.aph.gov.au



Speeches to the Senate

Senator the Hon. Stephen PARRY Tasmania

President of the Senate

The PRESIDENT: Please be seated, colleagues. I am sorry it took so long to get to the chair, but I am supposed to show some reluctance!

Thank you very much, I truly appreciate the honour that each of you have bestowed upon me. It is something that I do not take lightly. I intend to continue being impartial as I was as Deputy President. That is fair warning to both sides and to the cross-benchers. I will be impartial in my role. I will take it very seriously. I will build upon the trust and the commitment that I already started in my previous role. I look forward to working with each of you as we move forward in this Senate, which has a different configuration to most others.

I thank you for your warm wishes. I realise that this role not only presides over the parliament here in this chamber, but also jointly with the Speaker of the House where we preside and administer the parliament estate. In that aspect, I intend to

defend the parliament as being truly independent, especially being independent from the executive government. I think that is an important aspect about every Presiding Officer. The executive government has a right to govern and we must respect that. But equally, the parliament itself should be independent from the executive. In that way too, I think the funding and the financial aspects concerning the parliament should be brought back into the parliament, not left with the executive government. However, I do acknowledge the executive government has a very important role to play in governing this country with proper supervision, proper scrutiny and review from this parliament.

Colleagues, thank you again. I understand that the Governor-General will be waiting to greet us shortly. I do appreciate the honour you have bestowed upon me and I look forward to working with you. I regard myself as your servant.



Above: The President of the Senate takes the Chair



Above: Fellow Tasmanian Senators, Richard Colbeck and David Bushby “drag a reluctant” President to the Chair, in line with tradition

Senator the Hon. Eric ABETZ

Tasmania

Leader of the Government in the Senate,
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the
Public Service and Minister for Employment

Senator ABETZ: What a delight it is to be able to officially call you Mr President. I have the privilege to officially congratulate you on your election as our president. The regard in which you are held by honourable senators is reflected in the decision taken by the Senate today.

If I may be parochial just for a moment, I note that apart from being our 24th president, you are the fourth to come from the state of Tasmania. You follow John Blyth Hayes of the United Australia Party, Justin O’Byrne from the Australian Labor Party, and Paul Calvert of the Liberal Party. I know that in a former life you served as an officer of the law. I also note that President Blyth Hayes had a prison named after him in Tasmania. I interpret all of that as a signal that we should all behave in the Senate because the president might know what to do if we do not! Just in case that does not work, I do note that the other occupation that you held before entering this place was that of an undertaker!

On a personal note, I know this is a very special day for your parents, your wife Allison and your children. I am sure they are very proud, as they ought to be, of your achievement in being elected to this high office by your peers.



Above: Leader of the Government in the Senate,
Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz

As your predecessor President Hogg said to us only a few days ago in his non-valedictory statement, he valued the relationship he had with you in managing this chamber and in all the other activities that a Presiding Officer undertakes outside the actual meetings of the Senate. It would be accurate to say, especially in this Canberra winter, that the President’s job is a bit like the proverbial iceberg, 90 per cent of it is not immediately visible. I know you will represent the Australian Senate well and continue the distinguished traditions that have been built up since 1901.

On behalf of the government, the Senate and if I might say, as a friend, I congratulate you and wish you well in the new role on which you embark today.

Did you know:

It is custom on the election of a new President of the Senate for the proposer and seconder, one on each side, to “drag the reluctant” President to the chair, where they leave him and return to their seats.

This ritual has no basis in Senate practice or procedure. It is a relic of ancient Westminster, when Speakers often had good cause to fear for their heads and displayed understandable reluctance.

AT WORK WITH THE PRESIDENT

WHILE the demands of the Senate are varied and unpredictable, following is a summary of what the President's schedule could look like on any given day:

- 6.15 am** Arrive at Parliament House, check urgent overnight domestic and international communications
- 6.45 am** Exercise if time permits
- 7.30 am** Attend parliamentary function in support of charitable organisation
- 8.30 am** Meeting of the Joint House Committee to discuss a range of matters about the operations of Parliament House with Senators and Members
- 9.10 am** Briefing by the Clerk of the Senate on the day's proceedings in the Senate
- 10.00 am** Take the Chair in the Senate Chamber - open the day's proceedings
- 10.30 am** Deputy President relieves President in Chair to enable the President to receive a new ambassador
- 11.00 am** Presiding Officers meeting with the Speaker of the House of Representatives regarding administration of Parliament House
- 12.30 pm** Working lunch with senior executives from Department of Parliamentary Services
- 1.15 pm** Briefing on procedural matters by the Clerk of the Senate
- 2.00 pm** Resume the Chair for Question Time and the debate on a procedural matter which followed
- 3.30 pm** Meet group of school children from a Tasmanian primary school
- 3.45 pm** Meet parliamentary delegation visiting from overseas
- 4.30 pm** Regular meeting with senior advisors
- 5.30 pm** Meet with the Clerk to finalise a statement to be made to the Senate at 6.00 pm relating to the procedural matter discussed earlier in the day
- 6.00 pm** Resume the Chair to make a statement to the Senate and preside over further debate
- 6.30 pm** Hold discussions with the Usher of the Black Rod and the Parliament House Security Controller relating to a security matter
- 7.30 pm** Chair a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing to consider the Senate's proposed budget
- 8.00 pm** Host an official dinner in honour of the visiting parliamentary delegation
- 9.45 pm** Attend to the signing of official communications to the House of Representatives and other key offices
- 10.00 pm** Resume the Chair until rise of the Senate