

House Rules

Your key to the House

Keeping up with the business of the House of Representatives is easier if you know the paper trail you need to follow.

MOST people lament the mountains of documents they have to deal with in the course of their work day.

But without paperwork, Australia's House of Representatives would struggle to function and voters would have no idea what was going on.

In order to ensure the work of the House runs smoothly a team of staff are constantly producing and updating various important documents, which are then distributed to MPs and published on the internet for the public.

Each document has a different purpose, which can be confusing if you're not sure what exactly it is you are trying to track down.

For starters, it's worth looking at the Notice Paper which is the definitive guide to the House's agenda because it lists, among other things, all the business that is before it.

A new Notice Paper is published for each sitting day. 'Notices' indicate that a member is set to introduce a matter for consideration, such as a bill, while 'orders' have already been introduced but not fully considered.

The Notice Paper also lists questions in writing and general information about committee membership and committee inquiries.

The Notice Paper is a lengthy document in comparison to its counterpart, the

Daily Program or Daily Blue (named after the colour of paper it is printed on).

Unlike the Notice Paper, the Blue is not a formal document and does not set the order of business. Instead it is a guide to what is most likely to be dealt with on that particular day.

Ministerial statements, matters of public importance and committee reports can be found on the Blue, but will not be listed on the Notice Paper.

But what if you want to find out what happened yesterday as opposed to keeping track of what's going on today? Well that is the role of the Votes and Proceedings, the official record of exactly what has happened in the House of Representatives.

A separate record is compiled for each sitting that has been held and details the work of the House as a whole.

Items such as documents presented, motions and bills considered, messages from the Senate, and MPs present are recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

A more familiar document for many will be the Hansard (officially titled 'Parliamentary Debates') which is basically the transcript of debates in the House and Main Committee.

Although dominated by what has actually been said in the chamber, Hansard does also record the results of divisions and the text of motions and amendments. MPs are allowed to make



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small changes to Hansard to correct things like grammatical errors but they cannot change the meaning of what has been said.

Various documents can also be presented to the House, the most obvious one being bills.

And finally, those who love number crunching will enjoy reading the Work of the Session, which is a twice-yearly list containing statistical summaries of the sittings.

All of these documents can be found on the web at: www.aph.gov.au/house/pubs •

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Television networks are also required to broadcast films and television programs in their original English, rather than dubbed into Georgian, and the government provides full scholarships to students accepted into the world's top 50 universities.

It's all part of promoting the new face of Georgia, as a modern, open society ready to take its place among the world's advanced democracies.

"We are still a small country, but we are no longer the small, corrupt, inward looking country we were 10 years ago," Dr Bakradze said.

"We have very good relations with all our neighbours, unfortunately except Russia of course, we have very intensive economic cooperation with all our neighbours, and we have already become the regional example of reform and quick economic development.

"This is how we see our role, to be small, but to be a positive open country that communicates to the world, which is open to the world and which can play a positive role when it comes to standing on the same side when it comes to having the same values.

"We believe we stand on the right side and that's how we present and portray ourselves." •