

A Quick Guide to the Committee Role-play Senate

Role-play stages	<i>Interpretation</i>
<p>Opening</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The committee senators enter the room and sit at the committee table. 2. The committee chair declares the meeting open, gives the time and the date and states the purpose of the inquiry. 3. The committee chair names the witness groups giving evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A committee of inquiry is not held in a chamber. It is held in a committee room in APH or in various venues across Australia.</i> • <i>Senate committees usually investigate bills being considered by the Parliament.</i> • <i>Witness groups are made up of individuals or organisations, lay people or experts.</i>
<p>Witness statements</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The committee chair calls the representatives of the first witness group to the witness table. 2. The witness group sits opposite the committee senators. 3. The committee chair asks the witnesses to state their full names for the <i>Hansard</i> record. 4. The committee chair asks for the witness statement to be read to the committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Witnesses who give evidence are protected by the rules of parliamentary privilege.</i> • <i>Witnesses are expected to tell the truth.</i> • <i>Statements to the committee outline the witness group's position on the bill.</i>
<p>Examination of witnesses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The committee chair invites a senator to ask a question of a witness. 2. The committee senator asks a question. 3. The witness answers the questions. 4. The committee chair repeats steps 1 to 2 till the questions are exhausted. 5. The committee chair thanks the witnesses for their time and calls the next witness group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Questions asked by senators are designed to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>clarify witness statements</i> ○ <i>extract detailed information about the bill</i> ○ <i>allow the witness to fully explain their position on the bill.</i>

<p>Continuing the inquiry</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The committee chair calls the representatives of the second witness group to the witness table and repeats all the ‘Witness statements’ and ‘Examination of witnesses’ steps. 2. The committee chair calls the representatives of the third witness group and repeats the process until all witnesses have been heard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>By hearing evidence from many different groups the committee gathers a range of opinions on the bill and becomes better informed about its likely impact.</i>
<p>Adjourning the inquiry</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The committee chair announces that the meeting has ended and that the committee will consider the evidence presented when preparing the report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All of the evidence presented during a committee of inquiry is recorded.</i> • <i>A committee is the Parliament at work—just not in a chamber.</i>
<p>Report writing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The committee senators meet in private to consider the evidence. 2. The committee senators write a report including recommendations on the bill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A committee report summarises all the evidence presented to the committee.</i> • <i>Committee reports usually include recommendations.</i> • <i>The committee may recommend that the bill is:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>accepted</i> ○ <i>rejected</i> ○ <i>amended (changed).</i>
<p>Tabling the report</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The committee chair tables the report in the Senate. 2. By leave of the chamber, the committee chair speaks about the report and the committee recommendations. 3. The government responds to the report’s recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The tabling of the report occurs at a time after the hearings are complete.</i> • <i>The government does not have to accept the committee recommendations.</i>