

**Submission
No 1**

**INQUIRY INTO BROADCAST OF PROCEEDINGS
RESOLUTION**

Name: The Hon. Rose Jackson

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Overview

It is not a new phenomenon that the general public and notably young people are becoming increasingly disengaged and uninterested in government and political processes. Even though there was a record number of voters enrolled this year, there was also the lowest voter turnout since the 1920's.¹ It appears evident that there is a distinct and widening gap between the general public and politicians. Whilst people are engaged and interested in issues affecting society, they are disengaged when it comes to implementing change through parliamentary processes.

One meaningful way to change this issue and to encourage engagement and interaction with parliament and parliamentary processes is through utilising social media and technologies in the galleries and chamber, allowing people more access to the work of political decision-makers.

Background

Currently, the use of technology is limited in the two parliamentary chambers. For the general public viewing areas, phones are allowed but have to be switched off or on silent. No photography or filming is allowed of any chamber in session.

Additionally, members of both chambers are not allowed to record, take photos or utilise their phones to promote engagement on social media during sitting time in the Chamber.

The only exception is for members of the press gallery where the President may approve filming on request and prior to the event. However, this rarely occurs and when it does, the footage is mainly used for limited news purposes and may not reach the general public.

As a result, the main way the public can get any comprehensive information or exposure to what occurs in Parliament is through:

1. Attending Parliament House in person and watching the debates in the chamber galleries, noting that these cannot be recorded at any time.
2. Going onto the NSW Government website and accessing written versions of the day's proceedings in Hansard.
3. Watching the live stream on the website that does not repeat or allow for repurposing in anyway.

These forms of communication have not kept pace with the rapidly changing technology now cheaply and easily available, and parliamentary regulations have not considered the importance of social media in promoting active citizenship and citizen engagement. It has been noted that the greatest barrier to general participation in political decisions is a lack of time, and the current ways individuals can engage with political decisions are time consuming and ineffective.

Proposed Changes

1. An open Parliament where Members and the public are permitted to record or take photos in the Legislative Council, Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Inquiries in unobtrusive manner to promote engagement with Parliamentary debate and processes

- a. Change the regulations and allow Members of Parliament and the public to film and take photos in an unobtrusive manner. These can then be used on social media and other platforms to promote connection and engagement. Currently, over 79% of Australians have a social media account, with young people using social media extensively to access news and political information. There is a disconnect between what goes on in Parliament and the public. Allowing Members, staff and the public to take high quality photos and video in both chambers means better engagement especially through social media.
- b. This makes our Parliament and its processes more transparent and accessible.
- c. Britain has implemented a series of similar steps in 2009. They allowed the use of social media and an open parliament to promote engagement and restore confidence in parliamentary debates. Their inquiry found that utilising social media to unmask what goes on behind parliament doors has a positive impact on citizens' political engagement, thereby restoring their trust and faith in political processes.
- d. Sessional orders can easily be amended to allow this change to occur. Obviously filming and photography would need to be unobtrusive and not impede Members from participating in any way, but silent and discreet filming or photography is extremely simple. If Members are uncomfortable about being filmed in the Chamber, I would suggest the issue is with their behaviour. Allowing the public from having full access to this information might encourage better standards of conduct. If we are an open democracy there should be no reason we would not want to encourage the public to have a full view of what occurs when the Parliament is in session.

2. Updating Parliamentary technology making it easier to access and better quality broadcasts

- a. Developing Video on Demand System (VOD)
 - i) Currently all request for Parliamentary footage must be processed manually through the NSW Parliamentary Library.
 - ii) This is time consuming and resource intensive.
 - iii) The NSW Parliament should develop a system similar to Federal Parliament's "ParlView" system which allows staff and members and the media to download proceedings at any time.
 - iv) This means footage can be downloaded immediately promoting better engagement and reducing the resource burden on the NSW Parliament Library

- b. Better supporting Live Streaming of Parliament and committees
 - i) Making the webcast easier to stream on platforms such as Facebook and twitter.
- c. Updating the Legislative Council cameras and technology to allow for High Definition video recording
- d. Better filming and access to sound during Parliamentary Inquires
 - i) Currently the filming of Inquires only focuses on the witnesses and does not pan back to any Members during the asking questions
 - ii) During inquires the camera angles should change to allow footage of Members asking questions making the footage more engaging and natural
 - iii) Staff and media should get access to direct microphone feeds via a 'press mult box' or 'Press Box.'

ⁱ <https://www.abc.net.au/life/do-young-people-care-about-politics/10905604>