



**Legislative Assembly
Parliament of Victoria**

Fact Sheet 9

Messages

Background

A method is needed for the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council to communicate with each other, and for communication between the Governor and the Assembly. The longstanding procedure is for all such communication to be by formal messages.

Communication between the Houses

Joint Standing Order 1 of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly states that 'communications between the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly will be by written message'.

A message usually relates to bills or resolutions of either House to which the agreement of the other House is requested. For example, when a bill has passed all stages in the Assembly, it is sent to the Council with a message to advise the Council of the bill's passage, and requesting the House's agreement to the bill.

A message from one House to the other relates only to one matter. As soon as a matter has been completed, a message will be prepared and delivered to the other House. The Serjeant-at-Arms delivers messages from the Assembly to the Usher of the Black Rod. Messages sent from the Council are, in turn, delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod to the Serjeant-at-Arms. Because messages are only read out by the Speaker either during formal business at the start of the day or at a change of business, it is common practice for a number of messages to be read one after the other, dealing with different items. Messages are recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

For further information see:

- *Fact Sheet 1: A Typical Sitting Day in the House*
- *Fact Sheet 19: The Serjeant-at-Arms*
- *Fact Sheet 35: Votes and Proceedings*

Types of message sent between the Houses

There are two types of message relating to the passage of bills:

- **Sending.** The first House attaches a copy of a bill that it has agreed to and sends it to the other House for consideration and agreement.
- **Returning/advising.** The second House notifies the first House of its decision, for example, that it has agreed to the bill.

For further information see:

- *Fact Sheet 2: Stages of Bill*

In addition, one House may send a message asking the other House to agree to a resolution, for example, agreeing that a joint sitting should be held.

Governor's messages

The common messages received from the Governor are:

Appropriation. A proposal in a bill to spend public money is known as an appropriation. Before the Assembly can pass a bill to spend public money, the appropriation must first be recommended by the Governor in a message to the Assembly. This requirement is indicated in Standing Order 88 which states that:

A proposal to appropriate public money cannot proceed without a message from the Governor to the House in the same session recommending the appropriation.

Messages from the Governor recommending appropriations are generally announced in the House during the formal business stage of proceedings.

Where an appropriation message is required, it must be presented in the Assembly before the bill is read a second time. The exception to this is the case of the Appropriation Bill, commonly known as the Budget. For the Budget, the message must be read before the bill is introduced.

Royal Assent. Reflecting the Westminster system, neither House of Parliament can legislate without the Crown's agreement, known as the royal assent. In Victoria the Governor represents the Crown. When royal assent is given, a bill formally becomes an Act. The assent of the Crown is relayed to the Parliament by a message from the Governor. This is also announced by the Speaker during the formal business of the House.

Examples of messages

Sending a bill from the Assembly to the Council:

PRESIDENT,

PRAHRAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE AMENDMENT BILL 2007

The Legislative Assembly presents for the agreement of the Legislative Council a Bill 'for an Act to amend the *Prahran Mechanics' Institute Act 1899* and for other purposes'.

SPEAKER

Legislative Assembly
Melbourne

Governor's message recommending an appropriation:

From: Professor David de Kretser, AC.,
Governor of Victoria

GOVERNOR OF VICTORIA

Message No.

In accordance with the requirements of section 63 of the *Constitution Act 1975* the Governor recommends to the Legislative Assembly that an Appropriation be made from the Consolidated Fund for the purposes of the Bill for an Act to further amend the *Heritage Act 1995* and for other purposes.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MELBOURNE, 3004
VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

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Fact Sheets

The Legislative Assembly Procedure Office has produced a series of Fact Sheets that explain parliamentary procedure and terminology. All Fact Sheets are available on Parliament's website www.parliament.vic.gov.au or through the Procedure Office.

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