



## **Hansard editing and corrections policy**

### ***Background***

The Hansard section of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) produces *Hansard* transcripts of parliamentary proceedings for the three chambers (Senate, House of Representatives and Federation Chamber) and for parliamentary committee hearings and briefings held in Canberra and interstate.

### ***Hansard's mission statement***

To provide an accurate, substantially verbatim account of the proceedings of the parliament and its committees which while usually correcting obvious mistakes, neither adds to nor detracts from the meaning of the speech or the illustration of the argument

Hansard provides two distinct products: the report of the proceedings of the chambers and the proceedings of parliamentary committee hearings.

For chambers, Hansard produces:

A rendition which is accurate and readable, with minimal alterations being made only to clarify ambiguous or confusing passages, and to ensure that the meaning is understandable and the argument coherent. Politically sensitive subjects require a more strictly verbatim approach.

For parliamentary committees, Hansard produces:

An accurate, basically verbatim rendition. Witnesses should, by and large, be given their exact words, even though these are sometimes confusing and not always strictly grammatical. Editing should be kept to a minimum and used only in circumstances where it is deemed absolutely necessary and can be justified as such.

### **Hansard editing and style**

Hansard makes changes where there is:

- a lack of clarity where clarity is intended;
- a lack of readability; or
- significant diversion from standard spoken English grammar.

The major issues addressed by Hansard fall into the following categories:

- false starts and unfinished sentences;
- obvious repetitions;
- grammar;
- convoluted sentences;
- obvious mistakes, except during politically sensitive debates and question time; and
- colloquial language and loose expression.

All sentence correction is, wherever possible, 'invisible mending'—for example, by inserting unnoticeable or bland words, such as 'and'.

## ***Interjections***

To be incorporated in the *Hansard* transcript, an interjection or related descriptive line must be:

- responded to by the member speaking or by the occupant of the chair (other than by 'Order!' or similar);
- followed by an official warning from the occupant of the chair (and, in the House of Representatives, a possible suspension of a member under [Standing Order 94](#)); or
- the cause of any discussion unrelated to the debate, such as a request for a withdrawal of any words interjected.

Interjections are not edited. Editors listen carefully for, and record, interjections while they are in the chambers or while watching the proceedings via in-house monitors. Unless editors are certain of interjections, or they are audible on the recorded audio, the text of interjections are not included in *Hansard*. In these cases a descriptive line, such as '*Honourable members interjecting—*', is used.

## ***Time expired***

In the chambers, the occupant of the chair will call a senator or member to order when the time allotted for their speech has expired. Hansard editors use a (*Time expired*) line to indicate this. The Hansard editor will include the senator or member's words up to the point that the occupant of the chair finishes saying 'time has expired' and the senator or member's microphone is turned off.

[House of Representatives Practice](#), 6th edition, chapter 17, p. 621, notes: 'The Chair has ruled that the remarks made by a Member after his time has expired are not to be recorded'. This ruling was made in the House of Representatives in 1969.

## ***Acceptable corrections***

The following types of corrections are generally accepted by Hansard:

- ***Errors of fact***: corrections to names, numbers, figures, and dates when the wrong information was originally given and the speaker has checked them since.
- ***Typographical errors***: corrections to obvious errors such as repeated or left out words or misspellings.
- ***Mishearings***: homonyms, incorrect words used in very technical material, names and so on.
- ***Incorrect identification of speakers***: for example, when Hansard has attributed what was said to the wrong person.
- ***Omitted words***: words left out in a sentence or words left out at the end of a sentence, especially when a speaker is interrupted by another speaker or someone talks over them and the Hansard editors were unable to hear what was said clearly. This does not apply in chambers when the senator or member's time has expired (see comments on *Time expired* above.)
- ***Misspellings***: especially of people's names, technical material or other things which Hansard has not been able to verify within the requested turnaround time.
- ***Grammatical errors***: corrections of obvious grammatical errors. However, changes which do not fit in with Hansard stylistic conventions and practices



are not accepted, for reasons of consistency across the *Hansard* transcript as a whole.

- **Clarifications:** where the speaker has added or rearranged words to make the content/intent clearer, may be accepted, as long as it does not change the meaning.

### **Unacceptable corrections**

The following types of corrections are generally not accepted by Hansard:

- **Rewriting or altering the transcript:** the *Hansard* record is, as far as is possible, a record of what was actually said. A speaker should not change the transcript to put in what they wished they had said or what they would have written in a formal paper on the subject. Major rewriting of this nature will not be accepted. However, clarifications or simplifications may be accepted, at the discretion of the vetting editor, as long as they do not change the tenor of what was said or cause problems with the consistency of the transcript.
- **Adding to or improving the transcript:** as pointed out above, the transcript is a record of what was said and is not meant to be a polished written paper on the subject. Therefore, Hansard will not add information to the transcript which was not actually said by the speaker.
- **Changing Hansard style:** To ensure consistency throughout the transcript, corrections to Hansard's style on capitals, punctuation, hyphenation and so on are not accepted. For example, 'government' with lower case 'g' is accepted Hansard style, in most cases. A change to 'Government', with upper case 'G' will generally not be accepted.

The ultimate authorities on the acceptability or otherwise of a requested correction to a proof *Hansard* are the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

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