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## From the Editor

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This issue of the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* continues the emphasis of the last issue in presenting serious analysis of current issues related to Parliament. In the first article in this issue, Richard Herr uses the opportunity presented by the recent 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fijian independence to deliver a critical analysis of the further adaptation of the Westminster model to the Fijian context in the 2013 Constitution. He focuses particularly on relations between the Head of State and the Parliament, arguing that the 2013 Constitution has continued previous trends of diminishing the President's exercise of reserve powers via their codification and of increasing the power of the Prime Minister over the Parliament.

Given recent controversies over pork barrelling in sports and community grants schemes at both the national and state level in Australia, Susanna Connolly's detailed explanation of the current regulation of pork barrelling is most timely. Following a systematic review that covers electoral bribery offences, financial legislation and regulations, administrative law, ministerial standards, caretaker conventions, oversight by the Auditor-General and media coverage, she concludes with some suggestions for improving a regime that is 'limited by the absence of sufficient enforcement mechanisms'.

The next two articles focus on the roles of committees. Lynda Pretty analyses evidence on the current state of rights protection via legislation and committee scrutiny in Queensland. She notes the impossibility of effective rights protection when governments use their majorities in Queensland's Legislative Assembly to avoid committee scrutiny in the name of urgency—a practice that began before Covid 19 and has continued through the pandemic response—but also the potential of proper committee scrutiny for developing a more rights aware political culture in the sunshine State. Queensland's unicameral Parliament has, of course, just begun its first fixed four-year parliamentary term with the election of a majority government led by Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk.

The damaging effects of excessive partisanship and time pressures on committee work are also central themes of Emma Banyer's analysis of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics' controversial 2018-19 inquiry into franking credits. Relating the inquiry to broader theories of Parliament, citizen

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participation and deliberation, Banyer notes that ‘the existing literature overlooks the specific role of the Parliamentary Service’ in promoting participation and deliberation. She discusses this role and outlines a set of reform principles designed to avoid future ‘negative, manipulative or ineffectual public engagement’ by parliamentary committees.

Rebecca Burton considers recent instances of conflicts between the principle of parliamentary privilege and the integrity of investigations into criminal and corrupt acts required by the rule of law. Developments in surveillance mechanisms, including access to electronic metadata, have heightened this issue. Burton reviews current memoranda of understanding between parliaments and investigating agencies, arguing that

... it is an opportune time to renegotiate existing memoranda of understanding to include protocols covering more advanced investigative techniques and better safeguards to ensure material subject to parliamentary privilege is treated appropriately.

She concludes her article with a set of options for improving these memoranda.

We conclude the articles by adding to the three articles by Jonathan O’Dea, Stephen Mills and Graeme Orr published in the last issue of the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* on the impact of Covid 19 on parliamentary and related politics. In this issue, Scott Prasser presents a critical assessment of the genesis, early operation and future of the National Cabinet established by Prime Minister Scott Morrison in March this year. Prasser concludes that the National Cabinet has, among other things, ‘enhanced executive federalism’ and ‘extended executive power’, while raising ‘real concerns about the value and constitutional standing of Parliament in the Australian Westminster model’. We hope to continue assessments of the impact of Covid 19 responses on aspects of Parliament in future issues of the journal.