
From the Editor

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this Special Edition of the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* on **Freedom of Speech, Debate and Information**. This was also the theme for the 2023 Australasian Study of Parliament Group (ASPG) Conference hosted by the Western Australian Chapter of the ASPG in Perth in September 2023.

Like the Conference itself, this Special Edition canvasses not just bedrock topics such as parliamentary privilege, the doctrine of effective repetition, and citizen ‘right of reply’ provisions, but philosophical questions such as who has a voice in the legislature, and who gets to ‘heard’ in parliamentary forums and inquiries. Some of the speeches and papers presented here challenge us to consider the fragility of freedom of speech in our parliamentary systems, and whether parliaments should have to defend their ‘social licence’ to exercise free speech in an environment which increasingly considers legal but possibly ‘offensive’ speech to be impermissible.

This Edition captures the inspiring thoughts of the Keynote Speakers at the Conference, including Dr Arif Ahmed MBE, Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, Office for Students (‘Arguing for free speech in the 21st Century’), the Hon Robert French AC (‘Your Freedom Ends Where my Nose Begins – But what if the Nose Moves?’) and Catherine Spencer, Auditor General for Western Australia (‘Unheralded but indispensable: The Auditor General’s role in promoting government transparency’).

Speeches are also included from the erudite Professor James Allan, University of Queensland (Who Will Guard the Free Speech Guardians?) and David Gibson, Chair, GLBTI Rights in Aging Inc, and former Liberal National Party member for Gympie in the Queensland Parliament (Queering Up the Debate: Freedom of Speech seen through a LGBTI lens).

The Special Edition also includes papers presented by Charlie Feldman, President, Canadian Study of Parliament Group, as well as experienced parliamentary staff from a wide range of jurisdictions, including: Neil Laure, Clerk of the Queensland Parliament; Cecilia Edwards, Hansard Editor, Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, New Zealand; Vanessa O’Loan, Legislative Council, Parliament of New South Wales; and Dr Joel Bateman & Ophelia Tynan from the House of Representatives, Parliament of Australia.

Powerful academic offerings are also included from Thomas Spencer (‘Article 9 of the Bill of Rights’) Scott Prasser (‘What should Oppositions do?’) and Rachel Tan (‘Combating Misinformation and Disinformation’).

The views expressed in this Edition are varied and diverse, provocative and reflective, leaving readers in no doubt that freedom of speech remains a cornerstone of our collective practice as scholars and professionals with a shared interest in flourishing parliamentary democracies in this region. I express deep gratitude to all contributors, authors and reviewers involved in this publication and commend the contents to you.



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