PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT BILL 1983

Date Introduced: 7 December 1983
House: House of Representatives
Presented by: Hon. K.C. Beazley, Special Minister of State

Short Digest of Bill

Purpose

To increase from ten to fifteen the membership of the Public Accounts Committee.

Background

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts is a joint Parliamentary committee established under the Public Accounts Committee Act 1951, although the Public Accounts Committee was first established in 1913.

The Committee has very wide powers to inquire into any aspect of public finance or public administration. The aim of the Committee's scrutiny is to secure value for money in the administration of Government policies. The terms or adequacy of policy itself is not a matter of concern to the Committee.

Amendments to the Public Accounts Committee Act in 1979 removed any doubts as to the jurisdiction of the Committee over statutory authorities and certain other bodies, and permitted meetings of the Committee to be held even during Senate sittings.

A conference of Commonwealth and State Public Accounts Committees was held in Sydney in 1977, followed by a second conference in Melbourne in November 1981. At the later conference, the constitutive role of Public Accounts Committees was emphasized, reflected in recommendations which had been adopted and had a major effect on Government administration, such as the Commonwealth Committees' study of computer acquisition in the Australian Public Service[1].

At a third Conference in 1983, the vice-chairman, Hon. A.G. Cadman, M.P., referred to a number of steps taken to improve financial accountability, applying to statutory authorities and government companies as well as government

Main Provisions

The Bill would operate from the date of Royal Assent.

Clause 3 amends section 5 of the Public Accounts Committee Act 1951, to specify appointment of 15 members of the Parliament, of which five shall be from the Senate, and 10 from the House of Representatives. Appointments are to be made according to the practice for appointment to joint select committees.

Clause 4 amends section 7. The quorum is increased from 4 to 6.

For further information, if required, contact:

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References

2. The Australian, 10 November 1983.