

## Using Opportunities in the New Parliament

**SUMMARY:** *To form a minority Government, the ALP has agreed to a number of reforms to Parliamentary procedure which independent and Green parliamentarians proposed. These reforms will increase the opportunities for individual members to speak on different issues in the Parliament, have motions debated and introduce private members legislation. These changes also create opportunities for RESULTS to have Parliamentarians take action on our behalf. This month, we are encouraging our volunteers to ask their Members of Parliament to take action to increase the Australian Government's contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.*

### THE CHANGES TO THE PARLIAMENT

In recent decades, the Executive Government (Ministers and their Departments) have dominated the agenda for the Federal Parliament. Ministers have introduced nearly all legislation which the Parliament has considered, approve the subjects of Parliamentary Committee inquiries and often provide prepared responses to questions from Government MPs in Question Time. An outline of the basics of our parliamentary system is attached.

However, following the 2010 election, the major parties agreed with proposals by Independent and Green MPs for a number of changes to Parliamentary practices which will provide increased opportunity for individual MPs to raise issues in the Parliament and hold the Government to account.

The key changes to Parliamentary procedures are:

- **Question time:** Both questions without notice and responses to these questions are now subject to time limits, which will allow more questions to be answered in each day's Question Time.
- **Statements by Members:** Increased time in the House of Representatives schedule will be available for Adjournment Debates (5 minute statements by members) and Members' Statements (90 second statements), and a new category of statements (Constituency Statements, of up to 3 minutes) is also part of each sitting day's schedule.
- **Motions and Private Members' Bills:** Motions by members will be debated more promptly, and increased time will be available for debate of Bills that individual members introduce (Private Members' Bills).
- **Parliamentary Committees:** Committees will be able to undertake an inquiry with a referral from the Parliament as well as a Minister, increasing the range of issues on which they could investigate. The Government will also be required to respond to Committee reports within 6 months of the tabling of the report.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHANGES FOR RESULTS

These changes will provide increased opportunities individual MPs from all parties to promote action by the Government on issues we are raising through:

- Making speeches in the periods when members can speak on a range of issues (Adjournment Debates, Members Statements and Constituency Statements).

- Moving and debating motions on poverty-related issues.
- Proposing and participating in new Parliamentary Committee inquiries on poverty issues.
- Possibly introducing legislation to influence aid priorities.

## **HAVING MPs SUPPORT INCREASED GLOBAL FUND CONTRIBUTIONS**

The recent announcement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, The Honourable Kevin Rudd MP, of Australia's contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria in 2011 to 2013 provides an early opportunity to have MPs use their increased scope to speak on issues in the Parliament. The announced contribution of \$210 million over the next three years is an increase over the \$135 million Australia has provided in 2008 to 2010, but is still disappointing considering:

- Australia's fair share of the \$US 20 billion which the Global Fund would need in 2011 to 2013 to maintain current programs and expand its new commitments significantly would be \$A 500 million.
- The substantial growth expected in Australia's overall aid, which would allow for a larger increase in global Fund contributions.

Therefore, it is timely to ask Members of Parliament to move or speak in debate on a motion calling on the Government to increase its Global Fund contribution.

### **ACTION:**

Meet with your Member of the House of Representatives or a Senator from your State, and ask your Member or Senator to move or speak on a motion calling for increased contribution by Australia to the Global fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.

Key points for the motion would be:

- To note the impact of the Global Fund since 2002, including that the Fund has supported programs which have saved 5.7 million lives.
- Note that Australia's pledge to the Global fund for 2011 to 2013 is an increase over the contribution in 2008 to 2010.
- Note that a contribution by Australia consistent with its fair share of the \$US 20 billion the Global Fund requires to expand its impact would be \$A 500 million.
- All on the Government to announce a further increase in its Global Fund pledge within the next 12 months