



New South Wales
Council for
Civil Liberties

NSW COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES
PO BOX A1386, SYDNEY SOUTH, NSW 1235 AUSTRALIA

e: office@nswccl.org.au
p: 02 8090 2952
f: 02 8580 4633

www.nswccl.org.au

Senate establishes Committee to scrutinise responses to COVID -19 crisis.

The NSW Council for Civil Liberties welcomes the unanimous decision by the Senate to establish a Select Committee on COVID -19 matters.

The Committee has a wide scope. It is empowered *“to inquire into and report on:*

- a) the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and*
- b) any related matters.”*

It has strong powers to gain information, hold public or private hearings, publish evidence, findings and recommendations and a direction that it be *“provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and be empowered to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee with the approval of the President”*.

It will have a core membership of 7 being: 3 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate; 2 nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate; 1 nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens; and Senator Jacqui Lambie. Other Senators will be able to be nominated as participating – but not voting - members.

On the face of it, this new Select Committee should be able to make a significant contribution to democracy in overseeing the Government’s responses to the COVID -19 pandemic. In so doing it will hopefully provide some much-needed scrutiny of Government decisions and their implementation to fill an astonishing accountability vacuum created by the closure of the Australian Parliament until 11 August 2020.

The Government’s continued refusal to amend the Parliament’s sitting schedule to provide for sittings over the intervening months is a betrayal of the people’s rights to transparency and accountability in government.

Nicholas Cowdery AO QC
President NSW Council for Civil Liberties

Contacts for media

Michelle Falstein, Secretary
email: michelle.falstein@nswccl.org.au; mob 0412980540
Dr Lesley Lynch Assistant Secretary
email: Lesley.lynch@nswccl.org.au ; mod 0416497508