



Intended for

- All Ministers
- All Chief Executives
- All Senior Private Secretaries
- Speaker of the House of Representatives
- Chief Parliamentary Counsel
- Controller and Auditor-General
- Chief Ombudsman
- Official Secretary, Government House

Management of Parliamentary Business after the Dissolution of Parliament

Key points

- 1 This circular provides guidance on the management of parliamentary business after Parliament has been dissolved. The key points are as follows:
 - 1.1 on **Thursday, 1 October 2026**, at approximately 11am, the 54th Parliament will be dissolved, and there will be no Parliament until the first meeting of the 55th Parliament is called after the 2026 general election. This period between the dissolution of the current Parliament, and the first meeting of the next, is known as the **interregnum**;
 - 1.2 once Parliament is dissolved, all business before the current Parliament will lapse, but may be reinstated in the next Parliament by a resolution of the House of Representatives (the House);
 - 1.3 to assist the government in deciding which bills and other items of business will be proposed for reinstatement, departments should advise incoming Ministers of the implications of reinstating, or not reinstating, particular business;
 - 1.4 departments need to be aware of how the interregnum impacts their work, including how it affects requirements relating to publishing papers and reports, the release of select committee information, correspondence to select committees, parliamentary deadlines, written questions, and ongoing work on policy and legislation more broadly.

The interregnum

- 2 During the interregnum, there is no Parliament. There is no business before the House; there are no select committees; it is not possible to present documents to the House; many Parliamentary deadlines are paused; and commonly used scrutiny and accountability mechanisms of the House, such as written parliamentary questions, are unavailable.

- 3 The interregnum does not, of itself, limit the Government's executive authority, except that legislation cannot be enacted while Parliament is dissolved. The Government continues to govern until the election. Any restraint exercised in the pre-election period arises from the principles described in Cabinet Office Circular CO (26) 1 [*Government Decisions and Actions in the Pre-election Period*](#), not from the interregnum. The caretaker convention applies after the election and continues until a new government is formed. Again, any restrictions in the caretaker period are not a result of the interregnum.

Lapse and reinstatement of parliamentary business

- 4 [Section 20 of the Constitution Act 1986](#) provides that all parliamentary business before the House or its committees lapses on the dissolution or expiration of a Parliament but may be reinstated in the next session of Parliament by a resolution of the House. This provision enables the new Parliament to determine which items of business it will consider. This year, the dissolution will occur on Thursday, 1 October.

Effect of lapse and reinstatement

- 5 Lapsed business stops immediately where it is, and is no longer before the House. A lapsed bill does not progress any further, a lapsed inquiry does not report to the House, and a lapsed obligation to present a government response is no longer binding. Reinstatement revives lapsed business, bringing it back before the House at whatever stage it had reached before dissolution.
- 6 Although the effect of lapse is significant, this is tempered by the fact that it has been common practice for most Parliaments to reinstate nearly all lapsed business. Even where an entirely new government is elected, the large majority of lapsed government legislation tends to be reinstated, along with practically all select committee and other business, and new Ministers can then take advice on whether these bills should subsequently be withdrawn.
- 7 The only business that cannot be reinstated is written parliamentary questions. All unanswered questions lapse permanently upon dissolution. These cannot be answered, or reinstated in the new Parliament, and will be automatically closed with the standard reply “Parliament dissolved: no reply received” (although new questions can still be lodged up until 10.30am on the morning of the dissolution on 1 October 2026). Note that replies lodged immediately before dissolution will still be published after the usual three-day delay, so the last replies may not be published until 4 October 2026.

Timing of reinstated business

- 8 Reinstatement affects business with timing considerations in the following ways:
- 8.1 *Bills before select committee*: select committee final reporting dates on bills that are reinstated in the 55th Parliament will be addressed by the Business Committee in the new Parliament. In 2017, 2020, and 2023, at the first meeting of the new Parliament’s Business Committee, the report back date for nearly all reinstated legislation was moved to March or later in the subsequent year. Note that, even with this extended deadline, the practical effect of the interregnum and the summer break may be that select committees have less time to consider legislation, in real terms, than usual. Officials should contact the Clerk of the relevant select committee to discuss legislation that may need to be reported back very early in the next term, or the process for any bills which are open for submissions during the interregnum.

- 8.2 *Government responses to select committee reports and petition referrals:* the 60 working day deadline for government responses to reports and petitions is paused during the interregnum; for example, a response which was to be due 20 working days after the dissolution will, if reinstated, be due 20 working days after the date of reinstatement. Confirmed due dates will be provided in the new Parliament.

Advice on reinstatement

- 9 Agencies are expected to advise their Ministers of the items of parliamentary business within (or relevant to) their portfolio that will lapse on 1 October. Please contact the Office of the Clerk for any questions about lapsed business.
- 10 Following the election, the Cabinet Office, assisted by the Office of the Clerk, will provide the Leader of the House with a schedule of business that has lapsed and is available for reinstatement.
- 11 To assist with the reinstatement process, departments are expected to advise their incoming Ministers of the items of business within their portfolio that have lapsed, and the implications of reinstating, or not reinstating, each item. Departments may wish to consider including this advice in their briefings for incoming Ministers.

Matters arising during the interregnum

Publishing papers and reports after the dissolution of Parliament

- 12 Papers can continue to be presented as normal after the House rises, right up until the morning of the dissolution on 1 October 2026.
- 13 While papers cannot be presented to the House during the interregnum, Ministers may still be required by statute to publish reports or papers during this period. Departments need to be aware of any statutory requirements of this nature and advise their Minister accordingly.
- 14 A statutory requirement to publish a document (usually an annual report) by a certain date, or as soon as practicable, supersedes the usual expectation that a document be presented to the House before it is published. Such documents can be published in line with the legislative requirement, and then presented to the House as soon as practicable after the new Parliament meets.
- 15 Reports or papers that are not required by statute to be published before they can be presented to the new Parliament should be retained by agencies until a government is appointed. When the new Parliament meets, the report or paper can be presented to the House in the usual way.
- 16 Papers may be provided to the House Office during the interregnum so that they are available to be presented as soon as the new Parliament meets. However, the legal protection conferred on parliamentary papers by the Parliament Act 2025 will not apply to such papers until they are presented to the House. There is no opportunity for this to occur before the first meeting of the new Parliament.
- 17 These requirements also apply to secondary legislation that is promulgated during the interregnum. The government retains authority to issue secondary legislation during this period, subject to any considerations relating to the caretaker convention. Any such legislation can be published in the *Gazette* and come into force, and should be presented to the House as soon as practicable in the 55th Parliament.

Confidentiality of lapsed select committee business

- 18 Standing Orders provide that all select committee proceedings remain confidential through the interregnum, until nine sitting days into the new Parliament. This confidentiality ceases after the ninth sitting day of the new Parliament unless the House resolves to reinstate the select committee business or the committee concerned decides to readopt it.
- 19 To avoid being in contempt of the House, departments and other agencies subject to the Official Information Act 1982 that hold or have access to select committee information should refuse, under [section 18\(c\)\(ii\) of the Official Information Act 1982](#), requests for access to this material made after 1 October 2026 and before the ninth sitting day into the 55th Parliament.

Correspondence with select committees

- 20 During the interregnum, agencies should direct any correspondence to select committees, such as outstanding requests for information or advice, to the Clerk of the House of Representatives. This correspondence will be held by the Clerk until the 55th Parliament meets, select committees are established, and the correspondence can be referred to the appropriate committee.

Progressing legislation during and after the interregnum

- 21 Other than the general restrictions on government action around an election, as noted in paragraph 3 above, there is no expectation that all work on primary legislation be paused during the interregnum. Policy work and legislative drafting can continue in the absence of the Parliament, as can the scrutiny of submissions, and the development of legislative advice intended to be shared with the next Parliament.
- 22 Agencies may need to triage their policy and legislative priorities, and progress may be impacted by the practicalities of the interregnum and the election, but there is no broad constitutional prohibition on continuing the non-parliamentary aspects of the legislative process.
- 23 Following the 2020 and 2023 general elections, the legislation bids circular for the following year was published late in December. Final decisions on the process for the 2027 Legislation Programme will be made by the incoming government.

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