

*Guide to working with the
Parliamentary Counsel Office*

Edition 3.10
August 2016

Parliamentary Counsel Office
Te Tari Tohutohu Pāremata
Wellington New Zealand

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From instructions to Act: a Bill's journey inside back cover

1 Preface

1.1 Introduction

I am delighted to introduce the third edition of this guide. The purpose of the guide is to help departments provide full instructions for the drafting of legislation to the Parliamentary Counsel Office (PCO). Instructors and drafters perform an important role in the process of translating policy decisions by Government into effective, principled, and clear legislation. Well drafted, high quality legislation is the result of a team effort between instructors and drafters. A good working relationship is essential, and a sound understanding of the process and our role in that process helps to build that relationship.



This guide outlines what can be expected from the PCO and what we need from instructors. I hope that this guide helps to make the relationship between instructors and drafters as productive, efficient, and effective as possible in assisting the Government in delivering its legislative programme.

1.2 About the PCO

The PCO has two roles: providing law drafting services to the Government and providing access to legislation. This guide is concerned with law drafting.

We are responsible for drafting all Government Bills except those drafted by the IRD. We also examine and provide drafting assistance on local Bills and private Bills, and, when directed to do so by the Attorney-General, provide drafting assistance with Members' Bills. We also draft all Legislative Instruments and some other delegated legislation.

The drafters are organised into four teams under the overall leadership of a Deputy Chief Parliamentary Counsel. Each team tends to work with a specific group of instructing government departments although there is some sharing of workload between teams. The manager of the team responsible for your department (your "Drafting Team Manager") will often be your first point of contact with the PCO. The Drafting Team Managers' contact details are given in [section 6.4](#), along with other contact points in the office.

More information about the PCO is available on our website (www.pco.parliament.govt.nz).

1.3 About this guide

This publication is a guide to the usual processes of instructing and drafting: it does not cover all situations, nor does it set down rigid rules. On occasion, instructors and drafters may agree to vary some of the usual procedures.

[Section 2](#) (“Preparing instructions”) and [section 3](#) (“The drafts”) apply to the development of both Bills and Legislative Instruments. Bills and Legislative Instruments are then treated separately, in sections [4](#) and [5](#) respectively. [Section 6](#) is a collection of reference materials. The final section is the [glossary and index](#), explaining (and locating) many of the terms used in this guide. The chart inside the back cover gives an overview of how instructions become an Act.

1.4 Other resources

We have other resources to offer instructing departments and officials:

- We arrange seminars for departments (contact your Drafting Team Manager in the first instance).
- Our newsletter for instructing departments, the *PCO Quarterly*, gives you updated information on resources for instructors, discussion of drafting issues, and PCO news (contact the PCO’s Communications Adviser to join our mailing list).
- The New Zealand Legislation website (www.legislation.govt.nz) provides official up-to-date Acts, Legislative Instruments, Bills, and SOPs, and links to Other Instruments. Web feeds give access to the latest updates.
- The PCO website (www.pco.parliament.govt.nz) links to databases of legislation, both New Zealand and overseas, gives information on types of legislation (including reprints) and how to access them, and includes Instructing the PCO, a section which provides further help for instructing departments.

I am keen to continue to improve the PCO’s communications with instructing departments, and for that we need to hear from you. Please feel free to get in touch with the Communications Adviser or me with any suggestions for improvements. Contact details are given in [section 6.4](#). Thank you.



Chief Parliamentary Counsel

2 Preparing instructions

Instructions are your way of telling us what the Government’s policy objectives are and how the law needs to be changed to achieve them.

The preparation of instructions is one link in a chain of events that culminates in new legislation. The PCO usually becomes involved one stage earlier, with the proposal for legislation. See also the graphic “From policy to Parliament”, which sets out the steps and time required to transform policy into a Bill for introduction (see [section 6.2](#)).

2.1 First steps

2.1.1 Proposals for legislation

Consult your Drafting Team Manager (see [section 6.4](#)) before submitting a paper to Cabinet or a Cabinet committee that seeks approval for issuing drafting instructions (see form CAB100 in the CabGuide—details are given in [section 6.2](#) and the [glossary](#)).

You are welcome to consult us earlier if you wish. At the policy development stage, or for the annual legislation programme bid, we can help estimate the size, complexity, and drafting time of the proposed legislation, and suggest an appropriate vehicle (eg Act or amending Act).

If a drafting job is urgent, your Drafting Team Manager may need to reallocate and reprioritise work within the team, and so will need as much advance warning as possible.

When preparing a proposal for legislation, it is important that you discuss questions of timing with us (how long drafting will take, dates for introduction, and, if there is to be a delay, the time of its coming into force). You should avoid seeking Cabinet endorsement of particular words or formulations in your submission (unless you have already discussed them with the PCO), otherwise these may need to be altered later on. Departmental drafts (see [section 2.4](#)) and drafting instructions should not be attached to your submission. The submission should simply seek approval for the relevant policy and for drafting instructions to be issued to the PCO.

If you are not a legal adviser, you should involve your department’s legal advisers throughout the development of your legislative proposal. Do not wait until the policy is settled. Early legal input can:

- clarify the legal issues
- establish whether the options being considered conflict with legal principle
- identify which parts of the policy may not need to be enacted in legislation.

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2.1.2 Which department instructs?

Before starting on your instructions, check that you are the right department to provide them. The department responsible for administering the legislation is usually the one to instruct the PCO. If another department's legislation will be affected, consult with them before preparing the instructions.

If multiple departments are to be involved in instructing the PCO, clarify which one will take the principal instructing role and how each department's input on PCO drafts will be coordinated and channelled to the PCO.

2.2 The instructor's role

As principal instructor, you will be the drafter's primary point of contact with your department. You need to be able to answer most of the questions that come up during drafting, and to have a clear understanding of the proposed legislation.

The role of the instructor is to translate policy into drafting instructions. This requires a thorough understanding of:

- the current legal position, and how the proposed legislation will change it
- how the proposed legislation will implement the policy.

A thorough understanding is also required of the process by which legislation is made (as set out in the LAC Guidelines, Standing Orders, and the CabGuide—see [section 6.2](#) and the [glossary](#)).

2.3 The instructions

Instructions usually consist of a narrative with supporting documents. (Some instructors also include a departmental draft—see [section 2.4](#).) A checklist for instructions is given in [section 6.1](#).

It is often useful to discuss your instructions with your Drafting Team Manager while you are still working on them. This can help you clarify what is required and work through any difficulties. If you are considering engaging outside consultants on the preparation of instructions, discuss this with your Drafting Team Manager.

2.3.1 The narrative

Your instructions should:

- describe the proposal's objectives (this Bill will do A)
- spell out the reasons for the proposal (it will solve problem B; present law falls short because of C)
- identify the basic people and activities involved (this Bill will affect or is related to persons/agencies/situations D and E)

Preparing instructions

- describe what should be in the Bill (we intend to do A by amending Act F in the following ways)
- explain how the proposed legislation will fit into existing law (Act G already covers H, and the proposed Act will cover I)
- explain what will need to be done to make the transition from the existing law to the law as it will be: transitional and savings arrangements (existing licences under Act J become permits under the new Act; people will have K years to conform to the new law)
- explain what changes will be needed to other legislation: consequential and related matters (Act L must be amended; M penalties will be needed).

Note that the transitional and saving arrangements can be a difficult area to provide instructions on. You should consider them early on in the process of writing instructions. You may also wish to discuss them with your Drafting Team Manager.

Your focus should primarily be on the intended objective, rather than on the words that may be used. “Sacred phrases” or set forms of words can become a liability, holding the drafter back from finding better alternatives.

It is useful to include in your instructions specific references to the relevant decisions of Cabinet committees.

You should also include:

- an idea of the expected timeline for your proposal
- an idea of when any further instructions will come (if all are not provided initially)
- contact details: yours, plus those of an alternative contact.

2.3.2 Supporting documents

These documents form an important part of your instructions:

- all relevant Cabinet papers and papers sent to the Minister
- all relevant precedents, cases, legal opinions, and reports
- notes of any relevant court or other proceedings in contemplation
- official copies of any relevant international agreements or obligations
- a description of your consultation with other departments and agencies: the names of organisations and individuals within them consulted, and their input
- any other relevant background material.

It is important that you include relevant material whether or not it supports your department’s view. If you are not sure whether a document is relevant, discuss it with your Drafting Team Manager or, after you have submitted the instructions, with the drafter. If new documents become available later on, supply them promptly. The drafter needs as complete a picture of the proposal as possible.

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2.3.3 Questions to answer

Through your instructions (or in some cases through later contact with the drafter), you need to provide answers to the following questions:

- How does the proposal relate to other legislation?
- Are there any unresolved difficulties with any of the matters covered in the instructions?
- Is the proposal consistent with the LAC Guidelines?
- Do you suspect any conflict with the Bill of Rights (see [section 3.4.1](#))?
- Do you suspect any conflict with the Privacy Act 1993?
- Does the proposal work in all the relevant practical scenarios?
- Have you checked the proposal with your operational people?
- Which department(s) will administer the Act?
- When does the legislation need to come into force?
- What time constraints exist?
- If the instructions are for a Bill, what Legislative Instruments will need to follow?
- If the instructions are for Legislative Instruments, are you satisfied that they will not be outside the limits of the Act under which they are to be made (ie will not be ultra vires)? If not, explain the problem.

2.3.4 Before submitting your instructions

Take a fresh look at the instructions. Ask yourself: “If I knew nothing of the proposal, would this narrative give me a clear picture of what is wanted?”

If possible, have the instructions peer reviewed by another instructor.

If you are including material provided by others, check that you are equally able to answer questions on the detail of this material.

Examine the instructions from both the legal and practical perspectives.

Address as many of the problems as possible before submitting your instructions. However, and particularly if time is short, it may be better to pass on incomplete instructions, and tell the drafter about the unresolved issues and the process for resolving them.

Let the drafter know which options you have examined and eliminated, and why. This will avoid the drafter duplicating your work.

2.4 Departmental drafts

Departmental drafts are not a required part of instructions. However, some departments prepare drafts to test proposals and “tease out” issues, and you may wish to include such a draft with your instructions (as is common when giving instructions for Legislative Instruments). If you are thinking of submitting a departmental draft with your instructions, please discuss this with your Drafting Team Manager.

If you wish to include a draft with your instructions, it is important that you also give us a clear narrative that explains the draft both in detail and in its overall intentions.

2.5 Submitting your instructions

Address instructions for Bills to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. Instructions for Legislative Instruments should be addressed to your Drafting Team Manager (see [section 6.4](#)).

You can submit your instructions by letter, fax, or SEEMail (see [glossary](#)). You should be aware of the security level. Drafting instructions and drafting work are classified as In Confidence or higher (see [section 6.3](#) for more information).

If sending instructions by SEEMail, please give an accurate and succinct subject line. Meaningful subject lines should continue to be used with all later emails relating to the development of the legislation. However, the subject line will not be encrypted and so it may not be appropriate to name the Bill in it. If this is the case, please use either an acronym or an alternate name agreed with the drafter. And please avoid creating emails containing instructions for multiple pieces of legislation, but rather send a separate email message for each.

If your instructions include a departmental draft, please supply the document in rich text format (rtf) (preferred) or MS Word.

2.5.1 Forms and graphics

Your instructions may include material to be produced in legislation as forms or graphics.

If possible, the PCO prefers to produce forms in legislation using text only. This allows the material to be amended easily if required. The PCO is able to edit text-only forms, but not forms supplied as graphics. A text-only format can also be downloaded more quickly on the internet, and can be searched.

If, however, the form contains graphical elements that must be reproduced in legislation, or the whole form must be reproduced exactly as supplied, you will need to supply the entire form as a graphic. If changes to the graphic are later required, the graphic will need amending at source and resupplying.

The PCO has certain requirements for graphics, and forms supplied as graphics, that it can accept. Each graphic should be supplied in one of the following formats:

- .vsd
- .jpeg
- .tiff
- .png
- .pdf

For forms, flow charts, and diagrams, the preferred format is Visio (.vsd).

All graphics must fit within a standard legislative page (or will be reduced to this), and should have a minimum resolution of 1200 dpi.

[More information on supplying forms and graphics](#) to the PCO is available under Instructing the PCO on the PCO website.

3 The drafts

You have sent your instructions to the PCO. You can now expect us to:

- acknowledge them
- tell you who the drafter(s) will be
- prioritise the work within the PCO
- discuss the timeline and other preliminary matters with you
- begin drafting.

3.1 The role of the drafter

The drafter's job is to produce a draft that gives effect to Government policy, is legally correct, and is expressed as clearly and simply as possible. You can expect the drafter to:

- ask questions to clarify the issues
- help identify and solve problems associated with the proposal
- consider your comments carefully
- be aware of the Parliamentary process and the statute book as a whole
- for Legislative Instruments, consider the matters relevant to certification (see [section 5.1](#))
- work within the requirements of PCO layout and style
- draft to the timetable you have agreed with the drafter.

During drafting, the drafter will consider the same sorts of questions that you considered while formulating your instructions ([section 2.3.3](#)).

3.1.1 Responsibility

In broad terms, the drafter is responsible for the way that legislation is expressed and presented, while responsibility for policy lies with the department. In practice, policy and drafting are not mutually exclusive but form a continuum.

3.1.2 Independence

Drafters also have a wider responsibility. They are counsel to the Government and Parliament in their legislative capacity. This can occasionally lead a drafter to take a different view on the implementation of policy decisions from that of your department. If necessary, the drafter may ask for an assurance from you that the instructions reflect the Government's or Minister's intentions.

The drafts

If the drafter believes there is a serious conflict with good drafting practice or general legal principle, which discussion between you and the drafter has not resolved, the drafter may submit a memorandum to the Attorney-General setting out the drafter's concerns.

The PCO's independence can be useful if differences arise between departments. The drafter can help to resolve the conflict in an impartial and unbiased way.

3.1.3 General concerns

If you have any concerns relating to a drafter, for example, timetables, process, service, or relationship issues which you cannot resolve with the drafter, the matter should be referred, in writing, to the relevant PCO Drafting Team Manager. This should be done at the time the matter arises. A copy of the written concerns will be provided to the counsel. The Drafting Team Manager will resolve the matter with you and the counsel, or may refer the matter to the Deputy Chief Parliamentary Counsel or Chief Parliamentary Counsel if resolution is not possible.

3.1.4 Confidentiality

The drafter's relationship with you is in many respects analogous to the lawyer-client relationship. The drafter has a duty of confidence. No information about the drafting of particular legislation will be communicated by us to any outside individual or organisation (including the media and outside solicitors) if it could breach that obligation of confidence. If the PCO receives inquiries about the legislation, we will refer them to your department or to the office of the Minister responsible, as appropriate.

3.1.5 Style and layout

The PCO is committed to drafting legislation as clearly and as simply as possible.

Drafters work within the constraints of an approved layout and style that govern the structure and presentation of legislation (eg the numbering system and how text is set out on the page). These rules are both a matter of tradition and of function. They assist the reader's understanding and are a requirement for producing legislation electronically.

3.2 Responding to drafts

When you receive the first draft (and for each subsequent draft):

- read it critically
- check it against your instructions
- check that nothing is missing
- check for internal consistency
- check for readability
- check for any conflict with approvals
- test it against practical scenarios or formulae
- check it against the questions listed in [section 2.3.3](#)
- answer any queries the drafter has raised
- check that it meets the policy intentions.

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3.2.1 Your feedback

Try to respond promptly to the draft, so that the matter is still fresh in the minds of the drafter and everyone else involved.

If parts of the draft are hard to understand, query them. When you find a problem with the draft, respond by explaining what is wrong. Focus on the concepts rather than the words. Give illustrations of the problem.

As principal instructor, you will be collecting comments from others within your department. Analyse the comments and filter out those that are unhelpful or misconceived. Give the drafter the results of your internal discussions and decisions, without including all the preliminary views.

Your feedback can take various forms, but it is best to put significant comments in writing. Hand-annotated comments on a PCO draft are acceptable. The drafter will re-draft in response to your feedback. After the first draft, the rewriting can be substantial. The iterative process of drafting and feedback continues until a satisfactory result is achieved.

The aim at this stage is to simplify, refine, and develop, rather than to introduce new ideas. However, seeing a draft can make issues plain that were not plain before. While this is not an ideal process, drafting can thus lead to changes in policy. The earlier these changes are made, the better.

If you have any serious concerns about the drafting that discussion with your drafter fails to resolve, you should raise them with your Drafting Team Manager (or the Deputy Chief Parliamentary Counsel, if the drafter is the Drafting Team Manager).

3.3 Consultation

3.3.1 Consultation with other agencies

When your department is happy that the draft reflects the policy, the drafter will arrange for it to be circulated to the other departments that have an interest in it. The drafter will use as a starting point the list you supplied of departments already consulted (see [section 2.3.2](#)). In some cases, more commonly with Legislative Instruments, you and the drafter may agree that you will arrange the distribution instead. Whichever arrangement is used, both you and the drafter must receive copies of all the comments received on the draft from the departments consulted.

Ministerial approval is needed before a draft is disclosed to agencies outside government (unless the agency concerned is the instructing agency, eg the Financial Markets Authority). If non-government agencies are to be consulted, the drafter will rely on you to coordinate consultation with them.

If questions of Parliamentary procedure arise, input from the Office of the Clerk may be appropriate before a Bill is introduced. For example, if a Bill amends more than one Act (other than consequentially), the application of the omnibus Bill rules in the Standing Orders may be relevant. The drafter can help identify the procedural issues and liaise with the Office of the Clerk.

The drafts

You should ensure that your method of consultation is consistent with the security classification of the draft (see [section 6.3](#)).

3.3.2 Public consultation

If you need an exposure draft for public consultation (for which Ministerial or Cabinet approval is required), ask your drafter for a suitable version. The drafter will ensure that it is formatted correctly for the purpose (eg with the drafter's name and the words "In Confidence" removed). This document is usually supplied to you in PDF form.

3.4 Bills: final steps before introduction

A checklist for use before a Bill is introduced is given in section 6.1.2.

3.4.1 Bill of Rights vetting

All draft Government Bills (except Appropriation Bills and Imprest Supply Bills) must be vetted for compliance with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 (BORA vetting), usually by the Ministry of Justice, before they are submitted to the Cabinet Legislation Committee (LEG) (see the CabGuide). This is arranged by the drafter, who must allow at least two weeks for the process. The drafter will already have informed the vetting team about the Bill when he or she first received your instructions, along with your contact details.

It is useful to check the draft for compliance before it is submitted for vetting. The Ministry of Justice booklet *Guidelines on the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990* includes information to help with this (see [section 6.2](#)).

3.4.2 Explanatory note

All Bills at introduction are prefaced with an explanatory note, which is omitted from the Bill when it is reported back from the select committee.

The explanatory note usually has four parts:

General policy statement

- This sets out the general policy of the Bill. It is prepared by the department, with editorial input from the PCO. The general policy statement should be provided to the PCO as soon as it is in final form but a minimum of two weeks before the Bill goes to LEG.

Departmental disclosure statement

- This is a short statement that explains that a disclosure statement is required, describes its purpose, and provides a link to the disclosure statement. (If none is required, this will be stated.) The disclosure statement should be sent to the Publications Unit and copied to the drafter when the Bill goes to LEG, and if changes are made, a revised statement sent to the Publications Unit and copied to the drafter no later than two days before introduction. See [Disclosure statements](#) on the PCO website for more information.

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Regulatory impact statement

- This is a short statement that a regulatory impact statement (RIS) has been prepared by the department, with URLs for the locations of the RIS on the department's and Treasury's websites. (If no RIS is required, this section is omitted.) The URL to the location on the department's website where the RIS will be published should be provided to the PCO at least a week before the Bill goes to LEG. See [RIS guidance](#) on the PCO website for more information.

Clause by clause analysis

- This section states the effect of the individual clauses. It is prepared by the drafter.

If the Act (or part of it) is to come into force on a date appointed by Order in Council, the explanatory note must include the reason why this is necessary.

If the Bill is an omnibus Bill for which Business Committee approval has been given, the explanatory note must mention this. The drafter will provide the appropriate wording.

The PCO is not involved in the preparation of related speech notes or briefing papers.

3.4.3 Cabinet Legislation Committee (LEG)

LEG examines all draft Bills before they are approved for introduction into the House. When your department agrees that the Bill is ready, and it is settled as far as possible with other departments, the drafter will arrange for it to be sent to the Cabinet Office for submission to LEG. The Cabinet Office will attach the draft Bill to your LEG paper.

When a Bill is approved by LEG, it is usually referred to Cabinet. Cabinet's approval is required before the Bill is introduced, unless LEG has been given the power to act. Note that a Bill remains confidential until it has been introduced.

4 Bills: from introduction to assent

Only some basic points of Parliamentary procedure are covered in this section. For more information, see *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand* by David McGee, the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, and Speakers' Rulings (see [section 6.2](#)).

Note that as the Bill passes through the House, the drafter will attend some parts of the process and not others. The basic principle is that, if amendments can be made, the drafter will attend; if no amendments are possible, the drafter need not attend.

4.1 Introduction

When a Bill is ready for introduction, the drafter will arrange for copies to be printed for the House. The drafter will also send copies to the Minister, the Leader of the House, and the Prime Minister, and copies to you. The Leader of the House then arranges for introduction, and the Bill becomes available to Members and the public. The Bill is published on the New Zealand Legislation website as soon as possible, and by the day after introduction at the latest.

First reading can occur on or after either the next sitting Tuesday or the third sitting day after introduction (see the Standing Orders). The Bill without any amendments will then normally be referred to the relevant select committee.

4.2 Select committee

The select committee will usually call for submissions. The subsequent process involves several stages:

Initial briefing

- by department—drafter may attend but has no role

Receiving submissions

- you and the drafter receive copies of all written submissions from the clerk
- oral submissions are heard—drafter may attend

Consideration of departmental report

- department prepares the departmental report (see [section 4.2.1](#))
- department presents the report—drafter attends
- committee asks the drafter to prepare amendments to the Bill

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Consideration of RT Bill

- drafter presents a revised version of the Bill (the RT Bill—see [section 4.2.2](#))

Deliberation

- the committee votes on the amended Bill—drafter attends.

The drafter’s role remains as outlined in [section 3.1](#), both in terms of drafting and in providing independent advice on the legal implications of provisions.

Throughout the select committee stage, you should keep in regular contact with the drafter to ensure that you share the same understanding of the Bill and the effect of any proposed amendments. Avoid raising matters before the select committee relating to the drafting that you have not first discussed with the drafter. Remember to send the drafter a copy of any briefings or notes prepared for the select committee in addition to the departmental report.

4.2.1 Departmental report

It is important that the development of the departmental report is discussed with the drafter. Send the drafter a copy before it is finalised, and then the final version as provided to the select committee.

The report should make clear recommendations that the drafter can act upon, but it should not include actual drafting unless prepared by the drafter or qualified with a phrase such as “subject to PCO”. The report should suggest concepts rather than specific words. There is no need to identify the minor or consequential amendments required, as the drafter will attend to these.

4.2.2 Revision-tracked (RT) Bill and reported-back Bill

The amended Bill produced for the select committee is known as a revision-tracked, or RT, Bill. This is the Bill as introduced with the proposed amendments shown using strike-out and underline. The drafter drafts the RT Bill based on the select committee’s recommendations arising out of the departmental report.

The drafter will pass the RT Bill to you for feedback. Check it with the same care you used on earlier drafts, using the guidance given in [section 3.2](#).

When you are satisfied with it, the drafter takes the select committee through the RT Bill. Further amendments may then be required—it can take several rounds of amendments before the Bill is ready for deliberation. When the committee has deliberated, the Office of the Clerk prepares the “reported-back” or “as reported” version of the Bill (checked and published by the PCO) for the second reading and committee of the whole House stages. This version incorporates the changes agreed by the committee, shown as having been agreed unanimously or by a majority, and the committee’s commentary.

It is usual for the committee clerk to ask the drafter and instructors to comment on the commentary (prepared by the clerk). This is an important opportunity to check the commentary for accuracy.

4.3 Second reading

At the second reading of the Bill, the House agrees to or rejects the amendments recommended by the select committee and shown in the reported-back version of the Bill. The debate is limited, and no further amendments are made. The drafter has no involvement at this stage, although departmental officials usually attend.

4.4 Committee of the whole House

The committee of the whole House (the “committee stage”) is made up of all Members of the House other than the Speaker. The committee considers the Bill Part by Part or clause by clause, and amendments can be moved by the Minister in charge of the Bill or by any other Member. Amendments vary in form, and may include even a handwritten note (a “table amendment”), but most Government amendments are in the form of a Supplementary Order Paper. The drafter attends the committee stage.

4.5 Supplementary Order Papers (SOPs)

The process of producing an SOP can begin at any time after a Bill is introduced, although most are prepared after the select committee has reported back. SOPs are debated in the House at the committee stage.

Government SOPs are prepared by the drafter following your instructions. It is useful if you can give the drafter advance warning that an SOP is likely to be wanted. Consultation with other departments may be necessary and, if policy issues are involved, the SOP may be referred to LEG as if it were a Bill. In some cases the Minister will refer the SOP to a select committee.

A disclosure statement may also be required. See [Disclosure statements](#) on the PCO website for more information.

Once the Minister has approved the SOP, the drafter will arrange for it to be printed for the House and for copies to be sent to you. The Minister’s office will authorise the Office of the Clerk to release copies of the SOP to Members and to make it public.

Non-Government SOPs are usually prepared by the Office of the Clerk. If you are aware that a non-Government amendment could be adopted by the Government or agreed to by the committee of the whole House, advise the drafter immediately. This is necessary to give the drafter an opportunity to advise if there is a drafting problem.

4.5.1 Break-up SOPs

A break-up SOP is one that divides an omnibus Bill into two or more Bills so that they can be enacted as separate Acts. This is usually signalled in the explanatory note to the introduction version of the Bill.

The drafter does not need instructions to prepare a break-up SOP, but the SOP must be approved by the Minister before being printed for the House.

4.6 Third reading and Royal assent

The Office of the Clerk arranges for the third reading version of the Bill (the Bill with all amendments agreed to at committee stage) to be published by the PCO. The Bill's third reading follows.

Finally the Office of the Clerk prepares, and the PCO checks and publishes, a proof assent copy of the Bill in preparation for the Royal assent to be given by the Governor-General.

4.6.1 Administration of the Act

At the proof assent stage, a statement as to which department will administer the Act is inserted by the Office of the Clerk. The issue of which department will administer is usually settled before drafting begins (see [section 2.1.2](#)), but if it cannot be resolved by officials it may have to be referred to the relevant Ministers or Cabinet.

4.7 After Royal assent

4.7.1 Commencement

If the Act (or part of it) is to come into force on a date appointed by Order in Council, instruct the drafter to prepare the necessary Order in Council (taking into account the 28-day rule—see [glossary](#) for more detail). The more usual situation is that the Act comes into effect on a specified date, or on the day following Royal assent.

4.7.2 Publication

After Royal assent, official copies of the Act are published on the New Zealand Legislation website and printed for sale and distribution without the department's involvement.

4.8 Errors

If you find an error in the Bill after the committee stage, let the drafter know as soon as possible. If the error is found before the third reading, and is significant, the Bill may be able to be recommitted (sent back to the committee of the whole House) for correction. If the error is merely clerical or typographical, it may be possible to correct it under the authority of the Standing Orders when the Royal assent copy is being prepared.

5 Legislative Instruments: from certification to *Gazette*

Sections 2 and 3 in this guide, on preparing instructions and the drafts, apply to Legislative Instruments just as they do to Bills (with the exception of [section 3.4](#)). The procedure once the draft is agreed, however, is quite distinct from that for Bills.

5.1 Certification

When you are satisfied with the Legislative Instrument as drafted, it must be certified before it can be submitted to LEG (see [section 5.2](#) below). Certification is the responsibility of the drafter, who will have kept the requirements for certification in mind throughout the drafting process.

If satisfied that the Legislative Instrument is in order for submission to Cabinet, the drafter will stamp and sign a copy accordingly. If not satisfied that the standards are fully met, the drafter will issue a qualified certificate and will usually give the reasons for doing so in an accompanying letter.

To decide whether the Legislative Instrument is in order for submission to Cabinet, the drafter will consider whether it:

- might be outside the limits of the Act under which it is to be made (ie is ultra vires)
- is inconsistent with general legal principles
- fits any of the grounds on which the Regulations Review Committee may draw attention to a Legislative Instrument (see the Standing Orders) that the drafter considers should be drawn to the Minister's attention.

The drafter will note in the certificate if the empowering Act stipulates any procedural matter that must be satisfied, such as a requirement for consultation with another party.

If conflict with the 28-day rule is possible, the drafter will note this also. (The CabGuide sets out the cases where the 28-day rule can be waived; if a waiver is necessary, it must be noted in the Cabinet submission.)

5.2 LEG, Cabinet, and the Executive Council

The Legislative Instrument, along with the relevant Cabinet papers, is first submitted to LEG. (See the CabGuide for the procedure for submitting papers.) If LEG approves the Legislative Instrument, it is referred to Cabinet. If Cabinet confirms LEG's approval, it

Guide to working with the PCO

sends the Legislative Instrument to the Executive Council for the Governor-General's signature.

This process may be replaced by approval of the Cabinet Business Committee (CBC) in the event that the normal Cabinet process has been replaced by the CBC (as sometimes happens during a recess period). The Cabinet Office advises the PCO in advance if this is to happen.

In exceptional circumstances, Legislative Instruments may be sent direct to Cabinet (a step that requires the Prime Minister's approval).

The drafter arranges delivery of the following papers required by LEG and the Executive Council:

- the signature copy of the Legislative Instrument (the copy for the Governor-General to sign)
- the certified copy (with the drafter's stamp)
- the required number of additional copies.

The drafter will send these to you, or to the Minister's office, or direct to the Cabinet Office as you prefer and the timetable allows.

Your department must also provide to LEG:

- a Cabinet paper
- an advice sheet signed by the Minister stating that the Governor-General is recommended to sign the accompanying Order in Council
- a CAB 100 form certifying the consultation undertaken.

See the *Cabinet Manual* and the CabGuide for more detail on these requirements.

5.2.1 Delays in making Legislative Instruments

If you become aware of a delay between the drafter certifying the Legislative Instrument and its submission to the Executive Council, notify the drafter. A hold-up here can lead to problems with the 28-day rule or other difficulties in timing that may prove serious. In some cases redrafting may be necessary. The drafter's involvement in the Legislative Instrument usually ends with certification. The drafter may not know of any delay unless kept informed by you.

5.3 Gazetting and publication

Once Legislative Instruments are made, they must be notified in the *New Zealand Gazette* (published on Thursdays). Gazetting of Legislative Instruments that are approved by the Executive Council is arranged by the PCO without the department's involvement.

Departments are responsible for gazetting certain Ministerial notices and other Legislative Instruments that do not go through the Cabinet process. To do this, the department must notify certain information to the Publications Unit at the PCO as a matter of urgency once the instrument has been signed: the Legislative Instrument title, the date signed, who

Regulations

signed, the place signed, and the intended date of notification in the *Gazette*. The drafter will discuss this with you. See [section 6.4](#) for the Publications Unit's contact details, and see Instructing the PCO on the PCO website for [more information on this process](#).

If a Legislative Instrument comes into force earlier than the day after the next regular issue of the *Gazette*, a supplement to the *Gazette* must be published. Your department will be charged for this publication.

Official copies of Legislative Instruments are published on the New Zealand Legislation website and printed for sale and distribution, again without the department's involvement.

5.4 Disallowable instruments

The Legislation Act 2012 provides for the disallowance of certain instruments made under enactments. All Legislative Instruments stand referred to the Regulations Review Committee and must be presented to the House after they are made for scrutiny by that committee. The PCO arranges this without the involvement of the department.

6 Reference

6.1 Checklists

6.1.1 Checklist for drafting instructions

See [section 2](#) for a fuller explanation.

Check that your instructions contain the following:

- explanation of the legislative problem to be remedied
- explanation of what the legislation should do
- explanation of how the proposal relates to existing law
- description of what transitional and savings arrangements will be required
- description of consequential and related matters
- for a Bill: mention of any Legislative Instruments that will be needed
- identification of any unresolved difficulties
- statement of which department will administer
- statement of expected timetable/any time constraints/when to come into force
- description of your consultation to date with other departments and agencies
- if instructions are incomplete, state what is to follow and when
- contact details: yours, plus those of an alternative contact
- if forms or graphics are supplied, they are in the appropriate format.

Check that the proposed legislation will be:

- consistent with the LAC Guidelines
- consistent with the Bill of Rights
- for Legislative Instruments: within the ambit of the empowering provisions.

Check that you have included copies of the following:

- all relevant Cabinet papers and papers provided to the Minister
- all relevant precedents, cases, legal opinions, and reports
- notes of any relevant court or other proceedings in contemplation
- official copies of any relevant international agreements or obligations
- any other relevant background material.

6.1.2 Checklist for introduction of Bills

See section 3.4 for a fuller explanation.

Check that your timetable allows enough time for:

- Bill of Rights vetting (two weeks is the standard turn-around time)
- departmental consultation (a minimum of one week)
- PCO's quality control processes (proof reading and peer review—a minimum of one week).

Check that you have provided the PCO with:

- the **general policy statement** component of the explanatory note—to be provided to the PCO as soon as it is in final form but a minimum of two weeks before the Bill goes to LEG
- the URL to the location on the department's website where the **regulatory impact statement** will be published—to be provided to the PCO at least a week before the Bill goes LEG—see [RIS guidance](#) on the PCO website for more information.
- the **disclosure statement**—sent to the Publications Unit and copied to the drafter when the Bill goes to LEG, and if changes are made, a revised statement sent to the Publications Unit and copied to the drafter no later than two days before introduction—see [Disclosure statements](#) on the PCO website for more information.

6.2 Useful resources

Acts, Bills, SOPs, and Legislative Instruments

www.legislation.govt.nz

Acts as enacted 1841–2007

New Zealand Acts 1841–2007 As-Enacted Collection:

www.nzlii.org/nz/legis/hist_act/

and the 1908 Consolidation: www.nzlii.org/nz/legis/hist_act_1908/

CabGuide

the Guide to Cabinet and Cabinet Committee Processes, previously published as the *Step by Step Guide*

cabguide.cabinetoffice.govt.nz

Cabinet Manual

www.cabinetmanual.cabinetoffice.govt.nz/

Cabinet Office circulars

www.dPMC.govt.nz/cabinet/circulars/

Guidelines on the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990

www.justice.govt.nz/publications/publications-archived/2004/guidelines-on-the-new-zealand-bill-of-rights-act

House sitting programme

www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/ThisWk/Programme/

LAC Guidelines

ldac.org.nz/guidelines/lac-revised-guidelines/

Legislation Direct

for printed legislation—Acts, Legislative Instruments, Bills, SOPs, reprints

www.legislationdirect.co.nz

New Zealand Gazette

www.gazette.govt.nz

New Zealand Legal Information Institute

www.nzlii.org

New Zealand Legislation website

www.legislation.govt.nz

Order Paper

the House's daily order of business

www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/ThisWk/OrderPaper/

Parliamentary Bulletin

available from Bennetts and Legislation Direct; sections are available on the Parliament website

Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand

David McGee, 3rd edition, 2005, Dunmore Publishing Ltd, Wellington

Reference

Parliament website

for information on Bills, SOPs, select committees, and other aspects of parliamentary business

www.parliament.nz

Policy to Parliament: graphic showing steps and time required to transform policy into a Bill for introduction

www.pco.parliament.govt.nz/policy-to-parliament/

Progress of Legislation: Schedule of Bills

www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Legislation/Bills/

Reprints: list of hard copy reprints published by the PCO 2003–2014

www.pco.parliament.govt.nz/reprinted-acts/

Speakers' Rulings

www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Reference/Rulings/

Standing Orders of the House of Representatives

www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Reference/StOrders/

Working with Select Committees: A Guide for Public Service Advisers

www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PubRes/About/Procedures/

See also section 1.4 on PCO resources.

6.3 Security

Drafting instructions and drafting materials are classified as In Confidence or higher. The PCO ensures that documents are handled appropriately within the office and in delivery to outside agencies. The PCO takes no responsibility for the handling of documents once they are received by an outside agency.

It is PCO policy that SEEMail is used for emailing draft legislation. If a copy needs to be sent to a department that is not a member of SEEMail, then the draft is not emailed but sent as hard copy. For more about SEEMail see ict.govt.nz.

6.4 PCO contact details

Parliamentary Counsel Office
Level 12, Reserve Bank Building
2 The Terrace
PO Box 18 070
Wellington 6160

Phone 04 472 9639
Fax 04 499 1724
contact.pco@parliament.govt.nz

PCO website: www.pco.parliament.govt.nz

New Zealand Legislation website: www.legislation.govt.nz

Contact details for the individuals given below will change from time to time. Please use the general PCO contacts given above if you are unsure.

Guide to working with the PCO

Drafting Team Managers

Commercial

Julie Melville

julie.melville@parliament.govt.nz

Phone 04 817 9270

For departments: Attorney-General; Customs; Financial Markets Authority; IRD; Justice (occupational licensing and insurance/contracts, etc); MBIE (building and housing that is not tenancy); MBIE (commercial (except mining) and consumer affairs); Reserve Bank; Takeovers Panel; Treasury

Infrastructure

Melanie Bromley

melanie.bromley@parliament.govt.nz

Phone 04 817 9644

For departments: Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority; Culture and Heritage; Defence; DIA (except passports, citizenship, gambling); DPMC; MBIE (except commercial law, consumer affairs, housing, immigration, mining, science, tenancy); MFAT; Parliamentary Service; Remuneration Authority; SSC; Statistics; Transport

Justice and Social

Mark Gobbi

mark.gobbi@parliament.govt.nz

Phone 04 817 9272

For departments: Corrections; Crown Law; DIA (passports, citizenship, gambling); Education; Justice (except occupational licensing and insurance/contracts, etc); MBIE (immigration); MBIE (tenancy); Police; Public Trust; Rules Committee; Social Development

Resources and Treaty

Scott Murray (Acting)

scott.murray@parliament.govt.nz

Phone 04 817 9048

For departments: Conservation; Environment; Health; LINZ; MBIE (mining); MBIE (science); Office of Treaty Settlements; Primary Industries; Te Puni Kōkiri

Publications Unit

Michelle Groves

Publications Manager

Phone Publications Unit on 04 817 6425

Email publications@pco.parliament.govt.nz

To notify for Legislative Instruments made by an agency other than the Executive Council.

Communications

Communications Adviser

Gillian McIlraith

gillian.mcilraith@parliament.govt.nz

Phone 04 817 6707

For feedback on this guide, mailing list changes and feedback on the *PCO Quarterly*, and information on Instructing the PCO on the [PCO website](#).

7 Glossary and index

The glossary items that follow are intended to be a guide to use within the context of this publication, rather than providing complete definitions of the terms listed.

References are to sections. Where more than one reference is given, the primary reference is shown in bold.

- 28-day rule 4.7.1, 5.1, 5.2.1
A Cabinet rule that Legislative Instruments should not come into force until at least 28 days after notification in the *Gazette*. There are some cases where the rule can be waived. See the CabGuide for more information.
- administration of an Act 4.6.1
- annual legislation programme 2.1.1
A framework within which the preparation and progress of the Government's existing and proposed Bills are prioritised for the calendar year. At the end of each year Ministers are invited, by way of a Cabinet Office circular, to put in proposals (bids) for the inclusion of Bills in the annual legislation programme for the coming year. The programme groups Bills in descending order of priority, starting with Bills that must be passed each year.
- as reported Bill
see [reported-back Bill](#)
- assent
see [Royal assent](#)
- Bill of Rights, Bill of Rights vetting 2.3.3, 3.4.1, 6.2
New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.
- break-up SOP 4.5.1
An SOP that divides an omnibus Bill into two or more Bills so that they can be enacted as separate Acts.
- Business Committee 3.4.2
A multiparty committee of the House that meets twice a week to determine the business of the House.
- [CabGuide](#) 6.2
The Guide to Cabinet and Cabinet Committee Processes (previously the *Step by Step Guide*), published by the Cabinet Office.

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- Cabinet**
The central decision-making body of executive government. It provides a collective forum for Ministers to decide significant government issues.
- Cabinet Business Committee (CBC)** 5.2
The CBC comprises the 11 most senior Ministers plus any Minister with a portfolio interest in an agenda item.
- Cabinet Legislation Committee (LEG)** 3.4.1, 3.4.3, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2
The Cabinet committee that considers the Government’s legislation programme, Bills, Legislative Instruments, Government responses to select committee reports on inquiries and petitions, and other House business issues.
- Cabinet Manual* 6.2
A manual published by the Cabinet Office that records the constitutional conventions, procedures, and rules of Cabinet and central executive government.
- certification** 3.1, 5.1
The process of a drafter stamping and signing a Legislative Instrument as “certified in order for submission to Cabinet”. A certificate may be qualified if a drafter is of the view that not all necessary standards have been met.
- clause**
The basic unit of a Bill (and its schedules) and some types of Legislative Instrument. When a Bill becomes an Act, its clauses are called sections (except for the clauses of any schedules).
- Clerk’s Office**
see [Office of the Clerk](#)
- commencement** 4.7.1
The date on which an Act or Legislative Instrument comes into force.
- committee of the whole House** 4.2.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.8
Made up of all members of the House other than the Speaker. When the committee examines a Bill (committee stage), any member may suggest amendments, usually by way of a Supplementary Order Paper (SOP).
- committee stage**
see [committee of the whole House](#)
- concerns** 3.1.3
- confidentiality** 3.1.4, 3.4.3
- consequential amendment** 2.3.1, 4.2.1
An amendment to an enactment that is required merely as a consequence of a substantive provision. Consequential amendments are needed to ensure that the whole of the statute book is consistent with the substantive changes proposed. Collectively referred to as “consequentials”.
- consultation** 2.1.2, 2.3.2, 3.3, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2
- departmental draft** 2.1.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5
An illustrative draft of legislation prepared by the department.

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- disclosure statement **3.4.2, 4.5**
A departmental disclosure statement provides information about the development and content of legislation proposed by the government. The explanatory note of a Bill (or Supplementary Order Paper) may link to a disclosure statement. Disclosure statements are available at disclosure.legislation.govt.nz.
- drafter's role **3.1, 4.2**
- Drafting Team Manager **1.2, 1.4, 2.1.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.2.1, 6.4**
Manager of one of the PCO's three drafting teams. Your principal contact within the PCO before your instructions are assigned to a drafter.
- drafts **section 3**
- errors **4.8**
- Executive Council **5.2, 5.3**
The institution through which the Government as a whole formally gives advice to the Governor-General. The convention is that the Executive Council comprises all Ministers of the Crown, whether or not they are members of the Cabinet; it is presided over by the Governor-General.
- explanatory note **3.4.2, 4.5.1**
The text at the front of the introduction copy of a Bill (but not part of the Bill) that usually consists of a general policy statement and a clause by clause analysis. The explanatory note does not appear on subsequent versions of the Bill and is not updated to take account of changes to the Bill in Parliament.
Legislative Instruments are also published with an explanatory note, which is prepared by the drafter. The explanatory note is not part of the Legislative Instrument.
- exposure draft **3.3.2**
A draft prepared by the PCO for public consultation and approved for release by the Minister responsible for the Bill or Legislative Instrument.
- first reading **4.1**
A short debate in the House that follows introduction. A member explains the objects of the Bill; other members may debate the objects. Debate is limited to two hours; no amendments can be made. Members vote on whether to refer the Bill to a select committee. If the Bill is not referred on, members may vote to advance the Bill to its second reading or reject it.
- forms and graphics formats **2.5.1**
- Gazette* **5.3, 6.2**
The *New Zealand Gazette*, the official newspaper of the Government of New Zealand. Published at least weekly by the Department of Internal Affairs.
- graphics and forms formats **2.5.1**
- House
The House of Representatives.
- instructions, drafting instructions **section 2**
Your instructions to the PCO that we use as the basis for drafting legislation.

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- instructor's role 2.2
- introduction 2.1.1, 3.4.2, 4.1, 4.5.1
The process by which a Bill formally becomes part of House business and first appears on the Order Paper. After introduction, a Bill becomes available to the public.
- LAC Guidelines** 6.2
Legislation Advisory Committee Guidelines on Process and Content of Legislation.
Includes a checklist of matters covered by the guidelines.
- LEG
see [Cabinet Legislation Committee](#)
- Legislative Instrument
Legislative Instrument is defined in section 4 of the Legislation Act 2012. Before 5 August 2013, legislation of this type was generally known as “Regulations” or “Statutory Regulations”.
- New Zealand Gazette*
see [Gazette](#)
- Notifying Legislative Instruments 5.3
- Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Clerk's Office 3.3.1, 4.2.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.6.1
The secretariat for the House. It provides specialist advice and assistance on Parliamentary law and procedures to the House of Representatives and its committees.
- omnibus Bill 3.3.1, 3.4.2, 4.5.1
A Bill that deals with more than one substantive subject matter or substantially amends more than one Act. An omnibus Bill is allowable only as is permitted by Standing Orders.
- PCO 1.2, 6.4
Parliamentary Counsel Office
- PCO job numbers
A unique number given to every Bill or Legislative Instrument drafted at the PCO. The final number indicates the version before introduction. For example, PCO 1234/1, PCO 1234/2 would indicate the first and second versions of a draft.
- PDF
Portable document format. An electronic file format developed by Adobe Systems.
- regulations
The most common form of Legislative Instrument drafted by the PCO. The term is often loosely used to describe legislation made under an enactment that is drafted by the PCO. See the definition of “regulations” in section 29 of the Interpretation Act 1999.

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- regulatory impact statement (RIS) 3.4.2
Required in the explanatory note of those Bills that will impose compliance costs on business.
- reported-back Bill 4.2.2, 4.3
A Bill as reported back by the select committee that considered it. The reported-back Bill is debated at the Bill's second reading. A reported-back Bill is sometimes referred to as an "as reported" Bill. Note that "reported-back" can also refer to the Bill "reported-back" from the committee of the whole House.
- reprint/reprinted Act or reprinted Legislative Instrument
Acts and Legislative Instruments that have been reprinted to incorporate amendments since they were enacted or made.
- RIS
see [regulatory impact statement](#)
- role of drafter
see [drafter's role](#)
- role of instructor
see [instructor's role](#)
- Royal assent 4.6, 4.7.1, 4.8
Given when the Governor-General signs a Bill, at which point the Bill becomes an Act.
- RT Bill 4.2, 4.2.2
Revision-tracked Bill. A version of a Bill prepared by the PCO for a select committee showing the select committee's proposed amendments using underline or strike-out. It is the working draft of what will become the reported-back Bill.
- savings issues/savings arrangements 2.3.1
Provisions included in a Bill in order to preserve or save a right, privilege, or obligation that would otherwise be repealed or cease to exist once the Bill were enacted.
- second reading 4.2.2, 4.3
The second time a Bill is debated in the House. Members may briefly debate the changes to the Bill recommended by the select committee, as shown in the reported-back version, and re-examine its intended purpose and effect. Members then vote to decide whether the Bill should proceed or be rejected.
- section
The basic unit of an Act. Each section is numbered and deals with a separate subject. Before an Act is enacted (ie when it is still a Bill) these units are called clauses.
- security 2.5, 3.3.1, 6.3
- SEEMail 2.5, 6.3
Secure electronic environment email. Provides secure email traffic between member agencies suitable for the transmission of information classified as In Confidence, Sensitive, and Restricted. See ict.govt.nz for more information.

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SOP

see [Supplementary Order Paper](#)

Standing Orders

Standing Orders of the House of Representatives.

statute book

The existing body of law set out in statute, ie Acts and Legislative Instruments.

Supplementary Order Paper (SOP)

4.5

A published document setting out amendments proposed to a Bill. It has an SOP number and, once released, forms part of the public record of the proceedings of Parliament.

table amendment

4.4

A written proposal to amend a Bill that is tabled during the committee of the whole House stage. Unlike an SOP (which also shows amendments to a Bill), it is not formally printed and pre-circulated. Table amendments may be typed or handwritten but must be signed by the member making the amendments. Six copies must be given to the Clerk.

third reading

4.6, 4.8

Final debate on the Bill as reported from the committee of the whole House. When a Bill has been read a third time, it has been passed by the House (see the Standing Orders).

transitional provisions

2.3.1

ultra vires

2.3.3, 5.1

A term that applies to delegated legislation that falls outside the limits of the empowering provision under which it is made.

urgency

When the House is in urgency, it sits for extended hours and some of the usual Standing Orders are suspended. See the Standing Orders for more detail.

web feed

1.4

Provides summaries of web content in a simple format, and lets you track updates to a website or web page. For information on subscribing to the web feeds on the New Zealand Legislation website, visit About web feeds at www.legislation.govt.nz/aboutwebfeeds.aspx.

From instructions to Act: a Bill's journey

