

# Parliament nobbled by Govt

Parliament has been cancelled for a week to prevent embarrassing defeats for the Federal Government in debate, until its control can be restored with by-elections soon.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull pulled the plug on next week's sessions in the Lower House after threats by both the Opposition and by Government backbenchers to force a commission of inquiry into the banking industry. Past attempts had failed by as little as one vote.

Mr Turnbull was an investment banker through the 1990s, although his official biography deleted that role from his CV online, saying only that he "left the law for business in 1987".

The Prime Minister is avoiding a repeat of an unruly Parliament during the Gillard years, when the Opposition used its numbers to disrupt a minority Labor Government routinely. The Opposition was then led by Tony Abbott, who could also threaten Mr Turnbull's leadership if Parliament was sitting by sniping from the backbenches.

Pressure grew for a banking inquiry, with Nationals senator Barry O'Sullivan suddenly foreshadowing a private-member's bill, claiming support of some Coalition colleagues amid hints of ulterior motive – to foil a bill on same-sex marriage.

The banks had shown "a disregard for prudential regulation and law, and it's time for these people to have their day in court", he told ABC's RN Breakfast on Monday (20 Nov.). A series of scandals has plagued the banking sector recently (click for link):

- [NAB sacks 20 bankers for selling 'liar' home loans](#)

- [NAB may join CBA under spotlight over money laundering, counter-terrorism breaches](#)

- [CBA averts board spill, apologises for AUSTRAC scandal](#)

The House of Representatives was due to sit for two weeks from 27 November, now reduced to only one week from December 4 with an option to extend.

## ULTERIOR MOTIVES RUN AMOK

This timing fits neatly with a by-election on December 2, in a safe National Party seat of the former Deputy PM Barnaby Joyce. This could restore Coalition control by a slender majority just before the shorter session. The Deputy PM was a casualty of the dual-citizenship fiasco recently, which saw many politicians resign or sacked by the High Court. A second by-election is due on December 16 for John Alexander (Lib.) in Benelong, where a serious challenge has begun.

Two other hot issues need to be finalised before Christmas, or will conveniently fail if time runs out: same-sex marriage and a dual-citizenship review of politicians.

Curiously, the ALP stands to gain from the Liberal Government's stalling, since some of its MPs have yet to admit their citizenship status. A delay could sink any of those issues before the long break.

Meanwhile the banking industry has been oddly defensive with the resurgence of the threatened inquiry.

The head of the Australian Bankers Association, Anna Bligh, accused Senator O'Sullivan and crew of "seeking revenge (because) they didn't get their way in the same-sex marriage debate". A devious stalling motive was implied in the senator's call for a banking inquiry.

Last week, the former ANZ Bank chief Mike Smith said that banks were being used by the Government for political reasons. "When you want to get mob interest, you turn on the banks — Hitler did it," he said.

Ms Bligh described his comments as "colourful", but claimed there had been "demonisation in relation to banks that is unnecessary and unhelpful".

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-20/government-cancels-week-of-sitting-for-house-of-representatives/9167950>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-20/banking-royal-commission-barry-osullivan-disregard-for-law/9167818>

A deeply disturbing failure was highlighted by allegations against the Commonwealth Bank.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-07/commonwealth-bank-laid-the-groundwork-for-royal-commission/8779598>