

COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT NETWORK

REPORT WRITING: HOUSE OF COMMONS LIAISON COMMITTEE

EXCERPT FROM SECOND REPORT OF SESSION 2012-13, *Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers*, November 2012

The Constitution Unit's report *Selective Influence* found room for improvement in the way committee reports are drafted:

There is some lack of clarity in how select committees express their conclusion and recommendations. It is sometimes unclear whether a paragraph included in the 'conclusions and recommendations' section of the report is actually a recommendation or not, and therefore whether it demands a government response. Such unclear wording obviously risks letting government off the hook.

They pointed out that some reports contained a great many recommendations and considered that report would lose impact if the number got too large. They suggested that reports should identify which the main recommendations are, to ensure that those responding cannot avoid the key issues and to make it easier to follow up if the most important recommendations have been acted upon. We take this feedback seriously. ***We encourage committees to keep their reports short and accessible, and to avoid too many recommendations. A clear indication of which recommendations are most important will help the committee achieve impact and make follow-up easier. We recommend that the usual template for committee reports be changed to distinguish clearly the recommendations targeted at the Government. We suggest that conclusions should be in bold, with recommendations in bold italics, and that it should be clearly stated to whom the recommendation is addressed.***