

NORTHERN IRELAND (EXECUTIVE FORMATION ETC) ACT

EXPLANATORY NOTES

What these notes do

These Explanatory Notes relate to the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019 which received Royal Assent on 24 July 2019 (c. 22).

- These Explanatory Notes have been prepared by the Northern Ireland Office in order to assist the reader in understanding the Act. They do not form part of the Act and have not been endorsed by Parliament.
- These Explanatory Notes explain what each part of the Act will mean in practice; provide background information on the development of policy; and provide additional information on how the Act will affect existing legislation in this area.
- These Explanatory Notes might best be read alongside the Act. They are not, and are not intended to be, a comprehensive description of the Act.

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These Explanatory Notes relate to the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019 (c. 22) which received Royal Assent on 24 July 2019

Overview of the Act

1 The Act:

- Amends section 1 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 so as to extend the period provided in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (“1998 Act”) for Northern Ireland Ministers to be appointed until 21 October 2019 following the Assembly election held on 2 March 2017.
- Confers a power on the Secretary of State exercisable by regulations to further extend the period for forming an Executive from 21 October 2019 until 13 January 2020. This may be exercised once only so as to extend the period until 13 January 2020.
- Requires the Secretary of State to publish and lay before Parliament a report, on or before 4 September, on the progress that has been made towards forming an Executive in Northern Ireland (if one has not been formed) and to publish a second report on the progress made towards forming an Executive on or before 9 October 2019, and at least every fourteen calendar days thereafter until 18 December 2019 (or until an Executive is formed).
- The Act also requires that reports be laid before Parliament on a range of other issues relating to Northern Ireland, and obliges the Government to arrange debates on many of those reports in both Houses of Parliament.
- Requires the Secretary of State to make regulations to change the law relating to marriage in Northern Ireland to provide that marriage between same-sex couples is lawful.
- Requires the Secretary of State to make regulations to give effect to the recommendations of the Report of the Inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Requires the Secretary of State to make regulations to establish a scheme which provides for payments to be made to, or in respect of, a person who has sustained an injury as a result of a Troubles-related incident.

Policy background

The Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018

2 The Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 (“2018 Act”) was passed on 1 November 2018 to facilitate an extended legal period for formation of an Executive in Northern Ireland. The Act:

- Extended the period during which Northern Ireland Ministers could be appointed following the election of the Northern Ireland Assembly on 2 March 2017 (“the period for Executive formation”) so as to expire on 26 March 2019;¹ and
- Clarified that Northern Ireland departments are not prevented from exercising their functions in the absence of NI Ministers during the period for Executive formation, so long as they are satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so and they have regard to guidance published by the Secretary of State.

¹ Subsequently extended until 25 August 2019.

Collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive

- 3 There has been no functioning Northern Ireland Executive since 9 January 2017, when the then deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland resigned, which also resulted in the First Minister ceasing to hold office. All other Northern Ireland Ministers ceased to hold office when an extraordinary Assembly election was held on 2 March 2017.
- 4 The period for the appointment of Ministers to form an Executive after that election was extended to 29 June 2017 by the Northern Ireland (Ministerial Appointments and Regional Rates) Act 2017 (“MARRA”), but no Ministers were appointed.

Talks to restore the Northern Ireland Executive

- 5 In February 2018, Northern Ireland’s main political parties embarked on a new phase of talks aimed at restoring the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly. However, after 2 months of talks, the DUP and Sinn Féin (who, as the two largest parties, are entitled to the First and deputy First Minister posts respectively) were unable to reach an agreement.
- 6 On 26 April 2019, the UK Government and the Irish Government announced a fresh round of political talks. The talks between the UK Government, the Irish Government and the five Northern Ireland political parties, in accordance with the three-stranded approach set out in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, commenced on 7 May.² Following extensive discussion and negotiation, the talks have not yet been able to reach a conclusion. In light of the significant uncertainty ahead across the UK the Government believes that an extended window is needed.

Extension of Executive formation period

- 7 Section 16A of the 1998 Act provides for a 14 day period after the first meeting of the Assembly following an election in which Northern Ireland Ministers – including the First Minister and deputy First Minister – must be appointed. If they are not, then the Secretary of State is required to propose a date for another election under section 32(3). That period initially expired on 27 March 2017 but was extended by the MARRA so as to expire on 29 June 2017.
- 8 The 2018 Act then extended the time under section 16A of the 1998 Act for Ministers to be appointed until 26 March 2019, conferring a power on the Secretary of State to further extend that period by regulations on one occasion only for up to 5 months. On 20 March 2019 the Secretary of State exercised that power and the period for Executive formation was extended so as to expire on 25 August 2019.³
- 9 This Act extends the period again so as to expire on 21 October 2019 and enables the Secretary of State to further extend that period until 13 January 2020 (by regulations subject to the made affirmative procedure). The made affirmative procedure will enable the Secretary of State to make the regulations and extend time without the prior approval of Parliament but requires the subsequent approval of Parliament, ensuring Parliamentary scrutiny of how and why she has

² The 2019 talks aimed at restoring the Northern Ireland Executive have consisted of five working groups each discussing key issues central to making progress. They cover: a programme for government; transparency, accountability and the operation of the Executive; reform of the Petition of Concern; rights, language and identity issues; and improving the sustainability, stability and operation of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement institutions as a whole.

³ Northern Ireland (Extension of Period for Executive Formation) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/616).

exercised the power. Extending the period for forming an Executive means that if agreement is reached to form an Executive after 25 August 2019, Ministers can be appointed right away without the need for further legislation. This also has the effect that section 3 of the 2018 Act continues to apply and Northern Ireland departments may continue to exercise their functions in accordance with that section.⁴

Legal background

10 The relevant legal background is set out in the policy background to these notes.

Territorial extent and application

- 11 Section 13 sets out the territorial extent of the Act that is the jurisdictions in which the Act forms part of the law. The extent of an Act can be different from its application. Application is about where the Act produces a practical effect.
- 12 Except for section 9 which extends to Northern Ireland only, the Act extends to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It applies to Northern Ireland only.
- 13 See the table in Annex A for a summary of the position regarding territorial extent and application in the United Kingdom. The table also summarises the position regarding legislative consent motions.

Commentary on provisions of Act

Section 1: Extension of period for forming an Executive

- 14 Section 1 amends section 1(1) of the 2018 Act so as to extend the period for Executive formation. It enables Northern Ireland Ministers to be appointed without the need for further legislation at any point until 21 October 2019.

Section 2: Limited power to further extend period for Executive formation

- 15 Section 2 substitutes a new section 2 in the 2018 Act. As substituted that section will confer a power on the Secretary of State to extend the period for forming an Executive by regulations until 13 January 2020. This means that if Ministers have not been appointed, but the Secretary of State is of the view that further time is needed to enable this, they may extend the period without further primary legislation.
- 16 The Secretary of State may only exercise the power on or before 21 October 2019 and if they do, may only extend the period so as to expire on 13 January 2020 (subsections (1) and (2) of new section 2).
- 17 The regulations will be subject to the made affirmative procedure in Parliament. That is to say, they may be made without the prior approval of Parliament. They must however be approved by Parliament within 28 days of having been made and if they are not will cease to have effect. The 28 days is calculated so as to exclude any days when Parliament is dissolved or prorogued or during which both Houses are adjourned for more than four days (subsections (5) and (8) of new section 2).

⁴ Which provides for the exercise of NI departmental functions in the absence of Ministers.

- 18 If the regulations are not approved within 28 days and cease to have effect on or before 21 October 2019 then the period for forming an Executive will be treated as ending on that date (subsection (6) of new section 2). If the regulations are not approved within 28 days and cease to have effect after 21 October, then the period for forming an Executive is treated as ending when they cease to have effect (subsection (7) of new section 2).

Sections 3-7: Reports and Debates

- 19 Sections 3-7 require regular reporting to Parliament on a range of matters relating to Northern Ireland and for debates to be arranged in relation to a number of these reports. Taken as a whole, their effect is as follows.
- 20 The Secretary of State must, on or before 4 September 2019, publish and lay before both Houses of Parliament a report which covers the following issues relating to Northern Ireland:
- Progress towards the formation of a Northern Ireland Executive (section 3(1)),
 - Progress towards preparing legislation to provide for transparency of political donations and loans from 1 January 2014 (section 3(6)),
 - Improvement of higher education and the establishment of a university in Derry/Londonderry (section 3(7)),
 - Progress towards protecting veterans from repeated investigation into Troubles-related incidents by introducing a presumption of non-prosecution in the absence of compelling new evidence (section 3(8)),
 - Progress towards developing new prosecution guidance for Troubles-related cases (section 3(9)),
 - A review of abortion law in Northern Ireland and how that law might be amended in the absence of an Executive (section 3(10)),
- 21 The Secretary of State must then, on or before 9 October 2019, publish and lay before both Houses of Parliament a further report on the issues listed above. This requirement then repeats every fourteen calendar days until 18 December 2019 (section 3(5)).
- 22 Each time one of these reports is published, the Secretary of State must make arrangements for a neutral motion to be debated in the House of Commons; and for a 'take note' motion to be debated in the House of Lords (subsection (2)). These debates must take place within the period of five calendar days beginning with the end of the day on which the report is laid before Parliament (section 3(3)).
- 23 Section 3(4) provides that, if the Secretary of State cannot comply with the obligations to lay the report before Parliament and make arrangements for a motion as described above, then a proclamation under the Meeting of Parliament Act 1797 shall require Parliament to meet on a specified day within a period of five calendar days beginning with the end of the day on which the relevant report is laid before Parliament, and to meet on the five following days, excluding weekends and bank holidays.
- 24 The Secretary of State must, on or before 4 September, publish separate reports on each of the following issues:
- Progress made in Northern Ireland on gambling issues (section 3(11));
 - Progress on the use of discretionary powers to provide assistance and support in relation to human trafficking and exploitation and related issues (section 3(12));

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- Progress made towards preparing legislation implementing a pension for victims seriously injured in the Troubles (section 3(13)); and
 - Progress made towards implementing the recommendations of the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse in Northern Ireland between 1922 and 1995 (section 3(14)).
- 25 The reports published under section 3(11) and (12) must be included in the first report made under section 3(1) (see paragraph 20 above) and laid before both Houses of Parliament (section 3(2)).
- 26 The reports under section 3(13) and (14) must be published before the report under section 3(1) but there is no requirement to lay these reports before Parliament.
- 27 Within two sitting days of each report under section 3(11)-(14) being published, the Secretary of State must make arrangements for a separate motion approving the contents of each report to be debated in the House of Commons; and for a 'take note' motion to be debated in the House of Lords. The debates must take place within seven sitting days of the report being published- – see sections 4 to 7.
- 28 Before making the report under section 3(1), the Secretary of State must publish a separate report on each of the following issues relating to Northern Ireland:
- Progress towards preparing legislation on the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland (subsection (15)), and
 - Whether the definition of a victim in Northern Ireland legislation should be revised (subsection (16)).
- 29 The Secretary of State must also, on or before 21 October 2019 publish a report on each of the following issues relating to Northern Ireland:
- Progress towards establishing a Renewable Heat Incentive Hardship Unit (subsection (17)),
 - Progress on libel legislation in Northern Ireland and on any plans to align that law with the law in Great Britain (subsection (18)),
 - Progress on the implementation of Project Life 2 - Strategy for Suicide Prevention in Northern Ireland (subsection (19)), and
 - An assessment in relation to the demand for elective care services and how this is exceeding health service capacity for both new and existing patients across Northern Ireland; details of the current measures being taken - as well as planned - to reduce health and social care waiting times, and the impact of waiting times on children (subsection (20)).
- 30 The Secretary of State must also, on or before 1 December 2019, publish a report on future welfare mitigation support measures relating to the period after March 2020 (subsection (21)).
- 31 The requirements to publish reports under section 3 cease to apply if a First Minister, deputy First Minister and the Northern Ireland Ministers are appointed.

Section 8: Same sex marriage and opposite sex civil partnerships

- 32 Section 8 requires the Secretary of State to make regulations to change the law relating to marriage in Northern Ireland to provide that marriage between same-sex couples is lawful, and that opposite-sex civil partnerships are also lawful. The section comes into effect on 22 October 2019 if a Northern Ireland Executive is not restored by 21 October 2019, and the regulations, which will be subject to the negative resolution procedure in Parliament, must be in force on or before 13 January 2020.

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- 33 Subsection (2) requires that these regulations must be in force no later than 13 January 2020. However this does not limit the re-exercise of power if needed, meaning further regulations can be made under this power and following the same procedure after this date, as appropriate.
- 34 Subsection (3) enables regulations to make appropriate provision to ensure that same-sex marriage and opposite-sex civil partnership in Northern Ireland are accompanied by a comprehensive regime of rights, benefits and obligations which are equivalent to those available for opposite-sex marriage and same-sex civil partnerships.
- 35 Subsection (4) provides in particular for the regulations under subsection (3) to deal with parenthood and parental responsibility, gender recognition, the financial consequences of marriage and civil partnership (such as pensions and social security), and for the recognition in Northern Ireland of marriages, civil partnerships and similar relationships formed in the rest of the UK and overseas.
- 36 Subsection (5) enables regulations to make provision for conversion from marriage to a civil partnership and vice-versa.
- 37 Subsection (6) enables the regulations to also make appropriate provision to protect the ability of individuals and organisations to act in accordance with religious or other belief or opinion in relation to marriage or civil partnership, including the conversion of marriage into civil partnership and vice versa.
- 38 Subsection (7) enables regulations made under section 8 to set fees and to confer discretion, for example on the Registrar General for Northern Ireland, who currently has power to determine the form and particulars of certain applications in connection with marriage. Subsection (7) also enables the regulations to sub-delegate regulation-making and fee-setting powers to ensure that, where appropriate, the relevant Northern Ireland department can make administrative provision in regulations and set fees without the need for recourse to the Assembly each time.
- 39 By virtue of subsection (8) a reference to marriage or forming a civil partnership in Northern Ireland in section 8 includes forces and consular marriages and civil partnerships that take place outside the UK.

Section 9: International obligations in respect of CEDAW

- 40 Section 9 requires the Secretary of State to make regulations to give effect to the recommendations of the Report of the Inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ('the CEDAW Report'). This duty comes into effect on 22 October 2019 if the Northern Ireland Executive is not restored by 21 October 2019, and these regulations, which will be subject to the made affirmative resolution procedure in Parliament, will come into effect on or before 31 March 2020.
- 41 Subsection (1) requires the Secretary of State to ensure that recommendations 85 and 86 of the CEDAW Report are implemented.
- 42 Subsection (2) repeals sections 58 and 59 the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 ("OAPA") (attempts to procure abortion) in Northern Ireland. This is required to achieve implementation of one of the CEDAW Report recommendations.
- 43 Subsection (3) prevents any new investigations and criminal proceedings being commenced under those sections. Any existing proceedings must also be discontinued. This is required to achieve implementation of the criminal moratorium, one of the CEDAW Report recommendations.

- 44 Subsection (4) requires the Secretary of State to make any other changes as may be required to give effect to the requirement in subsection (1) by regulations. Those regulations must, in particular, make provision for the purposes of regulating abortions in Northern Ireland and that must include the circumstances in which an abortion may take place (subsection (5)).
- 45 Subsection (6) requires regulations under subsection (4) to come into force by 31 March 2020. However this does not limit the re-exercise of power if needed, meaning further regulations can be made under this power and following the same procedure after this date, as appropriate.
- 46 Subsection (7) requires the Secretary of State to exercise the duties imposed on her by section 9 expeditiously while recognising the importance of doing so for protecting the human rights of women in Northern Ireland.
- 47 Subsection (8) enables the Secretary of State to make provision by regulations that appear to be appropriate in view of the repeal of sections 58 and 59 OAPA and the prohibition and discontinuation of investigations and criminal proceedings for offences under those sections.
- 48 By virtue of subsection (9), regulations under section 9 (whether under subsection (4) or (8)) may make any provision that could be made by an Act of the Assembly. This would mean, for example, that regulations could delegate functions to Northern Ireland Departments or amend other legislation (matters which would normally require a specific power).
- 49 Subsection (10) notes that the CEDAW Report referred to in section 9 is the Report of the Inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women published in March 2018.

Section 10: Victims payments

- 50 Section 10 requires the Secretary of State to establish, by regulations subject to the negative resolution procedure, a scheme of payments for individuals injured in the Troubles (subsection (1)). This is further to the commitment set out in paragraph 28 of the 2014 Stormont House Agreement to find a way to provide a “pension” for those most seriously injured in the Troubles.
- 51 Under Subsection (2) the first such regulations must be made before the end of January 2020 and come into force before the end of May 2020 - in practice this means that the scheme should be operational by that later date.
- 52 Subsection (3) provides that regulations made under subsection 1 may include specific criteria for eligibility to receive such a payment, including:
 - Nature or extent of injury (for example, setting a threshold for entry to the scheme);
 - How, when, or where the injury was sustained (for example, whether the injury was sustained through the individuals own fault, or what time period the scheme covers);
 - Residence and nationality; and
 - Whether or not an individual has been convicted of an offence (for example, this could be linked to how the injury was sustained to exclude individuals convicted of an offence connected with the incident in which they sustained their injury from the scheme).
- 53 Subsection (4) allows the regulations to provide for costs incurred during the making of an application under the scheme to be reimbursed.

- 54 Subsection (5) allows the regulations to make provision: determining the size of payments under subsection (1); for payments for periods before the Act was made (for instance back payments); for when payments would need to be reduced (for example where the applicant is already in receipt of similar payments) or repaid (for example in cases of fraud); and how the payments are to be treated by other legislative schemes, such as social security benefits.
- 55 Subsection (6) requires that the regulations must provide for backdated payments to be payable to individuals who are eligible for the scheme who make an application within a period specified in the scheme (which must be at least two years). The payments those individuals receive are required to reflect the amount that would have been payable to them had the scheme existed since December 2014 (when the Stormont House Agreement was agreed).
- 56 Subsection (7) enables the regulations to make provision for various practical matters, including administration of the scheme (including creation of its administrative body), its funding from the Northern Ireland consolidated fund; evidential matters; information sharing between public authorities (for the purpose of assessing claims); the application process, reviews and appeals of decisions; and support to be given to applicants such as information, advice and assistance.
- 57 Subsection (8) provides that the regulations can confer discretion on a person. This might, for instance, allow the scheme administrator to make discretionary decisions in special circumstances such as terminal illness or other special cases.
- 58 Subsection (9)(a) allows the regulations to amend legislation made by an Act of Parliament or Northern Ireland legislation. This is expected to be used to make amendments to relevant connecting legislation such as existing social security legislation or the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Subsection (9)(b) allows ancillary provision to be made in respect of Welsh and Scottish primary legislation.
- 59 Subsection (10) requires the Secretary of State to have regard to advice from the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland in making the first set of regulations.
- 60 Subsection (11) is self-explanatory.

Section 11: Regulations – supplementary

- 61 Section 11 specifies that the power to make regulations may be used to make different provision for different purposes. This is a standard provision.

Section 12: Regulations - procedure

- 62 Section 12 sets out the procedure applicable to the various regulation-making powers contained in the Act. Regulations made under section 9 (International obligations in respect of CEDAW) will be subject to the made affirmative procedure which requires that they must be approved by Parliament within the period of 28 days beginning with the date on which they are made. Regulations under sections 8 and 10 (same sex marriage and opposite sex civil partnership and victims' payments) are subject to the negative procedure.

Section 13: Extent, commencement and short title

- 63 This section is self-explanatory.

Commencement

64 The Act will come into force on the day on which it is passed (24 July 2019), except for sections 9 – 12 which come into force on 22 October 2019 unless an Executive in Northern Ireland is formed on or before 21 October 2019, in which case they do not come into force at all.

Financial implications of the Act

65 There are no direct costs arising from this Act. The Act requires the Secretary of State to make regulations in three areas as set out above. Each set of regulations will have costs associated with the delivery of these regulations which will be set out as these regulations are developed.

Related documents

66 The following documents are relevant to the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Act:

- Guidance on decision-making for Northern Ireland Departments during the temporary period for Northern Ireland Executive formation:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/754029/Cm9725_Guidance_on_decision-making_for_NI_Dpts.pdf
- Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry:
<https://www.hiainquiry.org/historical-institutional-abuse-inquiry-report-chapters>
- Report of the Inquiry concerning the UK under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/GBR/INT_CEDAW_ITB_GBR_8637_E.pdf

Annex A – Territorial extent and application in the United Kingdom

Provision	Extends to E & W and applies to England?	Extends to E & W and applies to Wales?	Extends and applies to Scotland?	Extends and applies to Northern Ireland?
Section 1	No	No	No	Yes
Section 2	No	No	No	Yes
Section 3	No	No	No	Yes
Section 4	No	No	No	Yes
Section 5	No	No	No	Yes
Section 6	No	No	No	Yes
Section 7	No	No	No	Yes
Section 8	No	No	No	Yes
Section 9	No	No	No	Yes
Section 10	No	No	No	Yes
Section 11	No	No	No	Yes
Section 12	No	No	No	Yes
Section 13	No	No	No	Yes

67 This Act affects matters within the devolved (transferred) competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Sewel Convention sets out that the UK Parliament will not normally legislate in an area of devolved competence without the agreement of the devolved legislatures. In the absence of the Executive and a sitting Assembly, it is not possible for the Assembly to provide a Legislative Consent Motion. The Government is satisfied that the circumstances of this Act come within the exception allowed by the convention.

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Annex B – Hansard References

68 The following table sets out the dates and Hansard references for each stage of the Act’s passage through Parliament.

Stage	Date	Hansard Reference
<i>House of Commons</i>		
Introduction	4 July 2019	Vol.662 Col.1451
Second Reading	8 July 2019	Vol.663 Col.59
Committee of the Whole House	9 July 2019	Vol.663 Col.161
Report and Third Reading	9 July 2019	Vol.663 Col.161
<i>House of Lords</i>		
Introduction	9 July 2019	Vol.798 Col.1794
Second Reading	10 July 2019	Vol.798 Col.1824
Grand Committee	15 July 2019	Vol.799 Col.13
Report	17 July 2019	Vol.799 Col.244
Third Reading	17 July 2019	Vol.799 Col.357
Lords Consideration of Commons Amendments	18 July 2019	Vol.799 Col.470
Royal Assent	24 July 2019	Vol.799 Col.743

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Annex C – Progress of the Act Table

69 This Annex shows how each section of the Act was numbered during the passage of the Bill through Parliament.

Section of the Act	Bill as Introduced in the Commons	Bill as introduced in the Lords	Bill as amended in Committee in the Lords	Bill as amended on Report in the Lords
Section 1	Clause 1	Clause 1	Clause 1	Clause 1
Section 2	Clause 2	Clause 2	Clause 2	Clause 2
Section 3	Clause 3	Clause 3	Clause 3	Clause 3
Section 4		Clause 4	Clause 4	Clause 4
Section 5		Clause 5	Clause 5	Clause 5
Section 6		Clause 6	Clause 6	Clause 6
Section 7		Clause 7	Clause 7	Clause 7
Section 8		Clause 8	Clause 8	Clause 8
Section 9		Clause 9	Clause 9	Clause 9
Section 10				Clause 10
Section 11				Clause 11
Section 12				Clause 12
Section 13	Clause 4	Clause 10	Clause 10	Clause 13

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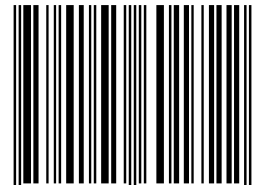
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