



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

TABLING OF PAPERS AND DOCUMENTS

The presentation of a document to the Assembly is called 'tabling'. This derives from the concept that a document is laid on the table of the Assembly.

Authority for tabling documents

Before a document may be tabled, its presentation must be authorised by the Assembly either by leave of the Assembly or according to convention or relevant Standing Orders.

Orders allowing the tabling of documents

The vast majority of the documents tabled in the Assembly are tabled in accordance with Standing Order 239, which provides that:

Papers may be presented in the Assembly by the Speaker, by a Committee Chair furnishing a report from a Committee, by any prior resolution of the Assembly, as required by any statute, by command of the Administrator, or by leave of the Assembly.

Documents covered by this Standing Order may be presented without the need for further authorisation.

Documents tabled pursuant to statute

Documents required to be tabled by Acts of the Legislative Assembly are deemed tabled each meeting day by the Clerk. The majority of this is subordinate legislation or annual reports.

Documents tabled by the Clerk are recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings. Documents tabled in this manner are deemed to have been tabled on the day they appear in the Minutes of Proceedings as Deemed Papers.

Documents tabled by the Speaker

The Speaker tables documents associated with the powers, responsibilities and proceedings of the Assembly. The main categories being:

- reports of the Auditor-General
- reports relating to the administration of Members' entitlements
- reports relating to the administration of the Department of the Legislative Assembly.

SUMMARY

For a paper or document to be tabled in the Assembly its presentation must be by leave, according to convention or by order

Documents required to be presented by Acts of the Legislative Assembly are deemed tabled each meeting day by the Clerk. A majority of this is subordinate legislation or annual reports

The Speaker tables documents associated with the powers, responsibilities and proceedings of the Assembly

Ministers table documents relating to the Executive, the administration of their portfolio responsibilities and public affairs.

Documents tabled by a Minister

Ministers table documents relating to the Executive, the administration of their portfolio responsibilities and public affairs. The main types of documents tabled are:

- government responses to committee reports
- ministerial statements
- documents associated with government legislation. For example, an explanatory statement.

The authority given to Ministers to table these documents arises out of their duty to inform the Assembly of executive matters, and applies only when they are acting in their Ministerial capacity.

A Minister acting in a private capacity must seek leave of the Assembly before tabling documents.

Committee reports

When a committee is appointed or matters are referred to an existing committee, the committee must report to the Assembly on the matters referred. Most references include a date by which the committee must report.

TABLING OF PAPERS AND DOCUMENTS

Orders for the production of documents

The power to order that documents be produced is one of the strongest investigative powers of the Assembly. These orders most frequently require the tabling of documents in the possession of Ministers, government departments and their agencies. The order will generally describe the documents sought and specify a date for their tabling.

Orders for the production of documents can also provide for documents to be presented to the Assembly on an ongoing basis pursuant to Orders of Continuing Effect.

Documents quoted in debate

Under Standing Order 241, Members may request that Ministers table documents from which they have quoted. The Minister must comply with this request unless they claim the document is confidential. If the nature of the document is disputed, the Speaker will rule on whether it is appropriate to be tabled.

Leave of the Assembly to table a document

A document may be tabled by leave of the Assembly. If leave is granted, a Member may table the document. Leave requires the unanimous consent of all Members present in the Chamber. One dissenting voice means leave is not granted.

What happens to tabled documents?

Once a document is tabled it may be considered in the Assembly.

The consideration of Committee Reports, Auditor General's Reports and Government Responses is governed by Standing Order 65. Time is allocated in the Routine of Business for consideration of these reports which will be considered in the order in which they were presented.

Tabled documents automatically become public. The Table Office is responsible for the safekeeping of all tabled documents. This responsibility includes recording, indexing and archiving. Copies of documents are distributed electronically to Members to assist them in parliamentary duties. Documents are also publically available on the *Territory Stories* website.

Papers are available for inspection. Copies of an entire document may be made in part or full. The Clerk may levy a fee for the cost of copying any material.

For more information on tabled papers, including how to electronically access them, see:

parliament.nt.gov.au/business/taled-papers